

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

18th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 14
December 2022

Public Participation Inquiry – Citizens Panel Report

Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 14 December the Committee will hear from members of the Citizens Panel on Public Participation in the Scottish Parliament, on their report and recommendations to Parliament. The Committee will hear from Paul MacDonald, Ronnie Paterson, Gillian Ruane, John Sultman, and Maria Schwarz.

Background

2. The remit of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee was extended in session 6 to include citizen participation and to consider and report on public policy or undertake post-legislative scrutiny, using deliberative democracy, Citizen's Assemblies or other forms of participative engagement.
3. In spring 2022 the Committee launched an inquiry into how people's voices are heard in the work of the Parliament.
4. The Committee want to hear from people across Scotland, especially when the Scottish Parliament is developing new laws or policies that affect them. This is important as the Scottish Parliament doesn't hear from some groups or communities and the Committee want to ensure that the views and opinions of everyone in Scotland are included in the work of the Scottish Parliament.
5. The inquiry started with a consultation with people across Scotland. The evidence received on the [inquiry](#) is published on the Scottish Parliament [website](#).

6. A citizens' panel of members of the public then considered the evidence and the question: **How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work?** By the end of the deliberative process the Panel identified four broad areas and seventeen recommendations to improve how the Scottish Parliament engages with the people of Scotland. The report of the panel can be found at **Annexe A**.

Next Steps

7. The Committee will publish its interim report setting out the evidence heard and the recommendations of the Citizens Panel on 16 December. The Committee will then be seeking views on the recommendations and action.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

Public Participation Inquiry – Citizens Panel Report

Report of the Citizens' Panel on Participation in the Scottish Parliament

The report of the Citizens' Panel sets out the selection process for the Panel, the deliberative approach to considering the question: How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work? and sets out the recommendations of the Panel to the Scottish Parliament.

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Introduction

This Citizens' Panel was commissioned by the Scottish Parliament's Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee ("the Committee "). Its findings will support the Committee's inquiry into public participation. The inquiry explores how people's voices are heard in the work of the Parliament.

The Committee wants to make sure that the views and opinions of everyone in Scotland are included in the work of the Scottish Parliament. The inquiry started with the Parliament consulting with people across Scotland. We heard from over 460 people and organisations who told us what improvements they would like to see to make engaging with the Parliament easier.

The Committee wanted to ensure that its work into public participation in the work of Parliament was informed by lived experience. It wanted to talk to people in Scotland who have had the opportunity to learn about the issues relating to public engagement in the work of Parliament. In order to do this, it decided to establish a broadly representative Citizens' Panel.

What is a Citizens' Panel and how does it work?

-  12 to 24 randomly selected citizens
-  They get to hear and question expert witnesses
-  They debate, deliberate and make informed recommendations

Source:

The Citizens' Panel met in person at the Scottish Parliament over two weekends, one in October and the other in November. It also met virtually over three Thursday evenings in November 2022. The Panel was made up of 19 randomly selected individuals who were broadly representative of Scotland's population. The Citizens' Panel was asked to develop recommendations in response to the following question—

How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work?

The Panel spoke to a range of expert witnesses to help them to consider the evidence and ideas that were relevant to answering this question. The participants used facilitated discussions, video conferencing and an online platform to deliberate over these issues and

form their recommendations.

This report is divided into three sections:

- The first section provides background information on how the Citizens' Panel was formed and who took part.
- The middle section provides an overview of the Panel's sittings, including how evidence was presented to the participants and their process of deliberation.
- The final section outlines the participants' recommendations.

How the Citizens' Panel was formed

Choosing the question

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee agreed at its meeting on 1 December 2021 that a Citizens' Panel should be established in Autumn 2022 to support the Committee's inquiry into public participation. The Committee agreed that the Citizens' Panel should broadly focus on the public participation in the work of the Scottish Parliament.

The Parliament carried out engagement and evidence gathering for the inquiry in the first half of 2022. This included Committee evidence sessions, a written call for views, a survey, and a series of focus groups with under-represented groups to explore the barriers to public participation in the work of the Parliament. The findings of this initial work helped to inform the issues and topics that could be considered as part of the Citizens' Panel. A summary of the evidence can be found on the Parliament's [website](#).

The Parliament's Citizens' Panel model involves the appointment of an expert Steering Group to support the formation of the question and format. Members of the Steering Group were chosen to form a relevant and balanced group of experts to support the process.

The Steering Group Members were:

- David Reilly, Communities and Networks Manager, Poverty Alliance.
- Kevin Ditcham, Insight and Engagement Lead, Police Scotland.
- Professor Jane Suiter, Professor in the School of Communications, Dublin City University.
- Professor Min Reuchamps, Professor of political science, Université Catholique de Louvain.
- Dr Paolo Spada, Lecturer, Southampton University.
- Susan Duffy, Group Head of Engagement and Communications, the Scottish Parliament.

The Steering Group developed the overarching question, the design of the sessions, the topics being discussed, and the expert witnesses invited to present on each topic.

When the Steering Group first considered how to frame the overarching question (on 25 August 2022) it agreed to the following wording: "How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work?".

The PACT team designed a Citizen" Panel delivery framework for the sessions, topics and proposed witnesses to be invited to workshop sessions with the panellists.

The Steering Group then met again on 8 September 2022 and agreed that the session design, topics and types of witnesses proposed for the Citizens' Panel were appropriate to support the participants to answer the set question. They also agreed that space should be made available for the panel to choose additional witnesses and information. This was to

give the panel some ownership over the evidence presented to them.

The role of the Steering Group is to help ensure that the process is conducted fairly, credibly and transparently. In order to make sure that these principles were also followed through the Citizens' Panel events, and that the Panel's work is accurately reflected in the final outcomes of the inquiry, an external evaluation process was also put into place. This involved an evaluator, recruited by tender through a research contract, reviewing the preparations for the Citizens' Panel, surveying and observing the Panel at work, and gathering feedback from participants and staff.

Participant recruitment

PACT worked with a not-for-profit organisation, the Sortition Foundation, to recruit a randomly selected and stratified sample of 24 people, based on Scottish Census data. Throughout this report the Panel members will be referred to as 'participants'.

Invitation letters from the Committee Convener, Jackson Carlaw MSP, were sent in August 2022 to 4800 residential households across Scotland, selected at random from the Royal Mail's address database. Recipients were invited to register their interest in participating in the Citizens' Panel on Participation. When registering their interest, potential panel members provided the following demographic information: gender, age, ethnicity, disability, educational attainment level and postcode.

We received 159 responses, a 3.3per centresponse rate, and the information provided by potential panel members was then used to select a sample that was broadly representative of the Scottish population. Citizens' Panel participants had their travel and accommodation costs covered and received a participation fee of £330 in recognition of the time and commitment they gave over the two weekends. The payment of expenses and the participation fee helped to remove barriers to participation and ensured that the voices of those who traditionally may not participate in public engagement exercises were included in the process.

Impact of date changes and change of circumstances

The Citizens' Panel was originally scheduled to meet in September and October. However, due to the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, the original dates had to be rearranged because of the logistical demands on the Parliament during the National Mourning Period.

As a result, three participants were no longer able to attend the rearranged dates. A further two more participants' circumstances changed before the first sitting on the weekend of 18–20 October, which meant they were no longer able to take part. In the short time available, no new participants were able to be recruited to join the panel before the first sitting. The remaining 19 panel members met together at the Scottish Parliament for the first time on the weekend of 18 October, and then for a further weekend and three online sessions between the two weekends.

The data below illustrates that the participants represented a diverse group of citizens and demonstrates the benefits of random stratified selection methods. These methods were used to make sure that the membership of the group includes a balanced selection of participants across a range of characteristics such as gender, age, location, ethnicity and

educational attainment. This ensures that the group is broadly representative of the wider population of Scotland.

There were challenges to ensuring a small group were fully representative across all categories. Creating a broadly representative panel and considering participants' multiple characteristics can sometimes lead to slightly varied results in comparison to the Census data. Where this has happened, an explanation of the difference between the selected panel makeup and the Census data is provided below.

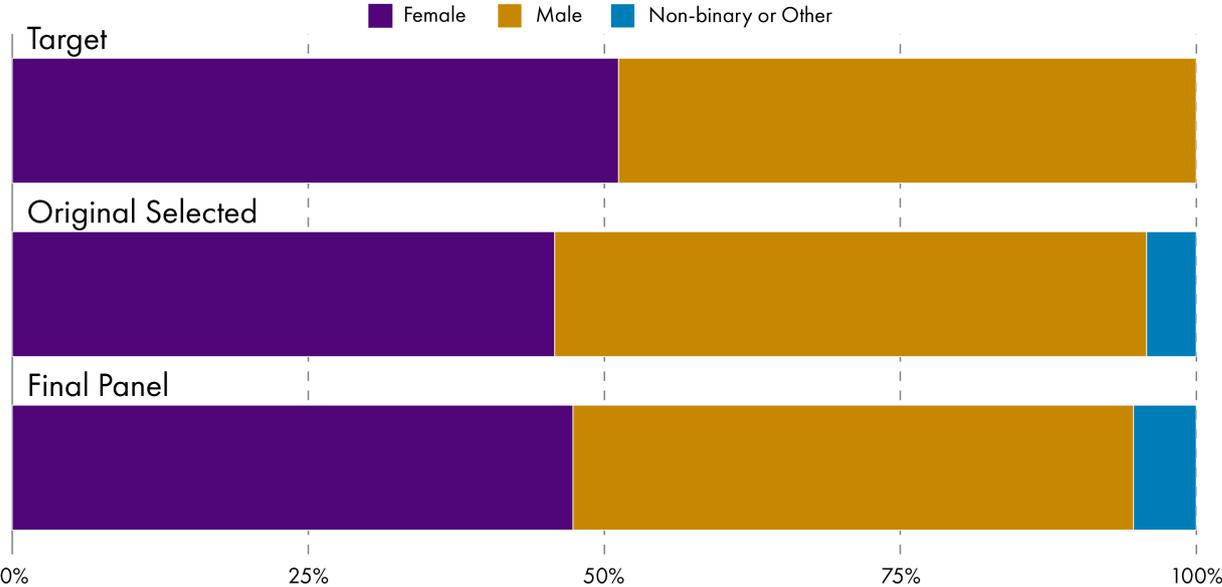
The data below shows the demographic makeup of Scotland, the demographic makeup of the original 24 panel members and the demographic makeup of the final 19 panellists. The percentages outlined in brackets below highlight the difference between the make up of the panel and the associated demographic make up of Scotland. For example -3 per cent would mean the panel under-represented a certain group by 3 per cent, or +3 per cent would mean the panel over-represented a certain group, compared to the Scottish population.

Gender

Gender was broadly representative of the Scottish Population

One participant described themselves as 'non-binary or other' and the rest of the panel was evenly split between women and men.

Proportion of gender representation at each stage of the selection process.



Source:

Age

16-24-year-olds were under-represented due to last minute changes in circumstances

The original 24 participants closely matched Scottish Census data for age, with only slight variations:

- Age 16-24 years - 4 per cent under-represented compared to whole population.

- Age 25-34 years - broadly representative.
- Age 35-49 years – 2.5 per cent over-represented.
- Age 50-64 years – broadly representative.
- Age 65+ - 2 per cent over-represented.

However, the impact of the change of date and change of circumstances meant that four participants aged between 16-32, and one participant aged between 50-64 could no longer take part.

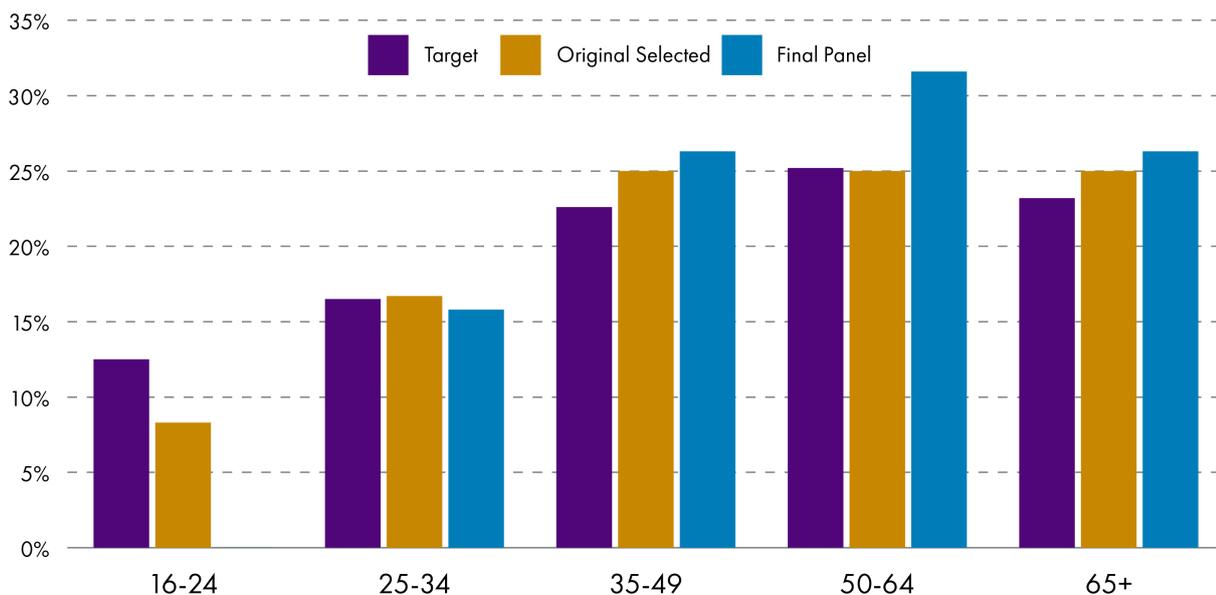
The comparison with Scottish Census data for the final panel was:

- Age 16-24 – 12.5 per cent under-represented compared to the whole population.
- Age 25-34 – 1 per cent under-represented.
- Age 35-49 – 4 per cent over-represented.
- Age 50-64 – 6.5 per cent over-represented.
- Age 65+ - 3 per cent over-represented.

The final 19 participants were aged between 26-81, and as there were no participant aged 16-24 steps were taken to ensure that voices of younger people were included in the evidence provided during the process.

16-24-year-olds were under-represented due to last minute changes in circumstances.

Proportion of representation by age group at each stage of the selection process.



Source:

Region

All eight parliamentary regions were represented but Lothians was under-

represented due to last minute changes in circumstances.

We aimed to have participants from every parliamentary region broadly in proportion to their population size. Three of the five participants who could no longer take part following the unexpected change of date were from the Lothian region, one was from Glasgow, and another was from South Scotland. This had an impact on the final geographical mix of the participants.

Some regions were overrepresented compared to the whole population:

- Central Scotland - 4 per cent over-represented.
- Highlands and Islands – 2.5 per cent over-represented.
- North East Scotland – 7 per cent over-represented.
- Glasgow – 1.5per cent over-represented.

Other regions were under-represented:

- Lothians - 10 per cent under-represented.
- Mid-Scotland and Fife - 7 per cent under-represented.
- West Scotland – 2.5 per cent under-represented.
- South Scotland – 2.5 per cent under-represented.

Despite this, the panel included people from all over Scotland, and all eight Parliamentary regions were represented.

Proportion of representation by Scottish Parliamentary region at each stage of the selection process.



Source:

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of participants was broadly representative of the Scottish population

Participants' ethnicity was considered when selecting the panel. Good practice highlighted in the recent report to the Scottish Government from the [Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Working Group](#) recommends that participants from marginalised groups, such as minority ethnic people, should be slightly over-represented in smaller sized citizens' panels. Otherwise, if the panel was selected in line with current census data, there would be only one participant representing minority ethnic communities. In the final panel, 15 of the recruited participants described their ethnicity as 'White Scottish/British' (79 per cent); two as 'White Other'; one participant described their ethnicity as Asian and one described their ethnicity as from 'mixed or multiple ethnic groups'.

Disability

The number of participants with disabilities was slightly higher compared to the Scottish population.

To make sure that those with disabilities were represented on the panel, participants were asked if they were living with a long term physical or mental health condition.

- 32 per cent of the panel said they lived with a long term physical or mental health condition that was limiting their everyday life – this is eight per cent higher than the population as a whole.
- Five per cent said they lived with a long term physical or mental health condition that was not limiting – this is one per cent lower than the population as whole.
- 63 per cent said they had no long term physical or mental health conditions – this is 7 per cent lower than the population as whole.

Education level

Participants with no qualifications were under-represented

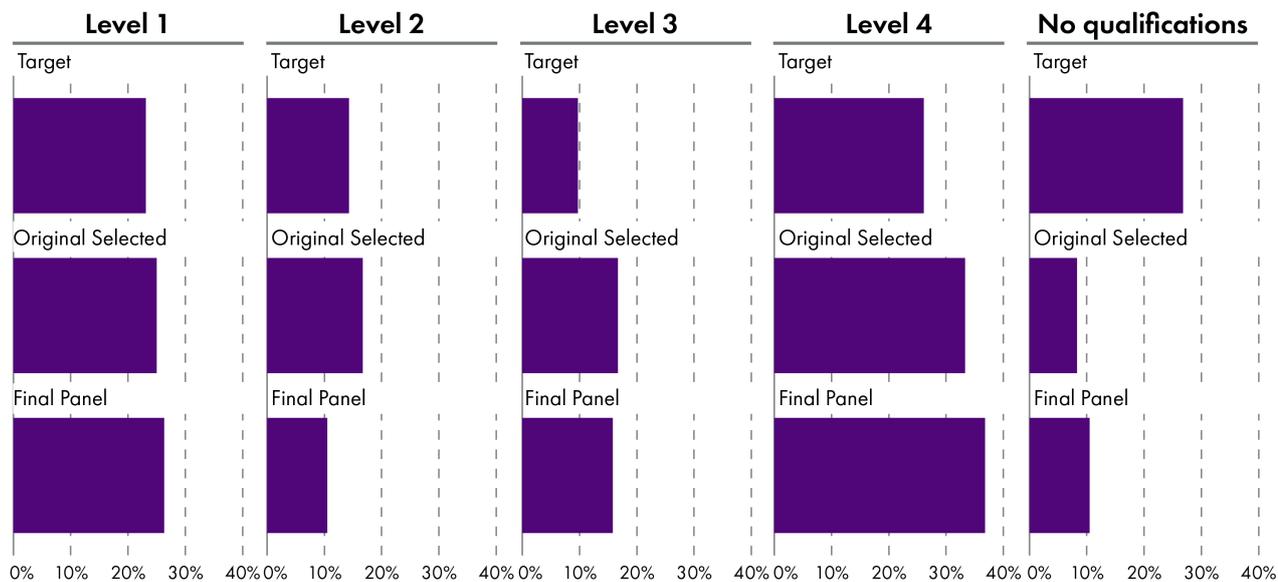
Educational attainment was defined by the levels set out in the 2011 Census questionnaire:

- No Qualifications.
- Level 1: National 4 or 5, Standard Grades, O Grades, or equivalent.
- Level 2: Higher, Advanced Higher, A Level, or equivalent.
- Level 3: HNC, HND, SVQ level 4 or equivalent.
- Level 4 & above Degree, Postgraduate qualifications, Masters, PhD, or equivalent.

People with higher levels of education tend to be more likely to respond to the initial invitation to take part. However, the use of stratified sampling meant that the final panel included participants from different educational attainment levels to make sure that people with all levels of education were represented.

Participants with no qualifications were under-represented

Proportion of representation by level of education at each stage of the selection process.



Source:

Despite the use of stratified sampling, people with some of the lower levels of educational attainment were under-represented compared to the overall population:

- People with no Qualifications – 16 per cent under-represented.
- People with Level 2 attainment (Higher or equivalent) –6 per cent under-represented
- People with Level 3 attainment (SVQ level 4 or equivalent) – 1 per cent under-represented

Two groups were overrepresented:

- People with Level 1 attainment (National 4/5 or equivalent) – 3 per cent over-represented
- People with Level 4 attainment (degree and above) – 11 per cent over-represented

Facilitation process



Source:

The Citizens' Panel process involved team building; learning about the Scottish Parliament, participation and deliberative democracy; questioning witnesses; deliberation and consensus-based decision-making. A team of 12 facilitators and note takers from the Scottish Parliament supported this, guiding the participants through the activities and ensuring all participants had the opportunity to contribute to discussions and participate in the exercises.

After being selected and agreeing to take part, participants were asked if they required access to a laptop or internet to help them in their role as a panellist. One participant was provided with a tablet and a SIM card for data to access the internet for the duration of the Panel to ensure they could take part in the process. All participants were given training and written guidance to use the video conferencing software Zoom and the online discussion site Your Priorities.

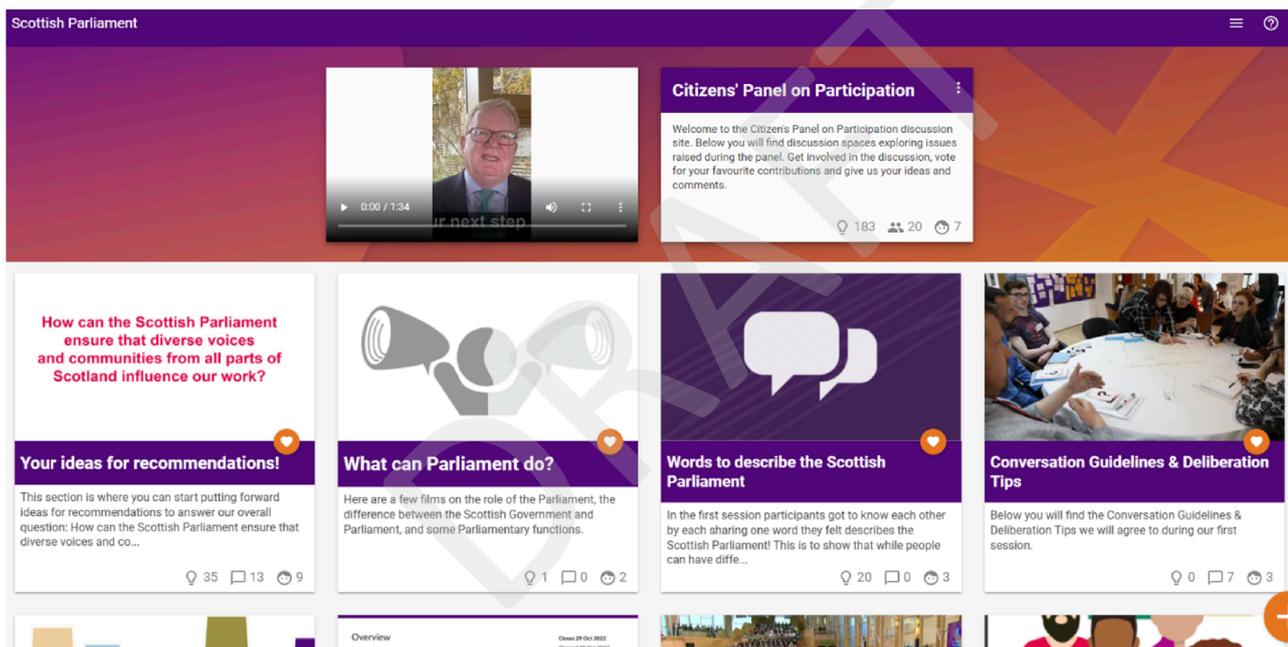
During all sessions, steps were taken to ensure every participant had an opportunity to take part and contribute to discussions. These steps included:

- working in small groups to ensure participants had time to fully explore and make sense of evidence and provide reasons for their opinions in a relaxed environment;
- whole group discussions to ensure all participants were involved in key discussions and decisions at the same time;
- providing opportunities for participants to quietly reflect on the evidence they had heard before discussing issues with the wider group;
- ensuring the participants could contribute to the design of the second weekend of the Citizens' Panel, including having the opportunity to suggest the types of witnesses they wanted to hear from to help them answer the question; and,
- providing an online platform where participants could reflect on the information provided between sittings, pose questions and identify potential recommendations to

be explored in future sittings.

Facilitators also ensured participants worked in groups with as many different people as possible to expose them to a range of views and to prevent individual voices dominating discussions, and maintaining, as far as possible, a balance of gender and age in each breakout space.

Note takers supported participants during each session to capture information from discussions on flipcharts. These were used to keep track of the issues raised and to prioritise questions and topics. A section was also set up in the online platform, Your Priorities, to keep track of the issues and ideas that arose during sessions so that participants could review the evidence in between panel meetings.



Source:

Evidence-gathering and deliberation

Friday 28 October 2022

Parliamentary awareness

Jackson Carlaw MSP, Convener of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, welcomed participants at the start of the first weekend and explained the reasons why the panel had been formed, the background to the Committee's inquiry and how the panel's recommendations would be used by the Committee.

PACT facilitators then delivered interactive activities in different parts of the Parliament building to help participants learn about how the Scottish Parliament works. This included explaining the Scottish Parliament's role in holding the Scottish Government to account and the devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament, as well as demonstrating how committee meetings and chamber debates work.

Saturday 29 October 2022

Conversation guidelines and introduction to critical thinking

Participants were supported to agree conversation guidelines to underpin how they would work together. These included, for example, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute and disagree respectfully. The agreed guidelines were displayed in the room throughout the process so they could be referred to by facilitators and participants if necessary.

Dr Oliver Escobar, Senior Lecturer in Public Policy at the University of Edinburgh, then spoke to the participants about assessing evidence and applying critical thinking during the process.

The participants worked in small groups, each supported by visiting participants from previous citizens' panels run by the Scottish Parliament. The visitors shared their experiences of what had been helpful to them in working together as a panel.

Learning from the CPPPC inquiry



Source:

A Senior Researcher from the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) presented a summary of the findings from the Committee's consultation with people across Scotland in the first phase of its inquiry. The 460 responses from written submissions, surveys and focus groups were distilled into a series of **key messages** about barriers to public participation in the work of the Parliament.

Participants asked questions and then discussed and rated the key messages to explore the findings from the inquiry and the Panel's initial thoughts on the question they were answering.

Participants' attitudes to democracy

To help participants consider how public attitudes to democracy might influence participation, they were presented with the results of a survey of their own opinions as a group. This covered issues around political involvement, capacity to influence decision making, and trust in MSPs and the Scottish Parliament.

They then worked together to identify and prioritise the questions they wanted to ask witnesses at a future session on public trust and motivation to participate

Meeting with MSPs



Source:

Participants were given the opportunity to question three MSPs from different political parties about the value they saw in public participation in Parliament's work and what barriers they felt existed to people taking part. The MSPs who took part were Maggie Chapman MSP, Pam Gosal MSP and David Torrance MSP. (Daniel Johnson MSP also agreed to attend but unfortunately had to withdraw on the day of the Panel.)

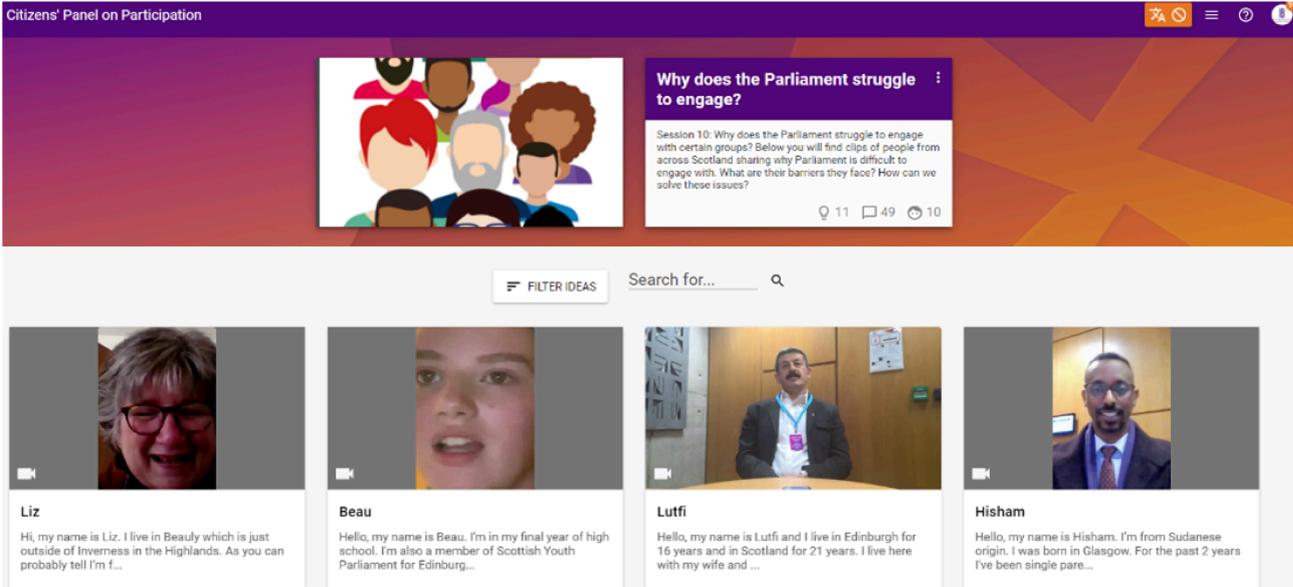
Sunday 30 October 2022

Why does Parliament struggle to engage with certain groups?

The Panel worked in small groups to view and discuss short videos from members of the public who had participated in the early stages of the Committee's inquiry.

The video evidence came from people across Scotland who are part of groups the Parliament traditionally struggles to engage with including:

- young people;
- people from ethnic minorities;
- people with disabilities;
- those who live in rural areas; and,
- people who have lived experience of low income.



Source:

The Panel discussed their initial reactions and thoughts on the barriers people faced. They then put forward ideas for how the Parliament could reduce barriers for those who find it a challenge to participate in the work of Parliament.

How to build trust and motivation to participate?



Source:

The Panel were joined by political scientists to discuss issues relating to lack of trust in democracy and overcoming apathy and barriers to participation.

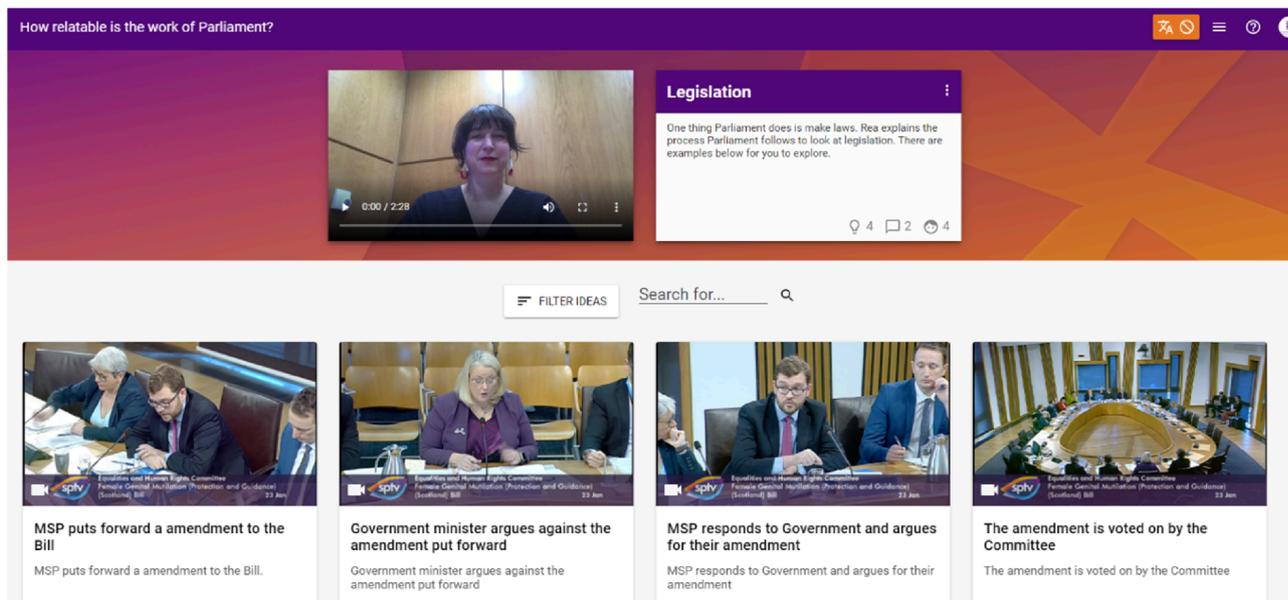
The Panel put questions to:

- Dr Danielle Beswick, University of Birmingham,
- Professor Cristina Leston-Bandeira, University of Leeds
- Professor Will Jennings, University of Southampton.

The Panel and guest witnesses discussed:

- behaviour of politicians;
- public mistrust in politics;
- using local issues and local media to support engagement on national issues;
- the best ways to engage under-represented groups;
- lack of public knowledge about the work of Parliament;
- the influence of lobby groups and organisations; and,
- the civic duty to participate.

Representation and relatability



Source:

This session was used to help the participants consider core Parliamentary business (debates, questions and legislation) and how relatable and accessible it is or could be to the public. Participants moved around three stations, and in each they were shown a short video from a member of Parliament staff from the relevant team, who explained their role, the significance of the business area they supported, and where there were opportunities for the public to get involved. Sample materials such as video clips from the Chamber and extracts from Official Reports (the written record of Parliament meetings) were also available. Participants then discussed what could be done to increase understanding and awareness and any ways that the public could or should be more involved in Parliamentary business.

Education & awareness

Three stations were set up summarising what activities the Parliament currently undertakes in the Holyrood building, online, and in communities to inform and educate the public. Participants moved round each station in turn identifying what they liked, didn't like or felt was missing. Participants then fed back their reflections to each other and asked questions of the Scottish Parliament's Head of Outreach Services, Public information and Resources.

What should we keep doing or try?

Participants were divided into three small groups, each of which reviewed a case study about engagement approaches taken in the Scottish Parliament or elsewhere. The three case studies covered:

- the Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee's low income and debt inquiry which used an experts by experience panel (people with direct experience of the topic) to advise the Committee;
- the Scottish Parliament Covid-19 Committee's use of an online platform to generate questions for MSPs to put to Ministers; and,
- an example from Australia of an MP running a deliberative "Town Hall" on an issue

linked to a conscience vote.

Participants fed back to the whole group at the end on the strengths and challenges of the approach they had considered and any possible recommendations about how they might be used in the Scottish Parliament in the future.

Preparation for the second weekend

At the end of this weekend, participants were given the opportunity to discuss and recommend what should be included in two planned online sessions and in the second weekend to allow them to answer the question they had been set.

Between the two weekends, all the evidence to date was summarised on the online platform, Your Priorities, and the participants were encouraged to review and comment on the various ideas.

After the first two online sessions (see below), a space was also created where participants could review all the ideas generated for possible recommendations and suggest their own additions.

Thursday 3 November 2022 (online session)

Deliberative democracy

A key part of the Committee's remit is to explore the use of deliberative democracy, Citizen's Assemblies or other forms of participative engagement. The first online session, held over Zoom, focused on this.

To help discuss issues around the use of deliberative democracy participants heard short presentations from:

- Kelly McBride, Deliberative Democracy Lead, TPX Impact.
- Dr Oliver Escobar, University of Edinburgh.
- Professor Ian O'Flynn, University of Newcastle.
- Professor Cristina Lafont, Northwestern University (Illinois, USA).

The presenters spoke about::

- what deliberative democracy is;
- the use of "mini-publics" in Scotland;
- principles of a good mini-public;
- thoughts on the potential of deliberative democracy to involve the public in the work of Parliament; and,
- the potential benefits and issues related to the use of deliberative democracy to support Parliamentary scrutiny.

The participants then worked together to question the presenters and to help each other learn more about the risks and rewards related to the use of deliberative democracy processes like citizens' panels.

Thursday 10 November 2022 (online session)

Communications and the media

The participants had proposed a session on the Parliament's use of communications tools and the role of the media in encouraging public participation. In this second Zoom session, a Senior Communications Officer from the Parliamentary Communications Office and Colin Mackay, Political Editor for STV, talked about their roles and answered questions from the Panel.

Thursday 17 November 2022 (online session)

Participants were offered an optional Zoom session before the second weekend to discuss the evidence to date and the ideas being posted on the online platform, and to ask the facilitators any questions they had. Nine participants attended.

Friday 18 November 2022

Review of evidence

A display of the evidence heard to date was set up in the room and participants worked together to create a visual representation of what they had learned so far.

Saturday 19 November 2022

How should the Parliament use mini-publics?

The purpose of this session was to review the evidence from the online session on 3 November, and to consider further how mini-publics (processes like Citizens' Panels where randomly selected broadly representative groups are supported to make recommendations on an issue) can be used to support the work of Parliament, including the range of options and challenges to overcome.

The participants were put into smaller groups which moved in turn between three different experts. Each expert gave a short introduction to their experience and the participants could then ask questions. The experts were:

- Claudia Chwalisz, founder of Democracy Next.
- Jonathan Moskovic, Advisor in Democratic Innovation to Brussels French-speaking Parliament.

- Andy Williamson, Head of Research at the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Under-represented groups – testing our ideas

At the previous weekend, participants explored whether there were any gaps in the evidence they had heard so far. These discussions resulted in a requested session with young people and with community groups working with under-represented communities, as participants felt the issues faced by these groups had not been fully covered.

Before this session, participants agreed who would meet which contributors in this session. They then reviewed their draft recommendations to date to identify which ones they wanted to test with the contributors.

Participants broke into their agreed four groups to learn more about the work of contributors and then to discuss the benefits, drawbacks and scope of their selected recommendations in order to test their relevance. These discussions generated new ideas for recommendations, and also suggestions to amend existing ideas. The groups heard from:

Group 1

- Artemis Pana, Scottish Rural Action.
- Kimberley Somerside, Voluntary Health Scotland.
- Ross Gibson, Children and Young People Centre for Justice.

Group 2

- Bill Scott, Inclusion Scotland.
- Olivia Ndoti, Expert by Experience.
- David Reilly, Poverty Alliance.
- Ron Graham, Expert by Experience.

Group 3

- Zaffir Hakim, Engage Renfrewshire.
- Parveen Ishaq, Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equalities Council.
- Mitra Rostami, Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equalities Council.

Group 4 (young people)

- Gavin Stewart, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament.
- A volunteer from Aberlour Children's Charity.

Sifting recommendations

Over the course of the first weekend, the evening online sessions and the first day of the final weekend, the panel had collectively produced over 60 draft recommendations. In order to help the panel process these, facilitators sorted the recommendations into broad

themes of education and communication; deliberative democracy; public involvement in the work of parliament; and community engagement.

Participants moved around themed tables adding red or green dots to ideas that they thought had more or less potential. At the end of the session participants had selected a smaller number of recommendations to explore with the Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament in the following session.

The challenge of implementation

The Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament, David McGill, answered questions from the panel about the potential opportunities and challenges of implementing some of their draft recommendations selected from the previous session. The Chief Executive gave his thoughts about how they might be implemented. He also discussed with the panel what they might consider while refining their recommendations including resource needs, the current political context and what the Parliament currently offers.

Sunday 20 November 2022

Agreeing recommendations

Participants worked throughout the day in several phases to refine and agree their recommendations. The clerk to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee outlined her experience of what makes a good recommendation in a committee report to help the participants consider what their recommendations should look like. Around 60 ideas were available on cards, grouped at different tables under the same broad headings that were used on Saturday.

In the first phase, participants chose which table to start at, with the option to move to another table at any point. At this stage participants considered which recommendations could be merged or made more specific, and also marked with a red dot any recommendation that they disagreed with or that they felt needed a lot of improvement.

In the next phase, working in plenary, participants reviewed all the recommendations that had a significant number of red dots and made a decision collectively to remove them or to improve them, agreeing wording that would strengthen them sufficiently.

Over lunch, all the remaining recommendations were recorded digitally by facilitators in a single master document, which participants then worked from for the final sessions. Paper copies of the master document were printed and the participants again chose which themed table to start at and were free to move between groups during the session. Facilitators stationed at each of the tables captured revised wording in the master document once it was clear that there was consensus between a majority of participants visiting each table.

For the final plenary session, participants worked through the master document on screen to agree their final recommendations. The final decision-making stage was based on a consensus model. The whole group suggested and reviewed potential recommendations and agreed as a group. If the panel member agreed with the proposal, they would show a green card. If they had further questions, or changes they wanted to make, they would hold up a red card to prompt further discussion in order to reach a consensus.

Because of weather-related travel disruption, some participants had to leave early (and one had not been able to join in person for the second weekend but attended virtually on Teams wherever could be accommodated). The remaining participants worked through all the recommendations, but agreed that there should be a further sign-off via email and another online meeting to ensure all participants agreed with the final recommendations.

Thursday 24 November 2022

The revised recommendations were circulated to all the panel members, making clear that this was their final opportunity to make any changes. Some confirmed via email that they were content and had no further comments. Nine members attended a final online session where some refinements to wording were agreed and the final text was approved.

Recommendations

The Panel agreed on 17 recommendations in total, along the themes of community engagement, how the Parliament uses deliberative democracy, public involvement in Parliamentary business, and community and education. Some of these recommendations stands alone, and others have further sub-recommendations and explanations which support the aim of the main recommendation or suggest how it might be taken forward.

Community Engagement

1. Remove barriers to participation so that everyone has an equal opportunity to be involved in the work of the Parliament.

Follow up on previous research by researching different methods of engagement, who they work for, and the resource that is needed to use these methods.

Apply research to use different engagement methods to reach the whole of society, including non-digital and digital approaches.

Be mindful of solutions to reach all parts of society -, work together with people to identify and create appropriate engagement methods for start to finish inclusion. Innovations like citizens' panels are good but be careful for how costly they are and how they may not engage people with other responsibilities or concerns such as child caring responsibilities, those on low incomes, those who don't have flexibility around work. Have an active approach to seeking out alternative voices and ensuring opportunities to engage are as flexible and as varied as possible: when, how and where people feel comfortable.

Raise awareness that the Scottish Parliament will provide payment which addresses the cost barriers that people face when coming to the Parliament and taking part in engagement activities, such as travel expenses, lost income from time off work, childcare and additional costs related to accessibility requirements.

This could also be expanded so that experts or individuals representing already identified protected groups or minority communities could be paid for a couple of days a month to work with different teams. Paying for engagement isn't enough to make it effective though – training and education are crucial to make community engage effectively.

Ensure access for people with English as a second language including promoting and improving use of Happy to Translateⁱ. Support participation from those with learning disabilities by promoting and increasing the of Easy Read.

2. Create opportunities for people to use and share their lived experience to

ⁱ [Happy to Translate](#) is a national initiative developed to promote equal access to services by overcoming language barriers.

engage on issues that they care about.

We heard that people are effective at being experts on things and can upskill and educate themselves very quickly if they need to - COVID-19 proved that. We don't have the bandwidth to feel passionate about everything all the time – but when we do we need to have the channels there to engage.

When identifying witnesses, ensure an even balance between academic and professional experts, and people with lived experience.

Experts by experience panels can be empowered by the process because they are treated as equal and the group can bond and build empathy. Committees could also build communities of practice embedded in communities across Scotland (e.g. farmers group, disability awareness and support groups) to work with members and Parliamentary staff.

3. Raise awareness of Parliamentary business in plain and transparent language including visual media

Core principle: Use clear and direct language and visuals to communicate information about parliament, including legislation.

Undertake research into the general public's level of trust and knowledge about the everyday work of the Scottish Parliament.

How many people are actually satisfied with their dealings with their representatives compared to those who are dissatisfied? What level of understanding do the public have around the difference between Parliament and Government? If people knew that Parliament was an independent institution here to represent the people of Scotland, pass laws and hold the Government and public bodies to account, they would be more likely to engage.

4. Bring the Parliament to the people.

The Parliament should test approaches to using regional engagement/information hubs and/or a travelling exhibition or mobile unit.

The Parliament should go to where people already are and where they feel safe and have a sense of community and support; and talk to people about their issues rather than politics. We would like to see the Parliament testing the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of:

- displays in public spaces where people are informed of the topical debates affecting their community and are able to communicate their views simply. These could be in schools, libraries, art galleries, community centres, shopping centres and parks;
- Information hubs in towns across Scotland; and,
- A mobile “Parliament bus” to make the Parliament visible in small or rural

communities, where the public can share views, learn, ask questions, etc.

5. Ensure that community engagement by MSPs doesn't exclude people that are outwith community groups, including by using evenings, weekends and online services.

6. Create a system such as a webpage where people can register and be notified about opportunities to engage.

The Parliament should create and advertise means for people to register their details and interests with the Parliament. MSPs and Committees would be able to contact individuals about opportunities to engage in the work of Parliament when an issue arises that individuals are interested in. This idea was inspired by the amount of issues discussed at parliament at any one time passing the public by - this solution could ensure that no one misses the chance to engage.

How the Parliament uses Deliberative Democracy

7. Legislate for Deliberative Democracy in order to ensure that:

- **diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence Scottish Parliament's work, and**
- **the public are consistently informed and consulted on local and national issues.**

In drawing up this legislation the Parliament should:

- Recognise that there is not one engagement solution that fits all situations and issues.
- Design and implement a framework based on this panel's recommendations for ensuring diverse participation in deliberative democracy.

The framework should include:

- An annually recurring citizens' panel with agenda-setting powers to determine which local and national issues require either national or local people's panels (e.g., 'deliberative town halls').
- Protection for participants to improve participation. We do not agree that participation in panels should be mandatory, but protective elements such as the right to time off work should be included for people who are selected to take part.

- Rules around how MSPs consider and respond to recommendations from people's panels such as mandatory follow-up to people's panels' recommendations no later than 9 months and a response from the Parliament and Government.
- Potential for mixed MSP–people panels.
- Ability to form local panels with local MSPs with outcomes that are sent up to the national level.

8. Build a strong evidence base for deliberative democracy to determine its effectiveness and develop a framework for measuring impact

9. Build cross-party support for deliberative democracy as this is needed for it to work

10. We recommend that one of the panels which should be set up is a specific people's panelⁱⁱ to discuss the MSPs' code of conduct

Public involvement in Parliamentary business

11. Carry out a cost-benefit analysis of the Parliament itself or committees meeting outside of Holyrood and compare this to (a) more support and targeted invitations for people to come to Holyrood and (b) reinstating Parliament days (MSPs going out into communities for a day of activity).

12. Set a 9-month deadline as a default for feedback on the outcome of any engagement with clear reasons where this deadline would not be met (if applicable). The live status of the decision making process should be clear and transparent throughout.

Parliament could create a minimum standard of response. For example:

- initial acknowledgement of engagement;
- follow up to explain how many responses and what happens next;

ii Note: we heard various different terms used to describe this form of engagement including "mini-publics" or "citizens' panels". We have settled on the term "people's panels" as we think this is engaging and easy to understand.

- a follow up with information on the outcome of the inquiry;
- signposting with more information;
- traffic light system for inquiries flagging up what has been addressed and what hasn't; and,
- Monitoring calls logged and establishing rules as to how long someone would have to wait for a response.

This would show people that their participation is worthwhile and make people feel that their voice is being heard. Legislation and inquiries can take a long time, so set expectations from the start and consider how you will keep people involved in the longer term. If you don't do this it will fuel apathy and mistrust.

13. Give the Presiding Officer the power to compel MSPs to give an answer to all questions asked: that is, a direct reply that is relevant to the question. This should include a process for a deferred answer if an immediate answer cannot be given. This will improve public trust and engagement.

14. Schedule specific time in the debating Chamber for individual public questions to be asked.

We recognise that there would need to be a process to filter questions and ensure they were relevant and to determine who asked the questions and how.

Communication and Education

15. Use media outlets, documentaries and short films to highlight Parliament successes and real life stories of engagement to improve public perception and trust.

We heard that the Scottish Parliament needs to do more to tell people about its engagement and participation work, as those it reaches are positive about the experience. Then it is a matter of finding the best marketing practices to reach as many people as possible.

Use people who have had positive interaction and experience with Parliament to tell their story through national and local media (TV/radio/newspaper etc.) and community groups. The public sometimes find it easier to digest information by way of another person telling them. Make sure people know about the teams of staff working on engagement as well as MSPs.

16. The Parliament should run a general information campaign explaining the role of the Scottish Parliament – a single brochure or leaflet explaining who your local MSPs are, what a call for views is and the role of the Parliamentary service and its impartiality and separateness from Government.

All age ranges may need more information on what the Parliament does and what it can do for them. We think this is something that could be done quickly.

17. The Parliament should hold an inquiry into the relationship between the aims of the current curriculum and the Parliament to explore systematic changes that can be made throughout schools and in communities to improve children and young people's knowledge and awareness of Parliament - and deliberative democracy - including through mentorships, internships and competitions.

Our vision is that by the Parliament's 25th anniversary there should be a clear plan in place so that by the Parliament's 30th anniversary, all young people of voting age have clear understanding and knowledge about engaging with Parliament and Government and all see engaging with Parliament as a normal aspect of everyday life.

DRAFT

