

HOC script – Secondary

The House of Commons is the elected chamber of UK Parliament. Here Members of Parliament, known as MPs, debate important issues, make and review our laws, represent the public and hold the Government to account.

Members of the House of Commons are elected by the public during a General Election. They generally belong to a political party, but some are independent. There are 650 Members of Parliament, each representing a different area in the UK known as a constituency.

All MPs split their time between the House of Commons and their constituency. MPs have to work out what's best for their party and the local people they represent – that includes the people that voted for them, the people that voted for a different candidate or those that didn't vote at all.

After a general election, the leader of the party that has the most MPs elected becomes the Prime Minister. They lead the Government and appoint around 20 senior ministers to form the cabinet. These ministers coordinate the work of different government departments

Inside the House of Commons there are two sides - on one side, the Government who run the country and, on the other side, the Opposition parties who check and challenge the work of the Government.

The Commons Speaker sits at the head of the room and keeps the house in order by chairing debates.

Prime Minister's Questions and Ministerial Questions give MPs from all parties the opportunity to raise issues or to challenge Government policies. MPs can also request to ask an Urgent Question relating to a topical event. If granted, the minister responsible is summoned to the House to make a statement in response. When questioning ministers and debating issues, MPs can share the views and experiences of their constituents, explaining how new policies or changes to the law may affect them.

A key responsibility of UK Parliament is making and shaping laws. The House of Commons and the House of Lords share this responsibility. The Government cannot make new laws or raise new taxes without Parliament's agreement.

An idea for a new law is called a Bill and each Bill presented to Parliament must go through different steps before it becomes a law. In the House of Commons, MPs will comment on, debate and amend the Bill through several stages. It will then go through the same stages in the House of Lords. At the end of the process, the final wording of the Bill must be agreed by both Houses.

It is then passed to the Monarch who gives formal approval, or Royal Assent, and the Bill becomes law and an Act of Parliament.

Away from the chamber lots of MPs are also members of cross-party select committees. Most select committees in the House of Commons mirror government departments, for example the Home Affairs Committee is responsible for scrutinising the work of the Home Office. Select committees review policies and Government spending by holding inquiries to look at specific issues in detail -this is called scrutiny. Committees ask experts and members of the public to share their knowledge and experience of how laws and policies affect their everyday lives to inform their inquiries. At the end of an inquiry, a committee writes a report with recommendations that the Government usually responds to within 60 days.

So, the House of Commons sits at the heart of UK democracy – 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 your local MP on social media or contact them by email, letter or phone to discuss an issue that's important to you or your community. You can start and sign petitions online or submit evidence to a select committee on the issues you care about.

By contacting your local MP, voting, petitioning, campaigning and more, you can get involved with the work of UK Parliament.

What will you do?