The Houses of Parliament’s bicameral Participation Team welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the committee’s inquiry into citizenship and civic engagement in the twenty-first century. This written evidence highlights the range of activities undertaken by the Houses of Parliament’s Participation Team to involve and inspire the public, and to promote public understanding of the House of Lords and engagement with its work.

This evidence relates specifically to the terms of reference which cover:
- The role of education in teaching and encouraging good citizenship
- The role of voluntary citizenship programmes such as the National Citizen Service
- What the UK Parliament can do to support civil society initiatives to increase civic engagement.

**Inspiring and engaging young people**

The Houses of Parliament plays an active role in educating young people about British democracy with the aim of supporting their growth into politically engaged citizens. A key way in which this is done is by facilitating inward visits to the Houses of Parliament for groups of young people from across the United Kingdom.

In 2016-17, **92,221** children visited the Houses of Parliament’s Education Centre. These groups came from each area and nation of the UK and received free interactive workshops, tours and talks with parliamentarians. State schools from outside London and the South-East also received a travel grant.

The Education Centre runs a weekly *Skype the Speaker* session, during which time House of Commons Speaker John Bercow MP participates in a live question and answer session. **1844** children took part in 2016-17. Similarly *Lords Live* is a new initiative which runs along similar lines and involves a member of the Lords speaking with secondary school students over Skype.

The wider Education Service runs the *Speaker’s School Council Awards*. This engages students with the work of the Houses of Parliament and rewards excellence in school council projects. **415** schools applied in 2017 with the number of students taking part in associated projects reaching **31,838**.

This engagement with young people is in addition to the estimated **230,000** visitors expected to go on a commercial tour of the Houses of Parliament in 2017-18 and the over **98,000** people expected to join Democratic Access Tours (facilitated directly by Members of both Houses).

**Educational outreach**

The Participation Team runs a programme of educational outreach for those unable to visit the Parliamentary Estate. This involves visiting schools and communities across the country and running free interactive workshops for students aged 7-18.

In 2016-17, **482** workshops were delivered across the UK with **48,710** students involved. A training programme is provided for teachers to engage students in learning about the British political system. **3,157** teachers were trained by the Education Outreach Team in 2016-17. The impact of this work is magnified as these teachers go on to deliver lessons themselves, reaching ever more people.
Our Universities Team works to engage students in higher education by delivering the *Parliamentary Studies Module* at 20 universities in 2017-18. This involves the delivery of up to 100 seminars to students and 20 visits to the Houses of Parliament with at least 550 students taking part.

The Universities Team also delivers separate student workshops, reaching over 750 students every year and is developing a new *Student Leaders’ Programme*. Separately, the Lords Speaker’s Office runs a *Peers in Schools* programme which launched in September 2007.

Educational resources
As well as direct engagement with young people, the Houses of Parliament produces an extensive range of free learning resources accessed via our website[^1] and partner websites over 100,000 times in the last full reporting year. Printed resources including booklets and an election toolkit are also available to order. In addition, over 500,000 views of our videos were made via our ‘Learning’ YouTube channel in 2016-17[^2].

The targets in the current year for these learning resources are 80,000 downloads, 40,000 game plays and 750,000 video views. We further increase our reach via partnership resources, such as the award-winning Magna Carta digital resource produced with the National Archives in 2015, and the *Your Voice Matters* Girl Guide badge.

The Houses of Parliament’s *Massive Open Online Courses* (MOOCs) for adults launched in 2016 when over 10,000 participants took part. Around double this number are expected to take part in 2017-18. This is available on the FutureLearn platform[^3].

**Involvement with voluntary citizenship schemes**
The UK Parliament participates in the National Citizenship Service (NCS) programme, and in 2017 delivered 182 sessions with the number of children booked to attend reaching 8,018. Our tailored NCS workshops involve encouraging young people to think about issues they care about, and writing postcards to their local MP setting out their views. These are then delivered to the MPs parliamentary offices along with an address for reply.

A review of attendee feedback from July 2017 shows that out of 658 attendees, 511 (77%) rated the workshops as good or excellent.

**Engaging with civil society**
**UK Parliament Week**
The Participation Team runs the annual UK Parliament Week festival (November 2017) that engages people from across the UK with the work of the Houses of Parliament and empowers them to get involved.

In 2017 the number of registered organisations participating, including schools, uniformed groups, and religious organisations has risen to around 4000 involving an estimated 300,000 people from almost every parliamentary constituency of the UK.

[^1]: [http://www.parliament.uk/education/](http://www.parliament.uk/education/)
[^2]: [https://www.youtube.com/user/UKParliament](https://www.youtube.com/user/UKParliament)
[^3]: [https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/introduction-uk-parliament](https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/introduction-uk-parliament)
Youth Parliament and Youth Select Committee
The Participation Team works with the British Youth Council to run the annual Youth Parliament sitting in the House of Commons. In 2016, 300 Members of the Youth Parliament (MYP) took part with the topics debated chosen by 978,216 young people following the Make Your Mark campaign.

The Youth Select Committee (YSC) is a British Youth Council initiative, supported by the Participation Team. The eleven committee members include Members of the UK Youth Parliament, Youth Councillors, a Young Mayor, and reserved seats and representatives from each of the devolved nations.

Engaging communities and civil society
The Participation Team works directly with organisations and communities across the UK to increase understanding of, and engagement with, the Houses of Parliament. The focus of this engagement are those identified from House of Commons Library research which outlines the extent to which certain groups – such as women, BAME communities, young and older people, long term-unemployed and people with disabilities – are likely to be less politically engaged than others.

The programme of community engagement involves delivering community engagement sessions across the UK, with 455 workshops and 20,000 individuals set to be reached in 2017-18. In 2016-17 an average of 95% of those who attended these events agreed their knowledge of the UK Parliament increased, and over 90% agreed their knowledge of how the UK Parliament holds the UK Government to account improved. Just 45% of the public claim to know at least ‘a fair amount’ about Parliament, indicating a marked improvement as a result of attending participative events.

This work engaging communities also includes tailored Women in Parliament Workshops (20 in 2017-18) and events designed specifically for people with learning disabilities (reaching 550 adults in 2017-18).

A network of community engagement officers deliver these events across the country, with each responsible for specific regions and able to build and maintain longstanding relationships with communities and organisations.

Train the trainer
This programme involves providing training to enable individuals to deliver engaging sessions about the work of the Houses of Parliament in their own communities or organisations. Around 350 trainers have been through the programme since its launch who have themselves gone on to train approximately 2,500 people in 2016-17. Specific strands have also been launched: Empower! designed for adults with learning disabilities and Women in Parliament geared specifically towards women. Just under 1000 people have been trained so far in 2017-18 with each given resources to help with their subsequent engagement.

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4 [https://www.parliament.uk/education/outreach-in-your-school/annual-events/youth-select-committee-2016/](https://www.parliament.uk/education/outreach-in-your-school/annual-events/youth-select-committee-2016/)
5 Political disengagement in the UK: who is disengaged? [http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CPB-7501](http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CPB-7501)
6 Hansard Audit of Political Engagement 2017 [https://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/research/audit-of-political-engagement](https://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/research/audit-of-political-engagement)
Involving the public in select committee inquiries
The Select Committee Engagement Team works to increase the range and diversity of witnesses engaged in select committee inquiry sessions. They do this by publicising select committee inquiries via a contacts database, which includes upwards of 20,000 contacts.

They also run face-to-face participative events to support committee inquiries, and enable the committee to hear from audiences they want to hear from, but can’t reach. In 2017-8, over 30 participative inquiry events are due to be held and 80,000 people contacted about relevant committee inquiries.

Digital engagement
The Participation Team also run the House of Commons Digital Debate Programme connecting MPs with the opinions and experiences of interested groups and the broader public through online debates held in advance of Parliamentary business.
Public contributions collected via the debate are shared with all Members through the debate pack to help inform the debate in the Chamber. Twenty-six digital debates have been held since the programme launched in June 2015. These are hosted on the most suitable platform for the topic and target audience, including Twitter and Facebook or within forums such as Money Saving Expert or Mumsnet.
For the reporting year 2016-17, 41,606 contributions were made by the public through this programme. This reporting year (2017-18) 20 debates will be hosted and the number of people involved is expected to exceed the previous year’s reach.
The House of Commons Twitter account provides unique real-time coverage of the activity from the House of Commons Chamber, as well as explanatory content on the work and role of the House of Commons. 200,000 people follow the account, with users predominantly based in the UK and with an existing interest in the work of the House. The reach of the account is far wider than the followers, as shares and comments from this core group spread messages through their networks. The monthly impressions for the account far exceeded the 1 million target in 2016-17, averaging 3.5 million.

Public enquiry service
The House of Commons Public Enquiry Service responds to questions from the public on the work, role and history of the House of Commons via a telephone line, email and post service. In 2016-17 they responded to 14,655 enquiries and similar levels are anticipated in 2017-18. This service is of particular importance to audiences without online access.
The team also provides simple fold-out guides and posters explaining the work of the House of Commons with over 50,000 distributed each year through visitors to the House of Parliament, direct orders by groups and organisations, and partnerships such as a selection of regional libraries in 2016-17.
Please note the House of Lords also runs an enquiry service but this is not based in the Participation Team.

Future strategy
This evidence outlines the ways in which the Houses of Parliament Participation Team seeks to inform and engage the public and help create politically engaged citizens.
The Participation Team is currently engaged in updating its strategy leading up to 2021 and intends to continue to increase both the delivery and reach of this work, capitalising on new

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7 https://twitter.com/HouseofCommons
methods to engage and continuing to play an active role in creating a thriving parliamentary democracy.

8 September 2017