Faculty of Social Science
& Public Policy

KING'S CAREERS
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THE
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Engaging with Parliament through its second chamber:
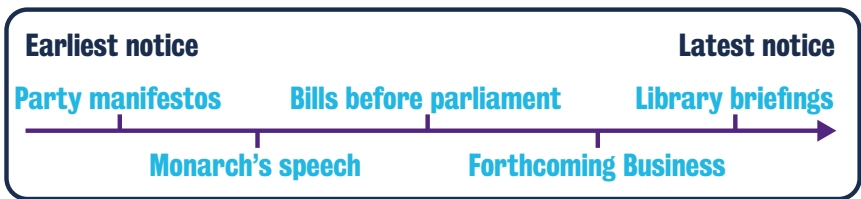the Policy Institute guide

What's on the
policy agenda?

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Research evidence needs to be relevant and timely to achieve policy engagement and impact. Research and policymaking often operate on very different timescales, and it is not always straightforward to anticipate when the opportunity might arise to contribute evidence. In some instances, though, priority research topics can be identified ahead of time and the potential for policy impact in research plans embedded from the start. It is not about fundamentally changing the research but understanding how it overlaps with policy priorities and how knowledge might be framed to have an impact on policy.

Identifying priority topics ahead of time

To ensure research has real-world impact and is well placed to inform and drive societal change, it is important for researchers to be aware of the current and forthcoming political and policy context, including the ability to identify future demand. This can help with planning how your research fits within wider political and societal developments and thinking longer-term about the trajectory of your research. Below are some steps we can take to ensure we are well-placed to inform policymakers with evidence readily available and relevant to parliamentary priorities.

Figure 2 Events to be aware of when sharing research

Earliest notice — Party manifestos — Monarch's speech — Bills before parliament — Forthcoming Business — Library briefings — Latest notice

Identifying longer-term parliamentary priorities

What are political party manifestos?

A manifesto is a publication issued by a political party before a General Election, outlining the policies the party intends to enact should they win. They are published during an election campaign, typically a few weeks before polling day, and are an important political tool in setting out the party's 'vision' for the coming Parliament. While parties have no formal obligation to deliver the policies set out in their manifestos, it is usually considered politically advantageous to act in line with them. Making a particular commitment in a manifesto can also help the government pass legislation through the House of Lords, since the Lords will not normally vote down government legislation that was set out in the election manifesto (the 'Salisbury convention').

- ➤ **Parliament.uk** Explanation of general elections
- ➤ **The Salisbury-Addison Convention**

What is the Monarch's Speech?

A speech is read out by the reigning Monarch in the Lords Chamber at the start of the parliamentary year (known as The State Opening of Parliament). The speech is written by the government and sets out their intended legislative programme that will be pursued in the coming parliamentary session. The Monarch's Speech provides early indication of important policies and legislation that are likely to appear on the agenda and be debated in both Houses.

How to identify priority topics from the Monarch's Speech

The speech is made publicly available and can be accessed via the government's website. In addition to the speech that is read aloud in the Chamber, the associated briefing notes are also available which provides the detailed background context behind the speech. Researchers can therefore identify priority topics to focus their work on and embed a plan for parliamentary engagement to feed findings back to parliamentarians involved in these debates. In reviewing the speech, it's worth considering what commitments have been made to developing legislation and the extent to which these have been met already

- ➤ **Gov.uk** Background briefing notes to the King's Speech
- ➤ **Gov.uk** The 2024 King's Speech

Example method for examining the Monarch's Speech and identifying priority topics

- Access speech via the government website, with additional documents providing the more detailed background briefing.

- Identify commitments and actions for government including House of Lords debates following the Monarch's Speech.

- If examining the speech towards the end of a parliamentary session, you can find what actions and commitments have already been addressed and debated in the Chambers by cross-referencing each legislative item against Draft Bills and Parliamentary Bills for the prior years.

- Where commitments have been made (in the speech), but not yet actioned (ie observed by the drafting or finalising of a Bill), there may be opportunities to provide evidence and influence debate. Hansard (see below) can be used to check if there are upcoming sessions on these topics (and therefore evidence and briefing information will likely already have been sought)

Table 1 Example framework

The King's Speech, 2023			
Area	**Committment**	**Action for Government**	**Legislative action taken?**
The economy	To modernise regulation so that innovative firms can thrive in the UK. To open the door to game-changing new technologies including machine learning. To support tech companies to grow and compete more easily in the British economy, while also putting in place new protections to ensure consumer safety.	Ministers will introduce new legal frameworks to encourage innovation in technologies such as machine learning	Yes (draft Data Protection and Digital Information Bill)
Healthcare	Mental health	Ministers will publish draft legislation to reform the Mental Health Act [Draft Mental Health Act Reform Bill].	Yes (Draft Bill)

More immediate parliamentary priorities

Draft Bills and Parliamentary Bills, where you can check what has already been actioned and what remains outstanding:

- ⯈ **Parliament.uk** Draft Bills
- ⯈ **Parliament.uk** Bills currently before Parliament
- ⯈ **Hansard** Check previous debates to see what is already known

Forthcoming business

The legislative programme for the coming few weeks is managed by the Government Whips' Office in the House of Lords. Anticipated forthcoming business is available online, set out day-by-day.

- **The forthcoming business of the House of Commons and the House of Lords**, including Bills and legislation, and committee work. This provides the schedule of upcoming debates, however at short notice.
- **House of Lords business**, including Order Papers for the coming days and an archive back to 1998.
- **Government Whips' Office, House of Lords**

Library briefings

- **The House of Lords Library** Tailored and timely research and information for policymakers covering legislation, topical areas, policy and constituency issues

Tools and resources

- **Parliament.uk** Browse Bills and draft Bills before Parliament
- **Hansard** Check previous debates to see what is already known
- **House of Lords Library**
- **House of Commons Library**
- **The King's Speech 2024**