

The New Prime Minister Should Appear Before The House Commons Liaison Committee As Soon As Possible Say Researchers

Dr Mark Bennister (Canterbury Christ Church University), Dr Alexandra Kelso (University of Southampton) and Dr Phil Larkin (Canberra) have published a report on the House of Commons Liaison Committee and its role in guaranteeing prime ministerial accountability. While most public attention is focused on Prime Minister's Questions (PMQ), Liaison Committee sessions with the Prime Minister have remained mostly under the radar. These sessions have operated since 2002, questioning three successive Prime Ministers. The research focuses on the process of significant institutional learning the Committee has undergone over the course of these sessions. The report comes after a yearlong research project led by Dr Bennister and funded by the Nuffield Foundation. The publication of the report was supported by Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Southampton.

The report made several recommendations including:

- The sessions should occur more often than 3 times a year and produce a report on the sessions.
- The Prime Minister should be called before the Committee at the start of each session to answer questions on the programme for government as set out in the Queen's Speech.
- A new mid-term Prime Minister should appear before the Committee as early as possible after becoming prime minister.
- Members of the Committee should be encouraged to ask shorter more succinct questions to the Prime Minister.
- The Committee should shape the substance of the sessions on decision-making at the heart of government. If the sessions are to shed light on areas of prime ministerial responsibility, a stronger focus on how decisions were formulated would be illuminating.



The research was the subject of a workshop at the Institute for Government in July. The event included a panel discussion with Lord Beith (Chair of Liaison Committee 2010-2015), Andrew Dismore AM Greater London Assembly (Former MP and Liaison Committee member 2005-2010) and Hannah White (Institute for Government). Dr Ben Worthy (Birkbeck) chaired the discussion.

The research was featured in BBC Radio 4 Today in Westminster broadcast on 8 July and available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07j7pdm>

Dr Bennister has been awarded a [parliamentary academic fellowship](#) to continue this research. Dr Bennister will have access to parliament from January 2017 to conduct further research under this new scheme.