

HOL script – Secondary

The House of Lords is the second chamber of UK Parliament. It is independent from, and complements the work of, the House of Commons. Here members, also known as Lords and Baronesses, share the task of making and shaping laws and checking and challenging the work of the Government.

The House of Lords has around 800 members. The majority of members are appointed as life peers, alongside a small number of hereditary peers and bishops.

Life peers are selected for their knowledge and experience. Although some have worked in politics, life peers bring expertise from many different fields including medicine, the arts, charities and education. They hold Government to account using their expertise and knowledge to look at laws and issues in detail.

The chamber is laid out with the Government party on one side and the Opposition parties on the other. There are a group of members known as Crossbenchers, who don't belong to a political party. Although the political party in Government may have the most seats in the House of Commons, it doesn't necessarily follow that they have a majority in the House of Lords.

The House of Lords has three main functions: to scrutinise, check and challenge the work of the Government; to debate and make laws to improve the way the country is governed; and to investigate issues in depth through committee inquiries.

Questions and debates in the chamber give members from all parties the opportunity to raise issues or to challenge Government policies. Another key responsibility is making and shaping laws. The House of Lords and the House of Commons share this role. The Government cannot make new laws or raise new taxes without Parliament's agreement.

Away from the chamber, select committees, made up of small groups of members from across the House working together, scrutinise different aspects of Government work. Their investigations look into broad, long-term issues, taking advantage of the Lords' expertise and the greater amount of time available to them to examine issues.

Together committee members investigate specific subjects, speaking to experts and members of the public to understand how laws and policies affect our everyday lives. At the end of an inquiry, committees normally publish reports on their findings with recommendations which the Government must respond to.

So, the House of Lords sits at the heart of UK Parliament – debating the big issues of the day, making and shaping laws and holding the Government to account.

There are lots of ways to get involved and get your voice heard whatever your age. You can follow the House of Lords online or contact members who have experience or expertise in the issues that are important to you.

What will you do?