

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology: Connecting the UK Parliament with Research Evidence

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ABSTRACT: The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) has connected the UK Parliament with impartial research evidence for over 35 years. This article outlines POST's structure, methodology, and services—including briefings, expert access, and confidential enquiries—that support evidence-informed policy-making. It highlights POST's role in overcoming barriers to research use in parliament, its collaboration with academia, and its impact on parliamentary work, especially committee scrutiny. The paper also explores future developments, including rapid evidence synthesis and AI tools, aimed at enhancing responsiveness and efficiency in meeting growing parliamentary demand for trusted research.

KEYWORDS: evidence-informed policymaking; parliamentary research; knowledge exchange; science and technology advice; legislature support services

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction – 2. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology – 3. Politically Impartial Research Briefings – 4. Impact of POST Briefings – 5. Answering Questions on Publications – 6. Providing Advice on, and Access to, Experts and Expertise From Academia and the External Research Community – 7. Discussion.

1. Introduction

The UK Parliament is one of the oldest representative assemblies in the world, tracing its roots to 1265.¹ Over the centuries, Parliament has become the ultimate forum for democracy in the UK, where elected and appointed members debate, legislate and scrutinise the UK Government.²

To effectively conduct these activities, members need access to up-to-date and accurate information and research. This information improves the effectiveness of their work by: supporting decision-making; supporting their understanding of citizen's views; counteracting the information imbalance that exists between parliament and the government; improving the legitimacy of their work; and by helping to provide continuity of knowledge following elections.³

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¹ UK PARLIAMENT, *Simon de Montfort's Parliament*, London, 2025.

² C. KENNY, D. C. ROSE, A. HOBBS, C. TYLER, J. BLACKSTOCK, *The Role of Research in the UK Parliament Volume One*, London, 2017.

³ O. BENNETT, P. BOWERS, D. HIRST, A. HOBBS, T. LEVERIDGE, N. NEWSON, C. OWENS, Z. OLIVER-WATTS, *Parliamentary Research Handbook*, London, 2017.

Academics have extensively studied the use of evidence and research in executive branches' policy making processes. Reviews have noted how challenging it can be to feed evidence into policy development, reflecting issues such as a lack of infrastructure, the complexity of the policy-making process, the need for leadership, and a lack of capacity.⁴ The UK Government has been working to overcome these challenges for at least 50 years,⁵ and there are a range of initiatives and infrastructure in place.⁶

There is a growing body of research on how and why legislatures draw on research evidence for policy-making, and the barriers to its use. Ouimet et al, 2023, conducted a systematic review of this research, noting that evidence use could be categorised into three main types: instrumental use to facilitate decision making; conceptual use to facilitate reflection; and symbolic use to achieve strategic or political objectives. The review also identified several other types of evidence use specific to legislatures including: to help parliamentarians to reach a consensus; to earn trust; to understand the feasibility of policies; to fact-check information; and to directly inform parliamentary work such as tabling amendments. The review grouped factors affecting the use of research evidence into four categories: institution and organisation (including organisational support and availability of access); research characteristics (the form and content of research); policy and political context (the characteristics of the issue being considered); and individual characteristics (including experience, knowledge and skills regarding the use of research evidence).⁷

2. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) is an impartial research and knowledge exchange service based in the UK Parliament. It is a core part of the research and information infrastructure of parliament. It is a bicameral team supporting both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. POST was created by a group of parliamentarians in 1989, after several decades of members pressing for more parliamentary research capacity.⁸

Structurally, POST sits within the Research and Information Team of the House of Commons, alongside the House of Commons Library, which also provides research and information services to members.⁹ The Library typically focuses on parliamentarians' more rapid policy research needs by supporting legislative scrutiny, preparing briefings for debates and helping members to respond to constituency work. POST and the Library's vision are to keep "information and analysis at the heart of our parliamentary democracy." They deliver this mission in coordination. POST and the Library also coordinate with other teams in parliament that deliver research services for members, including the staff of committees.

⁴ OECD, *Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Lessons from Country Experiences*, 2020.

⁵ C. BRITCHELD, T. SASSE, *The use of evidence in government and parliament*, Institute for Government, London, 2020.

⁶ A. HOPKINS, S. FOXEN, K. OLIVER, G. COSTIGAN, *Science Advice in the UK. Foundation for Science and Technology & Transforming Evidence*, London, 2021.

⁷ M. OUIMET, M. BEAUMIER, A. CLOUTIER, A. CÔTÉ, É MONTIGNY, F. GÉLINEAU, S. JACOB, S. RATTÉ, *Use of research evidence in legislatures: a systematic review*, in *Evidence and Policy*, 20(2), 2023.

⁸ M. NORTON, *The UK parliamentary office of science and technology and its interaction with the OTA*, in *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 54, 1997.

⁹ UK Parliament, *About us - House of Commons Library*, London, 2025.



POST has 13 permanent staff. Eight staff focus on delivering research activities and three on delivering knowledge exchange activities.¹⁰ Research staff are grouped into four sections: Biological Sciences and Health, Social Sciences, Energy and Environment, Digital and Physical Sciences. POST is supported by wider teams in parliament including the Research and Information Communications and Engagement team, which provides communications support.

The Head of POST is a member of the management board of the House of Commons Research and Information Team, the chair of which is the Managing Director of Research and Information, who is also a member of the Commons Executive Board. The Commons Executive Board provides leadership for the House of Commons Administration.¹¹

POST is advised by a Board that includes members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, reflecting the balance of parties in parliament, and eminent experts from the research community nominated by the national academies. The Board meets roughly quarterly to discuss proposals for research and to offer advice on which topics should be covered. It helps to ensure that POST's research programme reflects the interests of parliament.¹²

POST's services typically involve a high degree of knowledge exchange, involving a two-way collaboration between parliament and external academics. It does this to connect parliament to the latest evidence to enhance its work. This also enables POST to work on any topic that customers ask it to research, as in-depth technical expertise is not required in-house to conduct the research. This feature provides an important additional mechanism for ensuring that parliament can access expertise when this is not available in-house, for reasons such as staffing vacancies or resourcing challenges.

POST provides three core services for its customers. It defines its primary customers as members of both houses, their staff and parliamentary teams. These services are the production of impartial research briefings, answering confidential questions about these publications, and providing access to experts and expertise from academia and the external research community.

POST services enable parliament to overcome several barriers to the use of evidence in policy making by legislatures identified by Ouimet et al. Firstly, as an internal team staffed by impartial parliamentary officials, parliamentarians can trust that POST's research is for their benefit and conducted to meet their needs. Studies show that legislators are more likely to use evidence when they know and trust the information provider.¹³ Secondly, POST works to access and communicate evidence in a way that can be understood and used by parliamentarians, where academic authors may not have that as a primary consideration. This includes synthesising evidence to ensure that only the most relevant information is included and that it is presented in a concise format for parliamentarians who face significant pressures on their time.

Finally, POST officials have both scientific and parliamentary expertise. This enables POST to assess issues such as research quality while also producing products and services tailored to the needs of parliament.

¹⁰ UK Parliament, *Contact us - POST*, London, 2025.

¹¹ UK Parliament, *Commons Executive Board*, London, 2025.

¹² UK Parliament, *POST board*, London, 2025.

¹³ M. OUIMET, M. BEAUMIER, A. CLOUTIER, A. CÔTÉ, É MONTIGNY, F. GÉLINEAU, S. JACOB, S. RATTÉ, *Use of research evidence in legislatures: a systematic review*, in *Evidence and Policy*, cit.

Quimet et al. noted that “strengthening the organisational capacity of legislatures to collect, evaluate and synthesise research evidence in a non-partisan way is likely to be a promising way forward” for enhancing the use of research evidence by legislatures. They went on that equipping “legislatures with a neutral strike force for rapid assessment and dissemination of research evidence would give legislators a means of validating the quality of some of the information they are bombarded with, notably by interest groups and through the mass media.” POST forms a key part of the UK Parliament’s “strike force” in this respect, alongside the parliamentary libraries and specialist staff supporting committees.

3. Politically Impartial Research Briefings

POST publishes impartial research briefings on its website.¹⁴ Briefings typically take 3–6 months to produce and are concise reviews of the evidence set in a policy context. It has capacity to produce roughly 30 major briefings per year.

Customers can suggest topics for POST briefings. Suggestions for research are added to a longlist of proposals alongside other topics identified by the POST team and the POST Board. All proposals are then put to an internal consultation with other parliamentary research teams to ensure that there is no duplication with other research activities in parliament, and to seek feedback about the wider utility of the proposed research, such as for committee scrutiny.

Upon completion of this consultation, the POST team prioritises the research suggestions according to four criteria: the degree to which the suggestion would assist parliamentarians in performing their scrutiny, representative and legislative duties; the timeliness of the suggestion, including in terms of ensuring that parliament has access to high-quality briefing in advance of important developments; the degree to which POST’s research approach would add value, for example in relation to the complexity of the topic; and whether similar research is planned by or has been published by the libraries. This leads to a shortlist of research proposals that the team intends to deliver.

This process ensures that there is evidence to demonstrate the positive impact of the proposed research on the work of parliament, and that it has wider parliamentary support. POST staff then present the proposals to the POST Board at a board meeting. This allows for discussion on the proposal and its further refinement. POST announces agreed projects on the POST website shortly after the Board meeting.

POST’s major research projects follow a defined methodology leading to the publication of a briefing called a POSTnote. Shorter forms of POST briefing, such as Rapid Responses,¹⁵ draw on elements of this methodology.

The first stage in this process involves the public announcement of the project, and a call for contributors. POST’s Knowledge Exchange Unit promotes this call to all higher education institutions in the UK.¹⁶ Calls are also promoted by the communications team via POST’s social media channels.

Contributors are invited to submit information through an online form. They are instructed to provide information about themselves and their expertise and are asked to provide information that is relevant to the project. The call typically remains open for six to eight weeks. Due to the considerable number of

¹⁴ UK Parliament, *Connecting parliament with the latest evidence on the topics that matter*, London, 2025.

¹⁵ UK Parliament, *Rapid Responses - Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology*, London, 2025.

¹⁶ UK Parliament, *Knowledge Exchange Unit*, London, 2025.



contributors to some projects, strict word limits are placed on the volume of information that can be submitted, and the process for submission is largely automated.

Most projects have a POST fellow assigned to them. Fellows play a key role in researching and drafting and are supervised by a permanent member of the POST team. POST fellows are PhD students who receive funding from an external research body to work in POST for 13 weeks; the formal production of a POSTnote typically takes 13 weeks. Each fellow completes an induction on parliamentary writing, research skills and the use of parliamentary systems. The experience fellows gain from applying research in a policy context is valued by the fellow and their funder. A fellowship can have significant positive benefits on those participating in terms of their career opportunities and professional development. It also delivers significant benefits to parliament in terms of increased work capacity and for acting as a pathway for PhD students to later join parliament in various research roles.¹⁷

Weeks one to three of the research project typically focus on refining the scope of the project and conducting a literature review. This draws extensively on the contributions submitted via the POST website and the previously obtained feedback from the POST Board. The scope is discussed with other research colleagues with a policy interest from the library or committee teams, and it may also be discussed with the parliamentarian who suggested the project. The objective of these discussions is to ensure that the research clearly answers the main questions that the commissioner has. At this stage, if the research is likely to include distressing or contentious content, the supervisor and fellow will discuss how to address related issues such as by obtaining additional communications support.

POST's Liaison Librarian may support the literature review. The Liaison Librarian will, subject to capacity, conduct a literature search prior to the fellow joining POST.

The literature review does not seek to capture all the information available about the topic. Instead, the review seeks to give the fellow and their supervisor a basic understanding of the topic, to identify broad themes and to identify organisations and individuals to consider interviewing. The review typically identifies parliamentary reports, government publications, key academic literature, grey literature and media articles. POST has access to various resources and databases to conduct the literature review. The Liaison Librarian can also access individual academic articles when they are behind paywalls.

Interviews with experts and stakeholders are a core part of POST's research process, taking place from weeks two to five. Interviewees include other parliamentary research staff (if they have not previously been consulted), academic experts, public interest organisations, the private sector, parliamentarians and civil servants. Interviewees are typically asked to comment on the scope of the research, definitions, the evidence base and parliamentary and policy issues that should be addressed in the publication.

While POST aims to draw on the best available research evidence in its publications, all projects involve consultation with a broad range of stakeholders from beyond academia to ensure that various perspectives and political viewpoints are captured. This enables POST to place the research evidence in the wider policy context, which is crucial for parliamentarians who need to understand how the evidence may be applied to their work. It is also important for impartiality.

However, given the brief time available for the research, fellows conduct a maximum of 15 interviews. If there is a need to speak with a greater number of individuals, interviews are substituted for roundtable discussions, with similar stakeholders grouped together. Where possible, interviews are conducted online

¹⁷ J. PARRY, *Understanding the outcomes and impacts from PhD policy fellowship schemes*, Southampton, 2021.

to manage time pressure and to enable the use of automatic transcription and artificial intelligence (AI) summarising tools.

The fellow and their supervisor complete the first draft of the publication by week eight. To facilitate the drafting over this period, the supervisor collaborates closely with the fellow to agree headings, draft elements of the briefing, edit content, and conduct follow-up research if necessary.

POST provides detailed writing guidance and suggested content to the fellow to make it easier for them to tailor their writing for a parliamentary audience (see Table 1). This guidance stipulates that all briefings include a detailed standalone summary containing the key information, enabling busy parliamentarians to get a good overview of the topic without the need to read the full briefing. A strict 3,600-word limit is placed on the briefing (not including headings, tables, charts or the summary). Briefings also typically include an introduction explaining why the topic is relevant to parliament and the scope of the briefing, a background section setting out key statistics and terms, a section describing government and opposition party policy and headings for each of the key issues identified. Where possible, briefings also include a policy considerations section to draw together the main factors that a parliamentarian may wish to consider when developing or evaluating a policy that relates to the topic.

Heading	Suggested content	Indicative length
Title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titles should be meaningful, revealing what the paper is about, and as short as possible. • Titles should be engaging 	Maximum of 60 characters (with spaces)
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first paragraph highlights the key facts that the briefing conveys. • Typically, a short paragraph is written on each of the main sections in the briefing. • No description of the aims of the briefing or why the briefing has been published. • No use of jargon or technical terms, with the language optimised for search engines where possible. • No footnotes or references. 	300-600 words
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation of why the topic is important or why the briefing has been written. • An explanation of the scope: what the reader can expect to find in the briefing. If there is a related issue that is not covered, that is mentioned with the reader directed to an alternative source. • The territorial scope of the briefing. • A brief description of the structure of the briefing. 	300 words
Background	<p>The most essential information that underpins the rest of the briefing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definitions of key terms • key statistics to indicate the scale of an issue or how an issue has changed over time • a description of any key sources that are used heavily in the briefing, including other POST and parliamentary reports 	600 words



Government and opposition party policy	<p>If there is not much policy, or if this is covered by a Library briefing, this information might be added to the background section instead. This section describes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● relevant legislation ● the government's position or activity on a topic ● opposition parties' positions 	600 words
Headings for each of the key issues identified	<p>Separate headings for the key issues identified in the literature review and in the interviews. Only those issues that are most relevant to parliament are included. Issues that there is no space to discuss in detail can be listed as bullet points as "other issues that were identified during the research".</p> <p>Under each heading, evidence and data surrounding the topic, such as stakeholder opinions, case studies, and research evidence, is included. The headings will depend on the topic. However, common issues covered in POST briefings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Devolved matters ● International matters: The different approaches taken by other countries can highlight interesting aspects of UK policy. International policy coordination can also be important for some topics such as climate change or migration. ● Technical challenges: such as barriers to implementation, reliability, timescales for deployment, security vulnerabilities ● Regulatory issues: gaps in existing regulation or legislation, conflicting regulation, enforcement problems, optimisation of regulation ● Safety issues: such as public health, data security, wider risks ● Resource constraints: such as lack of funding, personnel, skills, infrastructure ● Ethical issues: such as privacy and data, inequalities, transparency and accountability, bias, impact on diverse groups ● Environmental impacts: such as greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, climate change adaptation ● Public perspectives: what is known about the views of the general public or specific groups ● Evidence quality: whether there is adequate data or evidence to enable effective decision making ● Research priorities: where further research and development is needed to address gaps in knowledge ● Efficiency gains: how better outcomes could be delivered, such as more efficient public spending ● Economic benefits: how the UK economy could benefit in terms of GDP, growth, new jobs, labour productivity 	2,100 words

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Societal benefits: such as improved quality of life, improved skills, health benefits 	
Policy considerations	A table summarising the main policy considerations identified across the briefing. These are the main factors that a parliamentarian may wish to consider when developing or evaluating a policy. This is optional.	Not applicable
References	All information must be referenced.	Not applicable
Contributors	A list of major contributors to the project. Typically, this includes interviewees, external reviewers and anyone that provided substantive information, with their permission.	Not applicable

Table 1: Suggested content for POSTnotes

Writing guidance also emphasises the need for impartiality, to ensure that the research can be a trusted source for parliamentarians of any political viewpoint. POST uses various techniques to produce impartial briefings. These include using the most robust evidence, drawing on a broad range of sources, describing a range of relevant perspectives, avoiding emotive language and not providing conclusions or recommendations from POST.¹⁸

The review process is also key to producing impartial research. This occurs in three stages, the first being an internal review by two parliamentary research colleagues from either POST, the library or a committee. Internal reviewers primarily check the content for impartiality and accessibility. Following any required edits, the publication is sent to external reviewers by week ten. External reviewers include the POST Board, any contributor mentioned by name or institution, the relevant government department or regulator, and contributors that reflect the different perspectives or stakeholder groups, including academics. Reviewers are given ten working days to review the publication and are asked to confine their review to impartiality, accuracy, and the focus of the briefing.

Finally, in week 13, the briefing is reviewed by the Head of POST and a professional editor from the Research and Information Communications and Engagement team. This final stage enables the Head to ensure that all POST publications have been produced in line with its Editorial Policy.¹⁹ It also enables a discussion between the Head, supervisor and fellow about possible next steps for the publication, including any potential media or communications work. The professional editor primarily ensures that the writing guidelines and style rules have been followed, thereby ensuring consistency across all POST publications.

When the briefing has completed its review process, it is published on the POST website, distributed through social media, and is printed for display in several locations in parliament, including the parliamentary libraries of both houses. It is also shared with whoever commissioned the research, which might lead to questions on the publication. Briefings are promoted to members in institutional daily, weekly, and

¹⁸ O. BENNETT, P. BOWERS, D. HIRST, A. HOBBS, T. LEVERIDGE, N. NEWSON, C. OWENS, Z. OLIVER-WATTS, *Parliamentary Research Handbook*, London, 2017.

¹⁹ UK Parliament, *Editorial Policy - POST*, London, 2025.



monthly communications, particularly where they relate to specific parliamentary business. All major contributors are listed on the briefing, and they may also conduct their own promotional work.

4. Impact of POST Briefings

The impact of POST briefings on the work of parliament is tracked by POST through several means, including citations. From January to July 2025, POST research was cited in 54 different parliamentary debates²⁰, committee reports²¹ and library research briefings²². This figure underestimates the full use of POST briefings in parliamentary activities, as a single parliamentary report or debate may cite POST research several times. For example, POST research was cited by three different members in a 2025 parliamentary debate on artificial intelligence and schools.²³ In addition, members may not always directly cite POST when they draw on its research, and many parliamentary activities, such as private meetings, do not lead to a citation that can be tracked.

POST research also has wider impact in society. In the first six months of 2025, its website was viewed over 190,000 times. POST briefings were cited in 112 external publications, including in government papers²⁴, the press²⁵, and scientific journals²⁶.

Committees are a key user of POST publications. The committees are formed of cross-party groups of members and are tasked with checking and reporting on specific government departments or broad areas. They enable more effective scrutiny of the government.²⁷ The committees run inquiries on specific topics, typically leading to the publication of a report to the government containing recommendations and conclusions. The government is required to respond to these reports.

Committees primarily use POST briefings in their reports by drawing on the key facts and figures contained therein as part of the evidence presented in support of conclusions and recommendations; POST research helps to build their case.²⁸ However, committees also use POST briefings for a range of other purposes such as to help decide which topics to run committee inquiries on,²⁹ to define key terms in inquiries,³⁰ to

²⁰ For example: UK Parliament, *Mental Health Bill Volume 842: debated on Monday 20 January 2025*, 2025.

²¹ For example: House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee, *AI and creative technology scaleups: less talk, more action*, London, 2025.

²² For example: House of Commons Library, *UK steel industry: statistics and policy*, London, 2025.

²³ For example: UK Parliament, *Generative Artificial Intelligence: Schools Volume 770: debated on Tuesday 8 July 2025*, London, 2025.

²⁴ For example: UK Government, *AI 2030 Scenarios Report*, London, 2024.

²⁵ For example: THE EXPRESS, "Reckless" Keir Starmer "bending the knee" to China in huge threat to UK, London, 2025.

²⁶ For example: D. JONES, *How (not) to define "assisted dying"*, in *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2024.

²⁷ Institute for Government, *Select committees*, 2024.

²⁸ For example, House of Lords Food, Diet and Obesity Committee, *Recipe for health: a plan to fix our broken food system*, London, 2024.

²⁹ For example, House of Lords Liaison Committee, *New committee activity in 2025*, London, 2024.

³⁰ For example, House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee, *The future of news*, London 2024.

help explain complex concepts,³¹ and to refer readers to further information.³² Committees may also directly quote POST in their conclusions and recommendations to reinforce their case to the government.³³

5. Answering Questions on Publications

POST answers questions from customers related to its recent publications. Questions are handled in confidence and are not shared with anyone other than a defined group of parliamentary colleagues. This is a developing area of POST's service, with work underway to better record and manage questions.

Customers ask questions on various points including about the evidence gathered during the research project, technical aspects of the research, or about those who contributed to the research. Committee teams in particular ask POST questions to inform committee scrutiny activities, such as to help scope potential inquiries or identify witnesses.

However, POST does not typically answer questions that go beyond the scope of its recent publications. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, as a small team POST does not maintain the wide range of knowledge required to provide a general question answering service to customers. Secondly, the parliamentary libraries provide a confidential enquiry service designed to meet members day-to-day research needs. POST therefore refers customers to the libraries when the question goes beyond the scope of a briefing.

The exception to this is where the library itself does not have the capacity to support the member. In these cases, POST may offer the customer the opportunity to speak to an external expert as described in the following section, or to suggest a major POST research project (on the understanding of the timescales involved, and that it is subject to the prioritisation process).

6. Providing Advice on, and Access to, Experts and Expertise From Academia and the External Research Community

POST supports customers to engage with experts from academia and the external research community. This is a significant area of POST's work. In the first six months of 2025, POST supported customers over 200 times to access external expertise. This included co-producing research with external experts, running rapid expert consultations and promoting opportunities to feed into committee inquiries. Much of this work is led by POST's Knowledge Exchange Unit,³⁴ and is promoted in a weekly newsletter that is distributed during parliament's sitting periods.³⁵

A core part of this activity involves placing academics into parliament for various periods of time. Currently there are three categories of academic. Roughly 30 PhD students are appointed as POST fellows for three months each year to support the delivery of POSTnotes. PhD fellows have been a feature of POST's work

³¹ For example, *House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, Governing the marine environment*, London, 2025.

³² For example, *House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee, The future of news*, London 2024.

³³ For example, *House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny, Eleventh Report*, London, 2024.

³⁴ UK Parliament, *Celebrating two years of the Knowledge Exchange Unit in UK Parliament: our achievements, learnings and next steps*, London, 2024.

³⁵ UK Parliament, MENT, *Receiving updates on parliamentary engagement opportunities*, London, 2025.



since its inception. POST also places several PhD fellows in library and committee teams to support the delivery of their work, such as to help write briefings and to support inquiries.³⁶

POST also arranges for Parliamentary Academic Fellows to work in parliament on a range of projects.³⁷ This scheme gives university-based researchers the opportunity to participate in a project with an office in parliament. Parliamentary teams identify projects that they believe academic input is needed on. Projects might involve bringing expertise into parliamentary teams, informing parliamentary scrutiny and analysing and evaluating parliamentary practices. Projects can vary in duration and time commitment. A recent example was a project to examine the work environment for disabled members of the House of Commons.³⁸

The third category of academic is Thematic Research Lead (TRL). POST partners with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), on the delivery of the TRL scheme. TRLs are researchers that are embedded three days a week in parliament, while retaining their substantive academic post for the remaining time. The purpose of the TRL role is to facilitate and enhance the use of research evidence and expertise in both houses, by supporting knowledge exchange in relation to specific policy areas. There are currently eight TRLs covering diverse subjects, including artificial intelligence, business, climate and national security. TRLs conduct a wide range of activities from supporting parliamentary teams to respond to complex member enquiries and drafting legislation briefings, to delivering training to parliamentary staff, and building capacity in the research sector by speaking at conferences.³⁹

7. Discussion

POST, alongside the other parliamentary research teams, plays a key role in connecting parliament with research evidence to support the work of members. Its services are adapted to the specific features of the UK Parliament and the UK's wider research ecosystem.

There is significant demand from UK parliamentarians for impartial parliamentary research services. It is challenging for parliamentary research teams to meet this demand in a timely manner.⁴⁰ While the POST research prioritisation process ensures that major POST research publications are delivered to meet clear and timely parliamentary needs, the variety and volume of parliamentary activity means that it is not possible to anticipate or deliver briefing in all areas that would benefit from robust evidence evaluation. This is despite POST's horizon scanning work to identify future issues relevant to parliament.⁴¹

POST is therefore exploring how its services might be adapted to meet more demand, faster, without increasing the parliamentary resources required to deliver this work or pressures on its staff. There are several strands to this work.

³⁶ For example, *House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee, Governance of artificial intelligence (AI)*, London, 2025.

³⁷ *UK Parliament, Parliamentary Academic Fellowship Scheme*, London, 2025.

³⁸ E. KOLPINSKAYA, *Examining work environments for disabled Members of the House of Commons*, Exeter, 2024.

³⁹ *UK Parliament, Parliamentary Thematic Research Leads*, London, 2025.

⁴⁰ C. KENNY, D. C. ROSE, A. HOBBS, C. TYLER, J. BLACKSTOCK, *The Role of Research in the UK Parliament*, 1, UK Parliament, 2017.

⁴¹ *UK Parliament, Horizon Scan 2024: Emerging policy issues for the next five years*, London, 2025.

A mechanism to produce rapid and concise evidence synthesis articles co-authored with external experts is currently being developed in a joint project with the House of Commons Library. POST has previously worked with external academics to co-author articles.⁴² This project will determine whether a standardised approach can be developed that can deliver short and rapid briefings to POST's high standards, without an increase in the overall resources required for this work.

POST is also refining its approach to the questions it receives. Improved coordination with the Library will ensure that POST can focus on answering questions where it can add most value. Clearer guidelines to staff on how to answer questions will improve the quality of the service offered to parliament, and the adoption of a database to record and manage questions will improve the efficiency of the service and the sharing of knowledge amongst parliamentary teams. This work will draw extensively on the experience of the Library, which answers thousands of confidential questions from members each year.

POST is also reviewing its academic placement schemes to explore whether the impact of the academics it brings into parliament can be increased. This will consider issues such as improving the efficiency of the recruitment and security processes, while also considering whether existing academic placement schemes could be adapted to bring academics into parliament more rapidly when their experience is needed by customers.

AI may also play an increasing role in meeting demand. POST has been experimenting with various AI tools to speed its research processes and to deliver new services. For example, its 2024 Horizon Scanning project involved consultation with hundreds of experts from across the UK to identify issues that parliament may need to address in the next five years. Working with an academic from the Open University, POST used an AI tool to help process the large volume of information submitted. The use of AI allowed for a larger and more inclusive consultation than it would otherwise have been possible to deliver within the resources available.⁴³ POST is also experimenting with AI tools to speed the delivery of other aspects of its work, such as using AI to review interview notes and to produce summaries of larger briefings. All parliamentary use of AI by staff is covered by a policy framework to address data and information implications, and guidance has also been provided to Members of Parliament.⁴⁴

POST, as parliament's main link to the external research community, is also monitoring wider opportunities to collaborate with academics experimenting with AI evidence synthesis and policy making. There is increasing funding in this area, such as the Economic and Social Research Council's launch of a £11.5 million investment to "develop and administer a global evidence synthesis infrastructure to transform the evidence ecosystem" that is based on AI.⁴⁵

⁴² For example, S. NAULLS, S. BUNN, *Psychedelic-assisted therapy in the treatment of addiction*, London, 2024.

⁴³ UK Parliament, *Horizon Scan 2024: Emerging policy issues for the next five years*, London, 2025.

⁴⁴ UK Parliament, *Artificial intelligence guidance for Members*, London, 2025.

⁴⁵ UK Research and Innovation, *Transforming global evidence: AI-driven evidence synthesis for policymaking*, 2025.