

Toolkit for **Parliament Week** Partners



Inspiring, informing and connecting people across
the UK with parliamentary democracy

parliamentweek.org
[@parliament_week](https://twitter.com/parliament_week)

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1. PLANNING AND RUNNING YOUR PARLIAMENT WEEK EVENT OR ACTIVITY

The rules

Your organisation can take part in Parliament Week in almost any way you wish. From workshops to debates, film screenings and performances, your organisation can make a real difference to its audiences and to Parliament Week.

However, to be included in the Parliament Week programme, your event or activity cannot:

- Be part of a political campaign or promote a particular party's viewpoints. Nor should it suggest that Parliament Week or the Houses of Parliament share a particular political viewpoint
- Be profit-making. All Parliament Week events should be free to attend, or run on a cost-recovery basis.

Planning what you want to do and why

We recommend that you start planning your Parliament Week event or activity by thinking about what you want to achieve. There are plenty of reasons why you might want to take part in Parliament Week. These could include:

- Offering something new to your existing audiences
- Reaching new audiences
- Using Parliament Week as an opportunity to promote the work you're already doing
- Fulfilling an identified need for your existing audiences
- Wanting to try something new

It's important to think about what your organisation will get out of taking part. Thinking about this will help you decide how much time you have to organise your event or activity and how much (if any) money you can spend on it. Keep in mind that the success of an activity is not necessarily determined by the money spent on it, but rather the planning and initiative used.

Parliament Week does not fund any partnering organisation's events, but if you would like some tips on raising money to support your event, take a look at our fundraising section.

Who do you want to reach?

Think about the target audience for your event because this will help you decide what the event will consist of and how you will promote it. Some partners use Parliament Week as an opportunity to reach out to new audiences.

Example events and activities

Here are some example events to get you thinking about what your organisation can plan for Parliament Week:

Question time

Question Time events are where an audience is invited to ask panellists questions – usually about current affairs. Question Time events are a great way for your audience to ask local politicians, influencers and others (with differing political viewpoints) about the issues that matter to them. Someone neutral needs to Chair the event to keep things moving – keeping panellists to time and encouraging questions from the audience.

These events usually work for a wide range of audience groups, although you also need to be careful that your audience has the confidence to ask questions. You can ask your audience to submit questions in advance, which gives them time to think about what they want to ask and it gives your panellists the opportunity to think about their answers.

Our evaluation from Parliament Week 2013 found that audiences enjoyed the opportunity to ask questions, so encourage your Chair to keep answers from panellists relatively short.

Debate

Debates are a great way of engaging your whole audience with a topic or question. It's also great for confidence-building and helping your audience to think about issues and topics in new ways.

Parliament's Education Service, BBC Three Free Speech and the UK Youth Parliament worked together to produce a great schools resource called **Create the Debate** which can be used to get debates going. The resource is very flexible – you can use it for almost any audience as long as you have some time with them to prepare.

www.parliament.uk/education

Talks and workshops

Inviting people to hear a talk or attend a workshop can help your audience understand more about the work of your organisation and why it's taking part in Parliament Week.

You can either deliver a talk or workshop yourself, or you can ask an external speaker to do so. One option could be to invite someone from the Houses of Parliament's Outreach team to deliver a free session for your audience (although please bear in mind that their sessions are very popular and get booked up very quickly). For more information about Parliament's Outreach Service, visit: www.parliament.uk/outreach

Art, music, performance and poetry

Using arts, music, performance and poetry can be a great way of engaging audiences and getting them to think about democracy and Parliament in new ways. In the past, Parliament Week partners have run poetry workshops, invited a poet to be 'Tweeter-in-Residence' for a day and have put on music and dance events.

However, it is well worth making the links between your event/activity and democracy or Parliament very clear so that your audience knows what to expect.

Inviting speakers

Speakers at your event could include local figures, politicians and other experts such as journalists, academics or local activists. Think carefully about your audience and who they might want to hear from. Having a high profile speaker can help gain publicity for your event, especially if they commit to tweeting or promoting the event on your behalf.

Be sure to contact potential speakers as far in advance as possible – the more notice they have the more likely it is that they will be able to attend. Don't worry too much about having all of the information about the event finalised, just get them to agree to the date and principle of your event.

Once the speaker has agreed to attend, you may want to provide them with a short briefing telling them who else is attending, who the event is for and what you would like them to do. Some speakers need more guidance than others so factor in time to make sure yours is properly briefed.

MPs and members of the House of Lords

You may be interested in inviting your local MP or a member of the House of Lords to attend your event, either to speak or as a guest. Feedback from previous Parliament Week events has shown that audiences like having the opportunity to talk with MPs or Lords.

It's worth noting that members of the House of Lords work in very different ways to MPs – they don't represent a 'constituency' in the same way and are usually selected to join the House of Lords based upon their expertise. Find out more about the House of Lords by visiting: www.parliament.uk/lords

We've learnt in previous years that partners are more likely to get a positive response from MPs and Peers when they make the approach directly, so don't be afraid to make direct contact. A follow-up call to their office can help get a quicker response to your invitation – MPs get hundreds of emails and calls a day so persevere if you don't hear back immediately!

How to invite Members:

Find Your MP and their contact details
<http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>

Look up members of the House of Lords according to their area of expertise www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/lords

MPs and members of the House of Lords tend to have very busy diaries, so try to contact them as soon as possible.

MPs and members of the House of Lords are usually in Westminster when the Houses of Parliament are 'sitting'. This means that, unless you are based in London, it might be very difficult for them to attend during these times. However, currently Friday 14 November is set to be a non-sitting day for both Houses of Parliament, so holding your event then may increase the possibility of an MP or Lord attending.

Resources for your event

As a Parliament Week partner, you will receive free Parliament Week resources to give out at your event, including Parliament Week pens, pads, leaflets as well as information related to this year's Parliament Week campaign and how to get involved. We will also send you a short animated film to show at your event to explain what Parliament Week is.

Ticketing

If your Parliament Week event is open to the public you may wish to provide tickets to help you manage numbers. You could use sites such as Eventbrite or Billetto to ticket your events – they are free to use if your event is free to attend. However, if your event isn't free, they will charge a fee (which is a percentage of ticket costs), so that's something to consider if you're charging for your event.

www.billetto.co.uk
www.eventbrite.co.uk

Publicity

Getting the right audiences to take part in your event or activity is crucial to its success. To do this, you need to create publicity that reaches your desired audience. You may also want to let others know that your event is happening, or has happened, to raise the profile of your organisation.

Think about what you want to achieve with your publicity, and why. While traditional media, such as news stories in your local or even a national paper can be great, they can also be quite hard to achieve and putting lots of effort into getting them could mean that you miss out on other publicity.

It's important that your publicity mentions that your event or activity is part of Parliament Week - this gives your event or activity context and explains why you're running it now (see page 6).

Writing about your event

No matter how you're publicising your event or activity, try to keep the information about it as short as you can, be clear about what it is and who it's aimed at, but also try to tailor what you're saying for your audience. Use bullet points where necessary and create links to any supporting information rather than including it all in the text. Lastly, don't forget to include details of your social media channels.

If you're running an event, don't forget to include information about where it is, when it will take place and if there are any costs. You should also let your audience know about disabled access arrangements.

If you are aiming to attract school groups, direct your publicity towards teachers and include relevant information about where it fits into the curriculum. Doing this makes it much easier for teachers to justify why they are spending time on an activity or attending an event with their students.

There are lots of guides available on how to write an effective press release. For a helpful starting point take a look at these guides:

[Four Colman Getty](#)

[Media Trust](#)

PUBLICITY CHECKLIST

Media

Getting coverage in local or national press is a great way to increase the profile of your event. Make sure that your press release is:

- Relevant and contains the most up to date information
- Includes 'what' the news is about, 'why' it's news and the 'when, where and who' it relates to
- Also includes why people should take notice of it
- Ensure you have third party approval to use the information and any photographs you're using

Leaflets and posters

Using leaflets and posters can be an extremely effective way of publicising your event/activity. Make sure that they:

- Are eye-catching
- Are distributed where your audience will see them/pick them up (e.g. a library or youth centre)
- Include all details (e.g. date, who it's for, how to book, venue, contact details)
- Use simple, jargon free language
- Include the official Parliament Week partner logo

Website

- Include all details (e.g. date of your event, who it's for, how to book, venue, contact details)
- Include official Parliament Week partner logo and link to the Parliament Week web page
- Upload your event to the Parliament Week website and link it to your website too

Social media

- Update your social media accounts regularly to build anticipation around your event – create 'teasers' by giving factual information prior to the event
- Include Parliament Week hashtag (we will retweet) #ParliamentWeek
- If you have any high-profile speakers or attendees could they share information about the event with their followers?
- What organisations do you know of who could tweet about your event? Are there any influential people with lots of followers who might retweet for you?
- Create a two way conversation – thank people for supporting your event or activity

Link your event to Parliament Week

We can help to promote your event, but to do this it's crucial that you:

1. Mention that your event or activity is part of Parliament Week i.e. 'This event is part of Parliament Week, which aims to inspire, inform and connect people across the UK with Parliamentary democracy'
2. Use the Parliament Week logo (sent to you as part of your welcome letter) on all your publicity including your website
3. Link to the Parliament Week website
4. Tweet using #ParliamentWeek

Fundraising

You might want to raise some extra funds to cover the cost of running your Parliament Week event or activity. While we cannot fund any partner events ourselves, we're happy to write in support of funding bids our partners are submitting, providing that the application directly relates to a Parliament Week event.

When approaching funders you will need to have a full event plan, a budget and be able to explain clearly what the event aims to do. Most funders have set criteria for the projects they will give money to, so do your research and make sure that you are targeting your application and explaining how your event fits their criteria.

If money is a concern it may be helpful to think about what current activity or projects you have planned that you could badge as Parliament Week, rather than spending money that you may not have!

There is lots of advice for applying for funding online. A couple of toolkits from other organisations that may be of use are:

www.refugeeweek.org.uk/Info-Centre/RefugeeWeek-resources/Refugee-Week-Toolkit/Fundraising

www.londoneventstoolkit.co.uk/finance/fundraising

Finding a venue

As much as we would love to host all Parliament Week partner events here in Parliament, we have an extremely limited amount of rooms, and with over 250 partners across the country it just isn't possible to provide a space for everyone's events. Here are some tips on finding a venue in your local area.

- Contact your local MP who might be able to advise you of a local organisation you could approach (explain that you're planning a Parliament Week event and why it would be in his/her interests to support you with this).
- Contact a local councillor to ask them for use of any space in their council office/chamber/town hall.
- Schools and universities often have space to hold events – approach one in your local area.

You could also collaborate with one of the many Parliament Week partners on our website. As well as helping you with finding a venue, working with another organisation may also enhance your access to funding and publicity and fill a skills gap.

On the day: health and safety

If you are inviting members of the public to participate in your event, the responsibility, or duty of care for public safety rests with you. This means that as the organiser, you have a duty of care, for your audience.

A duty of care is a legal obligation requiring you to adhere to a reasonable standard of care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others. As an event organiser, you will always have a duty of care to people working at or visiting your event, and safety must always be the paramount consideration before, during and after your event, whatever the size.

It is your responsibility to ensure that health and safety legislation is adhered to at all levels of management, and the implications of not considering your duty of care can be very serious, from major fines to imprisonment.

For this reason, it is best practice to have a competent, named person who is responsible for safety at your event – and for larger events there may be a need for a dedicated safety officer. You will need to ensure that you have developed processes for managing health and safety, and that all documentation is available for your local authority to review in the event of an incident.

For more information guidance on running your event safely visit:

www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/

If your event involves working with people under the age of eighteen, please take appropriate measures to ensure duty of care.

The Safe Network website is one of many online resources that provides support with safeguarding of children and young people:

www.safenetwork.org.uk

2. AFTER YOUR EVENT OR ACTIVITY

Evaluation

Evaluation is crucial to Parliament Week to help us find out what our partners and audiences think of the week and different ways that we can continue to improve it for the future. The Parliament Week team will send out evaluation forms for you to distribute at your event, so please make use of them and send them back to us. These forms help inform us how we can improve Parliament Week and not to find fault in your events!

We are happy for our partners to produce their own evaluation forms too that will help to inform your organisation's work.

We work with an independent evaluation consultant to help us analyse the evaluation data and then use this to shape future Parliament Weeks, so please do take part in the evaluation process.

Next steps

Following your event here are just a few online tools to further develop engagement in democracy with your members and attendees.

Media Trust, an organisation that aims to empower charities and communities to have a voice and be heard, provide a range of useful information including:

- a. [Social media dos and don'ts](#)
- b. [Top tips for Twitter](#)
- c. [Ten blogging tips](#)
- d. [Free resources hub](#)

Campaign Central (Sheila McKechnie Foundation) Social networking, information, resources and inspiration for campaigners: <http://www.campaigncentral.org.uk/campaigns>

ActUPNI is a practical resource that helps with the formation and presentation of campaigns to ensure all organisations regardless of size and resources have the capacity to run an online campaign www.communityni.org/campaigns

Parliament's Outreach Service – How to Campaign in the House of Commons
<http://bit.ly/Wa1zhc>

3. FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about the Houses of Parliament

Find out facts about Parliament and where you can get information to support your event or to use in any resources you might produce.

About Parliament: for useful information about what Parliament does, how it works and its living heritage.

www.parliament.uk/about

@UKHouseofLords

@houseofcommons

@UKParliament

House of Commons Information Office: to find out more about the work, history and membership of the Commons.

E: hcinfo@parliament.uk

T: 020 7219 4272

Guides to Parliament

House of Commons at work

House of Lords Information Office: to find out more about the work, role and membership of the Lords.

E: hlinfo@parliament.uk

T: 020 7219 3107

Briefing papers

Work of the House of Lords

House of Commons Library: offers pre-prepared briefing papers made available to the public including; research papers, standard notes and Parliamentary procedure and background papers.

www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/commonslibrary

@commonslibrary

Educational resources

Parliament's Education Service: works with schools to support young people's understanding of Parliament and democracy. The website has a fantastic range of resources suitable for all key stages, including; debate packs, films, lesson plans and games. For resources, information on how to visit and continuous professional development opportunities visit online at:

www.parliament.uk/education

@UKParEducation

Visiting Parliament

If you are interested in finding out about visiting Parliament, take a look here:

www.parliament.uk/visiting/