

Headline approach to parliamentary questions performance recovery

Objectives

The overarching objectives of the department's PQ performance recovery approach are to:

1. Clear the backlog of overdue PQs
2. Increase the number of PQs answered on time
3. Ensure high-quality answers

Implementation

To deliver our objectives, we are progressing work across three workstreams:

1. Ensuring sufficient **capacity** to process incoming PQs

We have taken steps to make sure that the Department is resourced to process the increased number of PQs that we are receiving. Actions in this workstream include:

- Increasing staffing in Parliamentary Affairs Team
- Monitoring capacity within the team to ensure the correct resources are in place
- Appointing a PQ Recovery Project Manager to drive forward delivery of the Recovery Plan

2. Ensuring the Department has the right **capability** across the system

We continue to provide targeted PQ support to Covid-19 policy teams that have expanded at pace in order to deliver the operational priorities of the response. Given the numbers of "chaser PQs" we began to receive from Members, we agreed that a dual approach of focusing resource on clearing the backlog at the same time as increasing the number of in-date PQs answered was important. Actions in this workstream include:

- Developing a support package to help policy teams draft high-quality answers to PQs within the necessary timeframes.
- Identifying and providing proactive, targeted assistance and training to policy teams and arms'-length bodies requiring additional support.

3. Reviewing the **end-to-end process** and ensuring we have an effective process that meets business and ministerial needs, and parliamentary requirements.

Actions in this workstream include:

- Creating a multi-channeled system to enable ministers to approve PQ answers whether they are in the office or working from home on any given day
- Increasing the overall resilience of the process to accommodate home working or the need to self-isolate with updated tracking and reporting of PQs.

Maintaining progress

Progress against the plan, along with new issues and actions are under constant review by the PQ recovery team and are reported into Minister of State for Health on a weekly cycle, with the objective of returning performance to previous levels.