

# Parliament

Easy Read  
Handout  
to go with the  
DVD or the  
presentation

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT  
OUTREACH SERVICE



# Who runs our country?

The United Kingdom is a democracy. This means that we, the people of the United Kingdom, choose who runs the country and who makes the laws.

The group of people who run the country are called the Government and the group of people who make the laws for the country meet in Parliament and keep a check on the Government.

Every few years we have an election.

We can vote for someone who will represent us in Parliament.

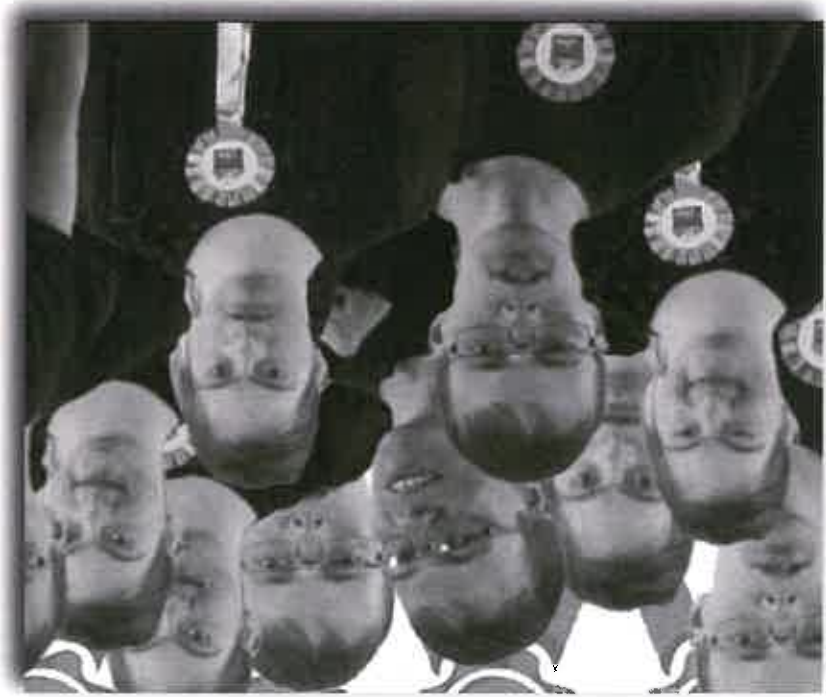
The person who wins the election in our local area will be come a Member of Parliament or an MP.





The leader of that political party becomes the Prime Minister.

The leader of the political party that has the biggest number of MPs in Parliament will be asked by the King or Queen to put together the Government.



MPs are usually part of a political party.

**Parliament...**

- makes laws
- keeps an eye on what Government is doing
- and allows the Government to set taxes and spend money.



**The Government...**

- runs the country
- runs public services
- looks after the country's money



Government and Parliament are different things.

# The Government

The Prime Minister chooses who will be ministers in the Government. These are mostly members from the House of Commons with some members of the House of Lords.

The Government runs public services - like..

- the Health Service

- the Transport Department

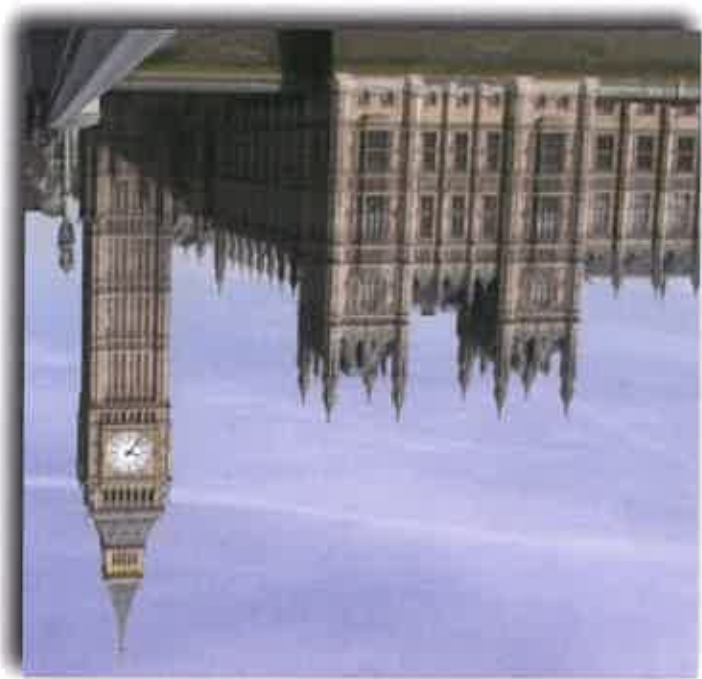
- the Department for

Work and Pensions, which looks after the benefits that support people.

The Treasury is

responsible for how public money is spent.





Parliament meets at the Palace of Westminster.

## Parliament



The Prime Minister works and lives at 10 Downing Street. Other members of the Government work in various offices around Whitehall in London.



The Government is usually made up of people from the same political party as the Prime Minister, although this is not always the case.

Parliament is made up of.

- the House of Commons
- the House of Lords
- and the Monarch.

The House of Commons is made up of Members of Parliament also called MPs. These are the people we vote for at an election.

The House of Lords is made up of different types of people.

Unlike the House of Commons, the public do not elect the members of the House of Lords. The majority are appointed by the Monarch on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.



# What does Parliament do?

- Parliament does 3 things..
- It makes laws,
- It keeps an eye on the Government, and
- It allows the Government to set taxes and spend money.

## Making Laws

A Bill is a proposal for a new law.

Bills can start in the House of Commons, where MPs look at, and discuss the different parts of the Bill in a debate.

They can vote on the Bill, to keep the bits they agree with or to remove or change the bits they do not agree with. They can also add new bits.





# 6

Some Bills start in the House of Lords, so go the other way, working through to the House of Commons, before the agreed Bill goes to the Monarch.



The King or Queen approves the Bill so that it becomes a new law.



When both the House of Commons and the House of Lords agree with the Bill, it goes to the Monarch for Royal Assent.



Once agreed, the Bill is then sent to the House of Lords for discussion. They can also vote on the Bill, to keep the bits they agree with or to remove or change the bits they do not agree with. They can also add new bits.

# Checking on the Government

Parliament can keep an eye on the work of the Government by..

## Asking Questions.

MPs and Members of the House of Lords are able to ask Government Ministers questions in both the House of Commons and the House of the Lords.

These questions allow Members to check on government activities, to raise issues of concern about government plans and to seek information and press for action.

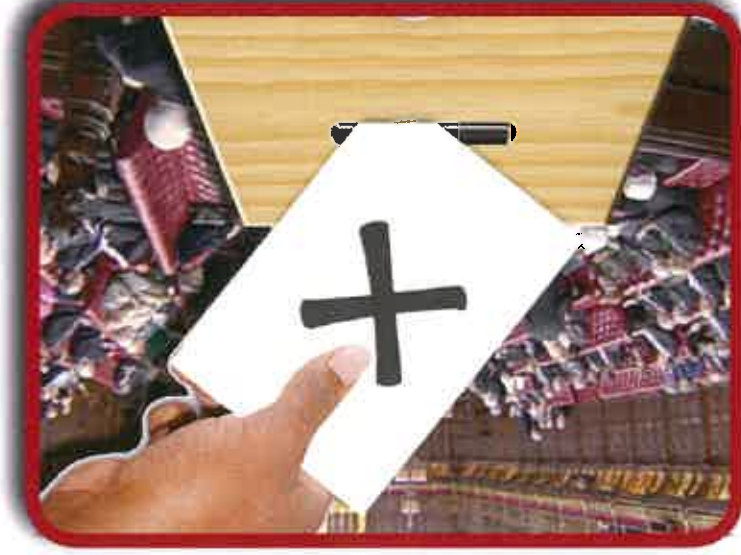


## Debates.

Debates take place in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. They are a chance to discuss important issues and help the Government understand the things that people are worried about.

Members take it in turns to speak on the subjects under discussion.

At the end of the debate, there is sometimes a vote.



# Select Committees.

A lot of the work in Parliament takes place in Committees.

Some committees are made up of MPs. Some are made up of Members of the House of Lords. Some committees are made up of both.

There are many different Committees. Some look at certain parts of the government's work in detail. Others look at different subjects.



# Taxes.

The Government raises money to pay for the services it runs. Most of this money is raised from taxes.

Parliament has to discuss the Government's plans for taxes. They can only go ahead once those plans have been agreed by Parliament.

Parliament also has to make sure that the money is spent in the best interests of the United Kingdom.

Every year the Chancellor of the Exchequer makes a major speech to the House of Commons on the state of the nation's finances and the Government's future plans for the economy. This statement is known as the Budget.

The Budget speech usually includes details of any changes to taxes.



# They work for us

We elect MPs; they represent the people who live in their local area and do work for them.

They help local people with problems and visit groups to listen to their concerns.

MPs hold surgeries in their local area where they meet with local people and listen to their problems. They try to help the people who raise issues with them.

In Parliament MPs speak up for their local area in debates.

They raise issues on behalf of their local people,



They contribute to work on new laws.

They keep a check on the work of Government, and they speak to people who are campaigning to change the law or government plans.

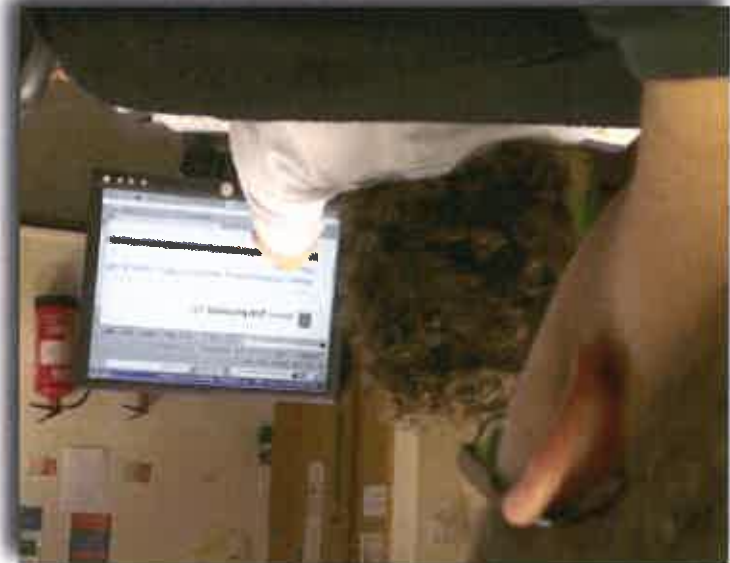
You can contact your MP about any issue. You can write to them or go to see them at their surgery.

You can ask them to ask a question in Parliament, or write to a minister, or to vote for a particular issue.

You can find out who your MP is..

- on the Parliament website
- at your Town Hall or at your local library.

**Listen to us!**

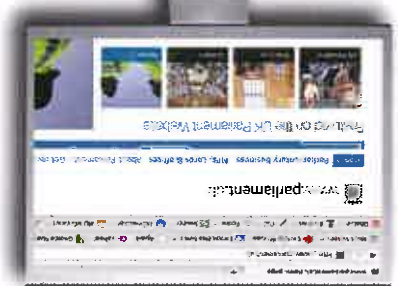


You can contact a Member of the House of Lords who has a particular interest in your issue. You can find out what individual Peers are interested in by looking on the Parliament website.

You can ask them to ask a question in the House of Lords or raise an issue on your behalf with the Government.

You can find the contact details for a Member of the House of Lords on the Parliament website.

You might be able to see Parliament TV where you can watch debates live. You might be able to access this on your TV or your computer.





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