



**LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL  
LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
THE RT. HON. JACOB REES-MOGG M.P.**



The Rt. Hon. Karen Bradley M.P.,  
Chairman, Procedure Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

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**Government response to the Procedure Committee report: Written parliamentary questions: Departmental performance in Session 2019-21 (First Report of Session 2021-22)**

Thank you to your Committee for your first report of this session on written parliamentary questions during the 2019-2021 session.

As your report sets out, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the proportion of both ordinary and named day questions answered on time. Clearly departments were under significant pressure when replying to parliamentary questions and I completely accept the frustration of the House when questions do not receive the standard of response they expect. It is my hope that instances of these issues being raised in the House fall away as we come out of the pandemic. It is worth remembering that in order for answers to be full and helpful they often need to be drafted by those who work on that policy area and as so many questions have been on the pandemic, it is inevitable that the burden of drafting has largely fallen on the same officials responsible for implementing the policies to tackle the pandemic.

Nevertheless, as I have set out previously, it is a recognised fundamental right of Parliament that members receive full and timely responses to parliamentary questions and I have written to all members of the Cabinet on this matter, including the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary, to ask that sufficient resource is directed by individual departments toward ensuring their performance improves where it needs to. As Leader of the House, I recognise that I have a role to play in making representations to Government on behalf of the House of Commons, I do my best to ensure that the Commons' views are represented and will continue to do so.

In addition, as your Committee points out, there are formal routes we can look at to encourage strong performance across Government, including revising the Guide to Parliamentary Work; looking at real-time reporting of answering performance by departments and your Committee calling ministers in to account for their performance. The Government, therefore, endorses the conclusions from your Committee and I look forward to seeing your proposals for revisions to the Guide to Parliamentary Work at the Committee's earliest convenience.

As ever, my office and I are happy to support any further work the Committee would like to undertake in order to better assess departmental performance.

With every good wish,

Yrs sincerely,  
Janet Kenyon