

## House of Commons Library: Statement of Services

- (1.1) The [House of Commons Library](#) is an independent research and information service. We support MPs and their staff scrutinise Government, participate in Parliamentary business and assist constituents.
- (1.2) Our expertise ranges from the complexities of casework to scientific and global trends. We equip you to use the latest statistics, legal resources and research tools. We publish our own, impartial research. And we provide access to other authoritative, third-party resources.
- (1.3) We support MPs and their staff via four routes:
1. Publishing our own politically impartial research and resources
  2. Providing access to reliable information resources from third parties
  3. Delivering training, how-to guidance and customer support
  4. Answering information requests and conducting bespoke analysis
- (1.4) This Statement outlines our fair use policy, our service limits and our service standards.

### Fair use policy

- (2.1) The Library is free at the point of use. We manage a high volume of competing demands with finite resources. As a result, our fair use policy is necessary to safeguard our ability to serve the House as a whole. We will refuse or negotiate the form, scope or deadline of a request if it:
- (2.2) Is not an appropriate use of our services. See below.
- (2.3) Could be completed by the Member's office itself with the right assistance. This includes cases where:
- The resources required to complete work are already available to the office
  - The House offers the guidance, training or support necessary to complete a task
  - The task requires standard office skills and not the expertise of our specialists

(2.4) Places disproportionate strain upon our staff or resources. This includes cases that:

- Require an inordinate amount of staff time or financial resource
- Have an unrealistic deadline or scope
- Are submitted at times of high demand when we do not have the capacity required at that moment in time

(2.5) We reserve the right to judge whether and how we respond to every request, according to this policy. Providing it is an appropriate use of our services, we aim to support every request via at least one of the four routes outlined above.

## **Limits upon and inappropriate use of our services**

(3.1) We cannot respond to certain categories of request which, taken together, we define as inappropriate use of the Library's request service.

This includes requests:

(3.2) Arising from the personal, business or commercial interests of Members or of their staff

(3.3) For personal information about another Member or individual where this is not already in the public domain

(3.4) To draft speeches, lectures, articles or books

(3.5) For help with student or school projects

(3.6) From Ministers on matters covered by their departments

(3.7) To provide standing, regular updates on a subject (although we will be happy to show you how to obtain email or Twitter alerts)

- (3.8) For verbatim translations or summaries of documents in a foreign language
- (3.9) To provide any level of assistance in election campaigns (including, but not limited to, local, devolved and Parliamentary elections)
- (3.10) That in any other way compromise the Library's reputation for accuracy and impartiality

We will provide only **limited assistance** with requests covering the following:

- (3.11) Advice relating to an individual's case when the input of a qualified professional (be it legal, medical or otherwise) is required. Under no circumstance is the Library a substitute for professional advice relating to the specific circumstances of a constituent
- (3.12) Fact-checking books, articles or lectures
- (3.13) Information about administrative arrangements or legal rights in other countries to inform an individual case or situation (e.g. to assist a constituent hoping to obtain a foreign passport)
- (3.14) Acquisition of expensive material or services likely to be of interest to only a limited number of Members. In such cases, the value for money of any such request will be considered

## Quoting our work

- (4.1) MPs often publish materials based on our work. This includes work provided via our confidential request service. We welcome this.
- (4.2) Inaccurate reporting of our work, however, damages our reputation for accuracy and impartiality.
- (4.3) We refer any questions we receive arising from an MP's office's reporting of our work to that office. This includes, for example, journalists looking for more information. We will

always offer support to MPs in resolving any misunderstanding. In the unlikely event this is not successful, we reserve the right to publish information about the basis of the work.

## **Our service standards**

(5.1) We aim to providing a reliable, impartial, high quality service. To this end, we commit to the following service standards:

### **Briefings**

(5.2) We publish briefings on key topical issues. These aim to assist Members in performing their scrutiny, representative and legislative duties.

(5.3) We commit to publishing briefings on Government Bills and the top seven balloted Private Members' Bills. Our target is to do so in good time for Second Reading. We will update our briefings to take account of developments during the Bill's progress. At minimum, we will publish an updated briefing in time for the Report Stage in the Commons, taking account of consideration of amendments during the Committee Stage.

(5.4) We also commit to publishing briefings on most non-legislative debates, providing we have enough notice of the debate and are able to obtain enough information about the purpose of the debate.

### **Requests for information and research**

(5.5) We provide a confidential request service to Members and their staff. We do not share requests or responses with anyone else. This includes other Members or their staff.

(5.6) When we receive your request we will log it and provide a unique reference number. We aim to respond to any appropriate request that has a specific deadline within that deadline, as agreed between the enquirer and our specialists.

(5.7) We usually need to know the purpose of a request, as well as the information you hope for, to assess how to support you. If the purpose of your request is not clear to us we will get in touch with you for clarification. We will not be able to start work on a request until we have obtained the necessary details. Library staff may also need to discuss with you:

(5.8) **The form of the response required**

For example, which of the four routes outlined above is adequate to support your needs

(5.9) **The scope of your request**

For example, the volume, range or depth of work required

(5.10) **The deadline provided**

This might involve agreeing a balance between the urgency of your deadline and the volume or depth of the support we provide.

## **Library loans service**

(5.11) The Library does not charge overdue fees. Where a book is overdue for an extended period we will, however, presume it lost.

(5.12) In circumstances where an item of our own stock is lost, we charge a flat rate towards a replacement copy. The charge for lost books obtained on inter-library loans is set by the originating Library.

(5.13) As part of its commitment to transparency, the House of Commons publishes information relating to Members' debts which have been outstanding for 90 days or more. This includes outstanding lost book charges. See our publications on Members' debts on the Parliament website.