

Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP,
Chair of the Procedure Committee,
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

17 July 2023

Dear Karen,

I am writing from Full Fact to thank you for leading the Procedure Committee through its [inquiry on correcting the record](#) and for recommending changes that will improve the honesty and accountability in Parliament.

We were very pleased to see the Procedure Committee recommend that the Ministerial corrections process be extended to all MPs. As you will know from our oral evidence to the Committee, this is an area of change that we have long campaigned for. Over the last year almost 50,000 people have signed our [petition](#) calling for this change to make parliament more honest.

Our fact checking and corrections work over the last decade has brought us into frequent contact with MPs over issues of accuracy. There are lots of examples where MPs respond positively to correction requests by Full Fact, but most of these cannot be done officially on the record, demonstrating the inefficiencies of Parliament's systems for upholding the agreed standards of Honesty and Accountability in the Members' Code of Conduct. This can be remedied by the House of Commons adopting of the Procedure Committee's recommendations to extend the Ministerial Corrections process to all MPs.

We are also strongly supportive of the recommendations to improve the visibility of corrections on Hansard, including replacing the existing corrections code on Hansard with clearer wording that states that the link directs the reader to a correction. The recommendations to ensure corrections made during Points of Order or Written Statements are also cross-referenced, along with creating a dedicated corrections page on Parliament's website, will also enhance transparency around corrections in the House of Commons.

However, we were disappointed to see the Procedure Committee reject our call for a change in process that would better hold MPs to account when they fail to correct false or misleading claims made in the House.

In our [evidence to the Committee](#), we set out the challenges MPs have in the current system to call out bad behaviour and to hold their fellow MPs to account. The Committee responded in its report and stated that they “do not believe the introduction of new procedural mechanisms to be necessary” and that they instead encourage MPs “to take advantage of existing mechanisms available to them”.

Whilst we agree with the Committee that the House of Commons does provide numerous ways that MPs can challenge the accuracy of contributions by other MPs, we do not believe the current mechanisms are sufficient. If they were, MPs would not have to ask repeatedly, without success, for Ministers to correct their mistakes. A clear example is the [former Prime Minister](#)’s failure to correct misleading statements on employment figures at least 10 times between 2021-2022, despite being asked in numerous ways and numerous times by fellow MPs.

It is crucial that there is a better system for MPs to use to hold others to account when they fail to correct their false or misleading claims. Current systems are ad-hoc, disjointed and not well-known enough by MPs. In 2021, the [Committee on Standards’ inquiry on the Members Code of Conduct](#) recommended that “the House service develop in-depth training on standards to be delivered to all Members within six months of a general election and for new Members within six months of their election”, highlighting the need for MPs to be better educated on how to uphold standards in Parliament.

Full Fact is calling on the Procedure Committee to hold a future inquiry on how MPs can further the recommendations made and to propose new measures that would allow MPs to better challenge dishonest behaviour and hold MPs to account. At a time when a lack of faith in politicians and politics remains a key concern for the public (as seen in unprompted responses in the [Ipsos Issues Index](#)), this could not be more important.

Full Fact has sent a [parliamentary briefing](#) to all MPs, and our supporters are getting in contact with their MPs to ask them to support the Committee’s recommendations and to go further on holding their fellow MPs to account on false or misleading claims.

I’d be very happy to discuss this further with you or your officials, and provide further information if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Dudfield".

Andrew Dudfield, Interim Chief Executive