



Centenary Action Submission to Procedure Committee Inquiry into Call Lists

[Centenary Action](#) was founded in 2018 by Professor Helen Pankhurst CBE to build on the legacy of the suffrage movement and campaign for a gender-equal Parliament by 2028, the centenary of equal franchise. We are a leading voice for women's political representation, bringing together over 100 activists, politicians, and academics across party lines to drive change through advocacy and collaboration.

Our mission is to dismantle the barriers preventing women from participating fully in politics. We have identified three key barriers to women's political participation, one of which is the culture and practices within politics that deter and exclude women. As part of our campaign to address these issues, we advocate for reforms that ensure Parliament becomes a workplace that works for women and supports their continued presence and advancement in politics. We are submitting evidence to this inquiry on call lists to further this goal, as we believe such reforms can contribute significantly to creating a more inclusive and accessible parliamentary environment for all.

Centenary Action has made this submission with support from the [Global Institute for Women's Leadership](#), with particular thanks to Dr Minna Cowper-Coles and Amy Hewson-Smith. We are also grateful for input from Professor Sarah Childs and Dr Jessica C. Smith.

Were the previous arrangements for call lists utilised during the pandemic effective, and are they applicable/appropriate in a post-pandemic Parliament?

We believe that the experience of using call lists during the pandemic clearly demonstrated their value in providing MPs with greater certainty and control over their schedules. This allowed Members to manage their workloads more efficiently while better balancing personal and family responsibilities as well as managing health conditions. This view is supported by evidence presented in [The Remotely Representative House](#), published by Centenary Action and co-authored by Dr Jessica C. Smith and Professor Sarah Childs. The report explored the lessons learned from the introduction of hybrid measures in the House of Commons during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings include:

- Providing MPs with clarity on when they will speak gives them the ability to more effectively manage their workload and be more productive.
- The introduction of call lists addressed the issues with the traditional practice of MPs having to 'bob' up and down trying to catch the speaker's eye in order to participate in debates. The report identifies how this practice is time consuming, fails to

acknowledge (gendered) bodily functions and only works for those who can stay in the same seat for hours on end without food, drink or a comfort break.

- MPs with health conditions benefited from the introduction of call lists. For example, Daisy Cooper MP, who has Crohn's disease, described the system as "revolutionary," enabling her to plan her eating and manage her health without fainting from lack of food.
- The report survey found strong support for call lists, with MPs rating their usefulness at an average of 4.02 out of 5. Support was even stronger among women MPs and those with caring responsibilities.

The report recommended making call lists permanent and potentially extending them to debates in Westminster Hall.

Would the introduction of call lists have the same impact on all Members, or could it disproportionately impact Members with protected characteristics?

We believe that introducing call lists would be beneficial for women, particularly those with caring responsibilities and for disabled people. This is supported by the evidence shared above from the [Remotely Representative House](#) report. Further supporting evidence is given below:

- The use of Call lists during the pandemic overturned the conventions of seniority that tend to privilege long-sitting men MPs, giving more opportunities to younger and female MPs. (Smith and Childs chapter available from authors in advance of publication)
- [The Open House](#) report also suggests that the publication of call lists can facilitate increased predictability of members' schedules, thereby making the work of parliamentarians more accessible, particularly for MPs with caring responsibilities or health conditions.
- The current system is informal, individualised and opaque, leaving women MPs with caring responsibilities dependent on whether or not they have what is seen as a family-friendly whip who will tell them when they will speak in a debate. (Smith and Childs chapter available from authors in advance of publication)

Introducing call lists on a permanent basis would demonstrate that the norms and traditions of parliament can be amended to increase accessibility and inclusivity.

Would the introduction of call lists require any other procedural changes to maximise any potential benefits?

We believe the introduction of call lists would be most effective if accompanied by the below procedural change to maximise their benefits:

- Providing advance notice and timing of Urgent Questions and Statements. [The Remotely Representative House](#), found that, alongside call lists, providing MPs with advance notice and clear timings for Urgent Questions and Statements proved highly beneficial during the pandemic. This combination allowed MPs to plan their day more effectively, manage competing responsibilities, and improve participation across the board.