



House of Commons
Procedure Committee

**Written Parliamentary
Questions:
Departmental
Performance in Session
2022–23**

Second Report of Session 2023–24

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
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Procedure Committee

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Contents

Written Parliamentary Questions: Departmental Performance in Session 2022–2023	3
Timeliness of answers	3
Quality of answers	9
Conclusions and recommendations	12
Annex: Timeliness of Answers by Department (Session 2022–23)	14
Formal minutes	23
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament	24

Written Parliamentary Questions: Departmental Performance in Session 2022–2023

1. Since 2010, our Committee, along with its predecessors, has been routinely engaged in the monitoring of Government responses to Written Parliamentary Questions (WPQs). This has, in the past, taken the form of quality monitoring work, offering Members of Parliament an avenue to challenge unsatisfactory answers, in addition to monitoring departmental performance on the timeliness of answering WPQs based on termly statistics provided to us by the House of Commons Table Office. As our predecessor Committee set out in the 2005–10 Parliament, the purpose of the monitoring work up to that point had been to:

[...] uphold [the] system of WPQs and reiterate the responsibilities of those involved in it [...]. Not only will this allow us to gauge the extent of any problem, it will also send a clear signal to Government that apparently inadequate answers to questions will not go uninvestigated. [...] We are determined to ensure that the WPQs system is treated with due respect by Government departments and that the questions asked by the public's elected representatives receive the answers they deserve.¹

Timeliness of answers

2. In our report on performance in the 2021–22 Session, we noted that the number of parliamentary questions tabled² by Members of Parliament for written answer had stabilised at around 330 each sitting day for the previous two sessions—a level not witnessed since routine monitoring by our predecessor Committee began in the 2010–12 Session.³ We note in the Session under examination in this report that a record high in the number of WPQs have been tabled per sitting day, up by 4% on the previous Session.

1 Procedure Committee, Third Report of Session 2008–09, [Written Parliamentary Questions](#), HC 859, paras 103–104

2 Questions accepted by the House of Commons Table Office

3 See Table 1

Table 1: Number of questions tabled to all answering bodies per sitting day, Session 2010–12 to 2022–23

Session	Number of sitting days	WPQs per sitting day
2010–12	295	333
2012–13	145	299
2013–2014	162	150
2014–2015	134	226
2015–2016	158	237
2016–2017	142	249
2017–2019	349	282
2019	15	231
2017–19 + 2019	364	279
2019–21	209	331
2021–22	149	334
2022–23	213	346

Source: 2010–12 to 2014–15: memorandum from the Leader of the House of Commons, November 2015; 2015–16 to 2023: Q&A system

3. It is clear that Members of Parliament regard WPQs as a core mechanism for scrutinising the work of the Government, and we anticipate that the WPQ system will continue to be increasingly utilised in sessions to come. It is therefore disappointing to note that the proportion of WPQs answered on time across Government remains below the established pre-pandemic benchmarks. As in previous years, we have scrutinised departments against the cross-Whitehall performance standard of 85% for timely provision of written answers, where responses are deemed ‘on time’ for Ordinary Questions if they are provided within five working days of being tabled, and deemed ‘on time’ for Named Day questions if answers are provided by the specified date.

4. Whilst overall answering performance improved in the 2022–23 Session, with both Ordinary and Named Day Questions showing a 3% increase in timely responses and the response rate for Ordinary Questions surpassing the 85% cross-Whitehall performance standard, this represented a slower rate of progress compared to the preceding session. In the 2021–22 Session, the rates of timeliness in written answers across Government had improved by 6% for Ordinary Questions and 5% for Named Day Questions compared to the 2019–21 Session.⁴ Had performance continued to improve at the same rate as the 2021–22 Session, it would have matched the responsiveness levels last seen in the 2015–16 and 2016–17 Sessions. We reiterate our stance that the House should not accept a permanent reduction in ministerial accountability via WPQs, and we expect to see significant improvements in performance across Government over the current Session to reach—and in due course exceed—the 2015–16 and 2016–17 levels.⁵

4 See Table 2

5 Procedure Committee, Second Report of Session 2022–23, [Written Parliamentary Questions: Departmental performance in Session 2021–22](#), HC 385, para 3

Table 2: Overall rates of timeliness in written answers from Government departments, Sessions 2010–12 to 2022–23

Session	Ordinary written	Named Day
2010–12	69%	69%
2012–13	76%	73%
2013–14	85%	78%
2014–15	87%	81%
2015–16	92%	86%
2016–17	92%	87%
2017–19	92%	89%
2019	91%	85%
2019–21	79%	74%
2021–22	85%	79%
2022–23	88%	82%

Source: 2010–12 to 2014–15: memorandum from the Leader of the House of Commons, November 2015; 2015–16 to 2023: Q&A system

5. While we note the improvement in performance compared to the previous two sessions, the figures contained in the table above represent an average across all departments. In our last report, we identified six individual departments whose answering performance fell below an acceptable standard during the first half of the 2021–22 Session.⁶ We kept a close eye on the performance of these departments throughout that Session. In September 2023, given the length of the 2022–23 Session, we conducted a detailed analysis of departmental answering performance based on interim data for the period up to the end of March 2023, and subsequently followed up with the Home Office and Department for Health and Social Care concerning their progress. Additionally, we identified three departments that had fallen short of the 85% cross-Whitehall performance standard for Ordinary and/or Named Day questions during the Session.⁷

6 Procedure Committee, Second Report of Session 2022–23, [Written Parliamentary Questions: Departmental performance in Session 2021–22](#), HC 385, Table 3

7 Table 3

Table 3: Departments in which poor performance was identified between 10 May 2022 and 30 March 2023

Department	Reason given	Action taken	% answered on time between 14 April and 26 October 2023
Home Office* <i>Similar level of performance to 21–22 Session</i>	"volumes and consequently, clearance times for WPQs are highly impacted during times of crisis like that most recently of Ukraine and Afghanistan" ⁸	Streamlining and strengthening of the process	Ordinary: 94% Named Day: 94%
Department for Health and Social Care* <i>Insufficient and inconsistent progress</i>	No reason offered ⁹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Upgraded WPQ management system 2. Taking forward recommendations of Government Internal Agency on strengthening senior governance of WPQs 3. 'Surge plan' to build resilience within Department's central PQ team 4. Promoting transparency and accountability through publishing league tables of WPQ performance and discussing performance monthly at executive level 	Ordinary: 85% Named Day: 68%
Attorney General Office <i>Reduction in performance</i>	Unusually high turnover of staff ¹⁰	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Back to full capacity after several recruitment rounds 2. Created new data tracker 3. Implementing office-wide training sessions 	Ordinary: 83% Named Day: 87%
Department for Education <i>Reduction in performance</i>	Reshuffles in 2022 and increases in WPQs ¹¹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewing performance on a weekly basis 2. Supportive of WPQ team's additional training activities 3. Regular conversations with other Government departments on best practice 	Ordinary: 79% Named Day: 68%
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs <i>Reduction in performance</i>	Performance and operational issues ¹²	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allocating appropriate resources to respond to WPQs 2. Streamlining processes to ensure timelier turnarounds 3. Build capacity across Department 	Ordinary: 83% Named Day: 75%

* Departments in which poor performance had been previously identified in 2021–22 Session

8 [Secretary of State for the Home Office to the Chair of the Committee, 1 November 2023](#)

9 [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to the Chair of the Committee, 30 October 2023](#)

10 [Attorney General to the Chair of the Committee, 16 October 2023](#)

11 [Secretary of State for Education to the Chair of the Committee, 24 October 2023](#)

12 [Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the Chair of the Committee, 25 October 2023](#)

6. Of all the departments identified, the Home Office was the only department that performed above the 85% cross-Whitehall performance standard for both Named Day and Ordinary Questions in the most recent data period up to the end of the Session,¹³ and it was also the only department that consistently improved its performance over each successive period.¹⁴ All four other departments identified demonstrated inconsistent performance during the Session, indicating a worrying trend. At its lowest point in the Session—the period ending 20 December 2022—the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs answered just 38% of Ordinary Questions and 46% of Named Day questions on time, down by 24% and 13% respectively on the preceding period.¹⁵ Additionally, the Attorney General’s Office answering performance for Ordinary questions dropped at the start of 2023, down from 71% in the period ending 20 December 2022, to 57% in the period ending 30 March 2023.¹⁶ The Department for Education’s performance had generally improved over the Session,¹⁷ however its performance declined significantly in the period ending 26 October 2023, down by 12% for Ordinary Questions and 4% for Named Day questions on the preceding period.¹⁸ It is worrying that such dips in performance across a single session can occur, and departments should ensure their focus is on maintaining consistently high levels of responsiveness throughout as well as on average across the entire Session. It is further disappointing that, despite our pressure on departments to improve their performance, some have apparently failed to put in place sufficient measures to minimise delays in providing responses to questions tabled.¹⁹

7. Ministers and their departments should regard timely responses to Written Parliamentary Questions as a crucial means for maintaining transparency and ministerial accountability to Parliament. We expect all departments—particularly those we have identified as having issues in the 2022–23 Session—to demonstrate a sincere commitment to improving their answering performance and meet the cross-Whitehall performance standards. Should departments fail to live up to this expectation, we and our successors will continue to hold them to account for their failure to show proper regard for the importance of transparency and accountability to Parliament via Written Parliamentary Questions.

8. Regrettably, this marks the third consecutive Session in the present Parliament where the Department for Health and Social Care has been highlighted in our report for its poor performance in responding to WPQs. Since 2019, we have written to the Department five times regarding its answering performance and extended several invitations to successive Secretaries of State to provide evidence.²⁰ In the response we received, the then Secretary of State did not provide any explanation for the significant overall decline in the Department’s performance during the relevant period.²¹ Data shows that in the period from 14 April to 26 October 2023, the Department for Health and Social Care’s performance averaged 85% for Ordinary Questions and 68% for Named Day Questions,²² but dipped as low as 63% for Ordinary Questions and 41% for Named Day Questions

13 See Table 3

14 [Chair to the Secretary of State for the Home Office, 25 September 2023](#); Table 3

15 [Chair of the Committee to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 25 September 2024](#)

16 [Chair of the Committee to the Attorney General, 25 September 2023](#)

17 [Chair of the Committee to the Secretary of State for Education, 25 September 2023](#)

18 See Table 3

19 See, for example, [Correspondence from Sarah Olney MP to the Chair of the Committee, 21 March 2024](#).

20 All correspondence is published on the Committee’s website.

21 [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to the Chair of the Committee, 30 October 2023](#)

22 Table 3

during some months.²³ Whilst the then Secretary of State acknowledged the need for further action to bring his department's Named Day performance up to an acceptable standard,²⁴ it is evident that there is still some way to go before the Department for Health and Social Care consistently meets the cross-Whitehall performance benchmark for both Named Day and Ordinary Questions.

9. While we note that it is neither alone, nor the worst performing department, across the 2022–23 Session, it is disappointing that the Department for Health and Social Care remains unable to meet the expected cross-Whitehall performance standard for Written Parliamentary Questions despite the repeated interventions by this Committee.

10. We recommend that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care write to us within 28 days of publishing this report, setting out in detail her long-term plans to address the chronic challenges regarding the department's answering performance to Written Parliamentary Questions to ensure sufficient and consistent responses across the entirety of the current Session and beyond into the next Parliament.

11. We recommend that our successor Committee in the next Parliament closely monitor the performance of the Department for Health and Social Care over the course of this Session when they come to perform their analysis, and, if performance issues persist, for the relevant Secretary of State to come before the Committee to explain the steps they are taking to address these issues.

12. Of the responses received to our letters to departments highlighting areas where performance was falling below the require standard, the most commonly cited reason for poor WPQ answering performance was operational issues, specifically staff shortages and ministerial reshuffles in the second half of 2022.²⁵ We accept that the Session has been exceptional in recent years in the number of ministerial reshuffles, which can be disruptive to routine business. However, ministerial churn is not a sufficient excuse for poor departmental performance in WPQ response times. While ultimately it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State to ensure the smooth running of departmental operations, including the timely handling of WPQs, support should be provided centrally, through the Cabinet Office if necessary, to help resolve process issues during transitional periods between ministers at times of reshuffles.

13. We are also concerned by the answering performance of several departments following the February 2023 Machinery of Government (MoG) changes. Two newly established departments—the Department for Business and Trade and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology—failed to meet the cross-Whitehall performance standard on average throughout their existence during the latter part of the Session. On the other hand, both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero performed well in the Session, despite also being affected by MoG changes.

23 [Chair of the Committee to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care](#), 25 September 2023

24 [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to the Chair of the Committee](#), 30 October 2023

25 Table 3

Table 4: Performance of newly formed departments in the 2023 MoG changes

Department	Date formed	Performance average across the Session
Department of Business and Trade	31 January 2023	Ordinary: 84% Named Day: 63%
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology	31 January 2023	Ordinary: 79% Named Day: 66%
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	3 February 2023	Ordinary: 95% Named Day: 91%
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero	30 January 2023	Ordinary: 98% Named Day: 95%

14. As shown by the commendable performances of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, unsatisfactory answering performance is not an inevitable outcome for newly established departments, or those departments affected by Machinery of Government changes. It is important that new departments are equipped with adequate resourcing and training from the point of their establishment to ensure a high level of WPQ answering performance from day one.

15. *As the department with policy oversight of Machinery of Government changes, we recommend that the Cabinet Office put in place processes and procedures to ensure that mechanisms for Ministerial accountability to Parliament via Written Parliamentary Questions are swiftly established and prioritised in the process of forming new departments, or in those departments affected by Machinery of Government changes.*

Quality of answers

16. Following several complaints from Members in the 2019–21 Session regarding the content and quality of responses to WPQs, we wrote to the then Leader of the House with recommendations for improvements to the Cabinet Office’s Guide to Parliamentary Work.²⁶ Our recommendations for areas for improvement were as follows:

Recommendations for changes to the Guide to Parliamentary Work

1. Clearer statement of the principle of ministerial accountability to Parliament
2. Improved explanation of the interaction between the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and parliamentary accountability
3. Improved guidance to officials when reference to published material is appropriate
4. Clarification of the extent of ministerial responsibility for the work of arm’s-length bodies
5. Greater detail on the procedural rules relating to written questions

17. In our last report, we noted that no changes had been made to the guidance over the six months since the then Leader of the House had accepted our recommendations.²⁷ We are pleased to report that, despite the initial delay, our recommendations for changes to the Guide to Parliamentary Work have now been incorporated into the Cabinet Office’s revised edition, published in November 2022.²⁸

18. However, concerns remain that, despite improvements to the guidance, the quality of some answers to WPQs continue to fall short of the standard we would expect, and that in some instances, there is an impression that timeliness appears to be being prioritised over quality of response. During the 2022–23 Session, the Chamber saw at least eight separate points of order relating to the quality of the content of WPQs, five of which were raised after the publication of the updated Guide to Parliamentary Work incorporating the changes we recommended.²⁹ Additionally, we have received examples of written answers which Members feel have not been satisfactory in content.³⁰ Interestingly, several departments that were flagged in the Chamber and directly with us for having provided inadequate WPQ responses have in fact maintained a satisfactory timeliness rate throughout the Session, namely the Ministry of Justice, the Cabinet Office, and HM Treasury.³¹ While we note that Members are encouraged to bring concerns regarding the quality of responses to the attention of the Table Office as an initial step,³² this is also something which we are keen to monitor on an ongoing basis in order to identify and examine any underlying issues or emerging patterns.

19. Equal weight should be placed on prioritising high-quality answers to Written Parliamentary Questions as to providing answers on time. Given that it is Ministers that are ultimately accountable to Parliament, it is incumbent upon them to embed a culture of transparency and cooperation with Parliament within their departments, setting a tone that underscores the importance of providing detailed—as well as timely—answers to Written Parliamentary Questions from Members of Parliament.

20. We will continue to monitor the implementation of the updated guidance and engage with departments bilaterally where it is found that the guidance is not being followed effectively.

21. We propose that our successor Committee in the new Parliament investigate the quality of answers to Written Parliamentary Questions in more detail, including investigating the 2023–24 Session as the first Session with the new guidance in place for the entirety. Members should be encouraged to provide examples of alleged poor-quality responses and identify areas for improvement to the Committee, so that it can identify and examine any underlying issues or emerging patterns swiftly.

27 Procedure Committee, Second Report of Session 2022–23, [Written Parliamentary Questions: Departmental performance in Session 2021–22](#), HC 385, para 5

28 Cabinet Office, [Guide to Parliamentary Work](#), 14 November 2022, p 52–58

29 HC Deb, 8 June 2022, [col 820](#) [Commons Chamber]; HC Deb, 18 July 2022, [col 725](#) [Commons Chamber]; HC Deb, 9 November 2022, [col 295](#) [Commons Chamber]; HC Deb, 9 February 2023, [col 1050](#) [Commons Chamber]; HC Deb, 6 March 2023, [col 71](#) [Commons Chamber]; HC Deb, 26 April 2023, [col 753](#) [Commons Chamber]; HC Deb, 9 May 2023, [col 236](#) [Commons Chamber]; HC Deb, 15 June 2023, [col 473](#) [Commons Chamber]

30 [Sir Christopher Chope to the Chair of the Committee](#), 14 April 2024

31 See Annex

32 [MP’s Guide to Procedure](#), p 66

Conclusions and recommendations

Timeliness of answers

1. Ministers and their departments should regard timely responses to Written Parliamentary Questions as a crucial means for maintaining transparency and ministerial accountability to Parliament. We expect all departments—particularly those we have identified as having issues in the 2022–23 Session—to demonstrate a sincere commitment to improving their answering performance and meet the cross-Whitehall performance standards. Should departments fail to live up to this expectation, we and our successors will continue to hold them to account for their failure to show proper regard for the importance of transparency and accountability to Parliament via Written Parliamentary Questions. (Paragraph 7)
2. While we note that it is neither alone, nor the worst performing department, across the 2022–23 Session, it is disappointing that the Department for Health and Social Care remains unable to meet the expected cross-Whitehall performance standard for Written Parliamentary Questions despite the repeated interventions by this Committee. (Paragraph 9)
3. *We recommend that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care write to us within 28 days of publishing this report, setting out in detail her long-term plans to address the chronic challenges regarding the department’s answering performance to Written Parliamentary Questions to ensure sufficient and consistent responses across the entirety of the current Session and beyond into the next Parliament.* (Paragraph 10)
4. *We recommend that our successor Committee in the next Parliament closely monitor the performance of the Department for Health and Social Care over the course of this Session when they come to perform their analysis, and, if performance issues persist, for the relevant Secretary of State to come before the Committee to explain the steps they are taking to address these issues.* (Paragraph 11)
5. As shown by the commendable performances of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, unsatisfactory answering performance is not an inevitable outcome for newly established departments, or those departments affected by Machinery of Government changes. It is important that new departments are equipped with adequate resourcing and training from the point of their establishment to ensure a high level of WPQ answering performance from day one. (Paragraph 14)
6. *As the department with policy oversight of Machinery of Government changes, we recommend that the Cabinet Office put in place processes and procedures to ensure that mechanisms for Ministerial accountability to Parliament via Written Parliamentary Questions are swiftly established and prioritised in the process of forming new departments, or in those departments affected by Machinery of Government changes.* (Paragraph 15)

Quality of answers

7. Equal weight should be placed on prioritising high-quality answers to Written Parliamentary Questions as to providing answers on time. Given that it is Ministers that are ultimately accountable to Parliament, it is incumbent upon them to embed a culture of transparency and cooperation with Parliament within their departments, setting a tone that underscores the importance of providing detailed—as well as timely—answers to Written Parliamentary Questions from Members of Parliament. (Paragraph 19)
8. We will continue to monitor the implementation of the updated guidance and engage with departments bilaterally where it is found that the guidance is not being followed effectively. (Paragraph 20)
9. *We propose that our successor Committee in the new Parliament investigate the quality of answers to Written Parliamentary Questions in more detail, including investigating the 2023–24 Session as the first Session with the new guidance in place for the entirety. Members should be encouraged to provide examples of alleged poor-quality responses and identify areas for improvement to the Committee, so that it can identify and examine any underlying issues or emerging patterns swiftly.* (Paragraph 21)

Annex: Timeliness of Answers by Department (Session 2022–23)

Table 5: Departments listed alphabetically

Department	Ordinary written			Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Attorney General Office	227	164	72%	100	81	81%	
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	2344	1921	82%	1704	1284	75%	Department dissolved 1 Feb
Business and Trade	321	269	84%	251	158	63%	Department created on 31 Jan 2024
Cabinet Office	1099	988	90%	732	648	89%	
COP26	34	32	94%	16	15	94%	Department dissolved—last response on 27 Oct 2022
Culture, Media and Sport	533	505	95%	306	277	91%	Department created 3 Feb 2023
Defence	3233	3034	94%	2103	1831	87%	
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	792	696	88%	376	343	91%	Department dissolved 3 Feb 2023
Education	4152	3351	81%	1532	1079	70%	
Energy Security and Net Zero	1227	1201	98%	731	696	95%	Department created 30 Jan 2023
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	3028	2089	69%	1218	773	63%	
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	3831	3225	84%	1930	1561	81%	
Government Equalities Office	202	178	88%	219	172	79%	
Health and Social Care	8912	6772	76%	4757	2697	57%	
Home Office	3949	3480	88%	2905	2345	81%	

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
International Trade	352	192	55%	192	73	38%	Department dissolved 6 Feb 2023
Justice	1453	1366	94%	1098	994	91%	
Leader of the House of Commons	40	37	93%	38	38	100%	
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	2499	2285	91%	1457	1320	91%	
Northern Ireland Office	210	203	97%	112	103	92%	
Prime Minister	28	27	96%	42	41	98%	
Science, Innovation and Technology	473	372	79%	274	181	66%	Department created 31 Jan 2023
Scotland Office	88	87	99%	66	66	100%	
Treasury	2263	2230	99%	1450	1389	96%	
Transport	2865	2865	100%	1645	1640	99%	
Wales Office	80	80	100%	97	60	62%	
Work and Pensions	2342	2185	93%	1730	1573	91%	

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by the House of Commons Table Office

Table 6: Departments ranked by the number of questions for ordinary written answer received

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Health and Social Care	8912	6772	76%	4757	2367	57%	
Education	4152	3351	81%	1532	1079	70%	
Home Office	3949	3480	88%	2905	2345	81%	
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	3831	3225	84%	1930	1561	81%	
Defence	3233	3034	94%	2103	1831	87%	
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	3028	2089	69%	1218	773	63%	

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day			
Transport	2865	2865	100%	1645	1640	99%	
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	2499	2285	91%	1457	1320	91%	
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	2344	1921	82%	1704	1284	75%	Department dissolved 1 Feb
Work and Pensions	2342	2185	93%	1730	1573	91%	
Treasury	2263	2230	99%	1450	1389	96%	
Justice	1453	1366	94%	1098	994	91%	
Energy Security and Net Zero	1227	1201	98%	731	696	95%	Department created 30 Jan 2023
Cabinet Office	1099	988	90%	732	648	89%	
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	792	696	88%	376	343	91%	Department dissolved 3 Feb 2023
Culture, Media and Sport	533	505	95%	306	277	91%	Department created 3 Feb 2023
Science, Innovation and Technology	473	372	79%	274	181	66%	Department created 31 Jan 2023
International Trade	352	192	55%	192	73	38%	Department dissolved 6 Feb 2023
Business and Trade	321	269	84%	251	158	63%	Department created on 31 Jan 2024
Attorney General Office	227	164	72%	100	81	81%	
Northern Ireland Office	210	203	97%	112	103	92%	
Government Equalities Office	202	178	88%	219	172	79%	
Scotland Office	88	87	99%	66	66	100%	
Wales Office	80	80	100%	97	60	62%	
Leader of the House of Commons	40	37	93%	38	38	100%	

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
COP26	34	32	94%	16	15	94%	Department dissolved—last response on 27 Oct 2022
Prime Minister	28	27	96%	42	41	98%	

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by the House of Commons Table Office

Table 7: Departments ranked by proportion of questions for ordinary written answer receiving substantive response within five working days

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Transport	2865	2865	100%	1645	1640	99%	
Wales Office	80	80	100%	97	60	62%	
Scotland Office	88	87	99%	66	66	100%	
Treasury	2263	2230	99%	1450	1389	96%	
Energy Security and Net Zero	1227	1201	98%	731	696	95%	Department created 30 Jan 2023
Northern Ireland Office	210	203	97%	112	103	92%	
Prime Minister	28	27	96%	42	41	98%	
Culture, Media and Sport	533	505	95%	306	277	91%	Department created 3 Feb 2023
COP26	34	32	94%	16	15	94%	Department dissolved—last response on 27 Oct 2022
Justice	1453	1366	94%	1098	994	91%	
Defence	3233	3034	94%	2103	1831	87%	
Work and Pensions	2342	2185	93%	1730	1573	91%	
Leader of the House of Commons	40	37	93%	38	38	100%	
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	2499	2285	91%	1457	1320	91%	

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Cabinet Office	1099	988	90%	732	648	89%	
Home Office	3949	3480	88%	2905	2345	81%	
Government Equalities Office	202	178	88%	219	172	79%	
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	792	696	88%	376	343	91%	Department dissolved 3 Feb 2023
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	3831	3225	84%	1930	1561	81%	
Business and Trade	321	269	84%	251	158	63%	Department created on 31 Jan 2024
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	2344	1921	82%	1704	1284	75%	Department dissolved 1 Feb
Education	4152	3351	81%	1532	1079	70%	
Science, Innovation and Technology	473	372	79%	274	181	66%	Department created 31 Jan 2023
Health and Social Care	8912	6772	76%	4757	2697	57%	
Attorney General Office	227	164	72%	100	81	81%	
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	3028	2089	69%	1218	773	63%	
International Trade	352	192	55%	192	73	38%	Department dissolved 6 Feb 2023

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by the House of Commons Table Office

Table 8: Departments ranked by number of questions for written answer on a named day received

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Health and Social Care	8912	6772	76%	4757	2367	57%	

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Home Office	3949	3480	88%	2905	2345	81%	
Defence	3233	3034	94%	2103	1831	87%	
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	3831	3225	84%	1930	1561	81%	
Work and Pensions	2342	2185	93%	1730	1573	91%	
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	2344	1921	82%	1704	1284	75%	Department dissolved 1 Feb
Transport	2865	2865	100%	1645	1640	99%	
Education	4152	3351	81%	1532	1079	70%	
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	2499	2285	91%	1457	1320	91%	
Treasury	2263	2230	99%	1450	1389	96%	
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	3028	2089	69%	1218	773	63%	
Justice	1453	1366	94%	1098	994	91%	
Cabinet Office	1099	988	90%	732	648	89%	
Energy Security and Net Zero	1227	1201	98%	731	696	95%	Department created 30 Jan 2023
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	792	696	88%	376	343	91%	Department dissolved 3 Feb 2023
Culture, Media and Sport	533	505	95%	306	277	91%	Department created 3 Feb 2023
Science, Innovation and Technology	473	372	79%	274	181	66%	Department created 31 Jan 2023
Business and Trade	321	269	84%	251	158	63%	Department created on 31 Jan 2024
Government Equalities Office	202	178	88%	219	172	79%	
International Trade	352	192	55%	192	73	38%	Department dissolved 6 Feb 2023

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Northern Ireland Office	210	203	97%	112	103	92%	
Attorney General Office	227	164	72%	100	81	81%	
Wales Office	80	80	100%	97	60	62%	
Scotland Office	88	87	99%	66	66	100%	
Prime Minister	28	27	96%	42	41	98%	
Leader of the House of Commons	40	37	93%	38	38	100%	
COP26	34	32	94%	16	15	94%	Department dissolved—last response on 27 Oct 2022

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by the House of Commons Table Office

Table 9: Departments ranked by proportion of questions for written answer on a named day answered on the day named

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Scotland Office	88	87	99%	66	66	100%	
Leader of the House of Commons	40	37	93%	38	38	100%	
Transport	2865	2865	100%	1645	1640	99%	
Treasury	2263	2230	99%	1450	1389	96%	
Energy Security and Net Zero	1227	1201	98%	731	696	95%	Department created 30 Jan 2023
COP26	34	32	94%	16	15	94%	Department dissolved—last response on 27 Oct 2022
Northern Ireland Office	210	203	97%	112	103	92%	
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	792	696	88%	376	343	91%	Department dissolved 3 Feb 2023

Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Work and Pensions	2342	2185	93%	1730	1573	91%	
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	2499	2285	91%	1457	1320	91%	
Justice	1453	1366	94%	1098	994	91%	
Culture, Media and Sport	533	505	95%	306	277	91%	Department created 3 Feb 2023
Cabinet Office	1099	988	90%	732	648	89%	
Defence	3233	3034	94%	2103	1831	87%	
Attorney General Office	227	164	72%	100	81	81%	
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	3831	3225	84%	1930	1561	81%	
Home Office	3949	3480	88%	2905	2345	81%	
Government Equalities Office	202	178	88%	219	172	79%	
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	2344	1921	82%	1704	1284	75%	Department dissolved 1 Feb
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Ordinary written				Named day			Notes
	Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered substantively within 5 working days		Questions tabled for answer	Number (%) answered on named day		
Wales Office	80	80	100%	97	60	62%	
Health and Social Care	8912	6772	76%	4757	2367	57%	
International Trade	352	192	55%	192	73	38%	Department dissolved 6 Feb 2023

Source: data from the Q&A system provided by the House of Commons Table Office

Formal minutes

Wednesday 8 May

Members present:

Dame Karen Bradley, in the Chair

Nickie Aiken

Kirsty Blackman

Sir Christopher Chope

Patrick Grady

Andrew Western

Written Parliamentary Questions: Departmental Performance in Session 2022–23

Draft Report (*Written Parliamentary Questions: Departmental Performance in Session 2022–23*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 21 read and agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Monday 13 May at 4 pm

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2023–24

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	Commons scrutiny of Secretaries of State in the House of Lords	HC 338
1st Special Report	Commons scrutiny of Secretaries of State in the House of Lords: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 672

Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	Proxy voting and the presence of babies in the Chamber and Westminster Hall	HC 383
2nd Report	Written parliamentary questions: Departmental performance in Session 2021–22	HC 385
3rd Report	Proxy voting: Review of illness and injury pilot	HC 807
4th Report	Correcting the record	HC 521
1st Special Report	Proxy voting and the presence of babies in the Chamber and Westminster Hall: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 691
2nd Special Report	Written parliamentary questions: Departmental performance in Session 2021–22: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 806
3rd Special Report	Proxy voting: Review of illness and injury pilot: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1325

Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	Written parliamentary questions: Departmental performance in Session 2019–21	HC 532

Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: proposals for remote participation - First Report of Session 2019–21	HC 300
2nd Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: remote voting in divisions	HC 335
3rd Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: the Government's proposal to discontinue remote participation	HC 392
4th Report	Proxy voting: review of pilot arrangements	HC 10
5th Report	Written Parliamentary questions: Departmental performance in the 2017 Parliament	HC 790
6th Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: virtual participation in debate	HC 905
7th Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: call lists and time limits on speeches in debates	HC 1031
8th Report	Back to the future? Procedure after coronavirus restrictions	HC 1282
1st Special Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: the Government's proposal for proxy voting for shielding Members	HC 429
2nd Special Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: Government Responses to the Committee's First, Second and Third Reports	HC 565
3rd Special Report	Proxy voting: review of pilot arrangements: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 836
4th Special Report	Procedure under coronavirus restrictions: Government Responses to the Committee's Sixth and Seventh Reports	HC 1165
5th Special Report	Back to the future? Procedure after coronavirus restrictions: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report	HC 1389