



## Procedure Committee

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From Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Chair

Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP  
Leader of the House of Commons

8 June 2021

Dear Jacob

You will recall that in October 2010, the Committee commenced its monitoring role in respect of the answers received to written parliamentary questions. Since then, the Committee has published figures on a roughly Sessional basis. Ten years on, we are now considering the overall health of the system and our role in the process.

We noted in our first report that where a complaint was followed up, a better answer was provided, or at least an explanation of why one could not be given. This is both good and bad news so far as the Member is concerned: on the one hand they come away with more than they had before, but are doubtless left wondering why they had to ask twice.

In the previous Session, we had twelve points of order, three Speaker's Statements and one Urgent Question relating to inadequacies of timeliness or content of responses to WPQs. Mr Speaker and his Deputies have been clear and consistent in their support for Members on this matter.

Having reviewed figures for the last Session, we have concluded that a comparatively high volume of WPQs tabled is no justification for poor performance. Of the seven departments receiving an average of more than 20 WPQs per day, three exceed the target of 85% on-time answering, while another meets it. The three remaining are some way off the pace, with the DHSC being an outlier in terms of both high volume and poor performance. Both the Home Office and Department for Education have struggled with PQ performance in the past and it is troubling that their performance is once again cause for concern, especially since both have in the past been through programmes of performance improvement.

While the Minister for Health appeared before us in December to account for DHSC's performance and subsequently provided written updates on the Department's performance, this is still well below anything approaching an acceptable level, even for a Department which has been operating under

significant pressure for more than a year. We expect the Department's performance to reach an acceptable level of performance by the end of the Session.

I am copying this letter to Mr Speaker and will also publish it on the Committee's website. We intend subsequently to follow up with Ministers designated as having responsibility for WPQs across Government and, with your office, with the heads of parliamentary branches. I hope that the Committee will publish a short report and the latest data on WPQ monitoring before the House rises for the summer recess. We look forward to your next appearance on Monday 28 June and hope to discuss this further then.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP**