The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

Public Participation in the Scottish Parliament

Contents

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

To consider public petitions addressed to the Parliament in accordance with these Rules (and any additional matter added under Rule 6.1.5A) and, in particular, to—

(a) decide in a case of dispute whether a petition is admissible;

(b) decide what action should be taken upon an admissible public petition; and

(c) keep under review the operation of the petitions system.

(d) consider and report on public policy or undertake post-legislative scrutiny through the use of deliberative democracy, Citizen's Assemblies or other forms of participative engagement.

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Interim report – Public Participation in the Scottish Parliament

Background

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee (The Committee) was set up at the start of Session 6 of the Scottish Parliament.

The Committee's remit was extended in session 6 to include citizen participation and to consider and report on public policy or undertake post-legislative scrutiny, using deliberative democracy, Citizen's Assemblies or other forms of participative engagement.

The Public Participation Inquiry

In spring 2022, we launched an inquiry into how people's voices are heard in the work of the Parliament.

We want to hear from people across Scotland, especially when we are developing new laws or policies that affect them. This is important as we know that the Scottish Parliament doesn't hear from some groups or communities.

We want to ensure that the views and opinions of everyone in Scotland are included in the work of the Scottish Parliament.

Our inquiry started with us consulting with people across Scotland. This report sets out who we heard from and what they told us.

A citizens' panel of members of the public then considered the evidence and agreed several recommendations for action. These recommendations are included in this report and the report of the Panel is set out in full in Annexe B.

We are now asking which recommendations the Scottish Parliament should prioritise first and what action we need to take.

Timeline of the Inquiry

The timeline for the inquiry is set out below. It shows the key events to May 2023, with the publication of the Committee's final report.

March – Committee agreement on inquiry approach

April – formal evidence from the Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy (IPDD) working group

May – surveys launched

June – evidence from the Scottish Government on the IPDD's report | Focus groups

July – surveys close

August – form stewarding board for deliberative event and analyse evidence

September – work on evidence presentation and translation

October – publish evidence, Committee consideration of evidence. First deliberative weekend

November - second deliberative weekend plus evening sessions.

December – Committee consideration of evidence and Citizens' Panel report, publish interim report including report of event

December 2022 to February 2023 – seek views on interim report, online, informally and in Committee meetings

February – summarise views on interim report

March/April – Committee consideration of evidence and final report

May 2023 – Final Committee report published

Source:

Who we heard from

The views shared in this report come from many different activities and represent the views of more than 460 people and organisations.

Between May and July 2022, we had an open public survey. This received 305 responses from people of all ages from across Scotland, covering 25 local authorities. Around 17 per cent of these people said they had never been involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament before.

We shared the survey in various languages and invited people to submit in the language they felt most comfortable using. We had one response in Polish, one person used Gaelic, and four responses were from British Sign Language (BSL) users.

We also had a survey that looked for more detail on increasing engagement. That had 35 responses from various organisations and individuals, including academics.

We heard from 119 people in 10 focus group sessions. People from many places and backgrounds spoke to us, including people from minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds, people with physical and learning disabilities, people from low-income backgrounds, and people living in rural and island locations. We also invited people to send us submissions by email, and four people/organisations did this.

Annexe A provides a summary of the evidence we received.

What people told us

Although people with protected characteristics are under-represented in the work of the Scottish Parliament, people said those with a low income are most likely to be under-represented.

People from disadvantaged backgrounds don't feel that engaging with the Scottish Parliament is worthwhile. People often struggle to engage in the work of the Scottish Parliament as they don't feel representatives reflect them, or their communities' needs and concerns.

Education has a vital role to play in breaking down barriers to participation in the democratic process.

Cross-party groups are integral to the involvement of minority groups and those with protected characteristics in the work of the Scottish Parliament. Cross-party groups are groups of Members of the Scottish Parliament and other people interested in a subject or issue.

The Scottish Parliament needs to do more to tell people about its engagement and participation work, as those we reach are positive about the experience.

Strengthening trust in politics and politicians is essential to successfully involve people in the work of the Scottish Parliament.

Breaking down barriers to participation will improve the diversity of participation and opinions in the work of the Scottish Parliament.

We knew that certain types of people, who are protected by the Equality Act 2010, might be less likely to speak to the Scottish Parliament – people from ethnic minorities, with disabilities, or who might be discriminated against because of their age, sex/gender, religion, or sexuality.

People also told us that many people who aren't protected might not speak to us. These included people on low incomes, who are unemployed, who live in rural areas, who didn't go to university, or who don't have English as their first language, among others.

Intersectionality

Many people said if people have more than one of these characteristics, that might mean they're less likely to speak to us, and they may be even less likely to engage. That was the same for people who might have more than one barrier to engagement.

Barriers to engagement

Barriers to engagement

People told us there are many barriers to engagement. These are mainly:

Money: People linked money and income closely to education levels, employment status, time, and age. If you have more money, you may find it easier to overcome other barriers.

Time: This is linked to money when it comes to employment types and childcare, but people also said if they were very busy, they had to feel taking part was worth their time.

Incentive: People need an incentive to take part – to feel like it's worth it. To do this they need to trust us and the process. Having more education might mean you understand your role more, but some people also thought well-off people might feel their voice is more likely to be heard.

Education: People need to understand political systems to see where they fit in and to know how to be involved. This starts at school. Many people said that they didn't know what the Parliament does for them and said that our language is intimidating. Politicians and Parliament staff need to learn more about the types of people they are engaging with.

Trust: Many people have lost trust in politics and politicians because they don't feel heard or represented. The media plays a part, but some people have engaged with us and not seen their voice impact on policy, so they have lost trust.

Fear/Intimidation: People need to feel safe taking part and not at risk of intimidation or bullying (including online). Some people aren't comfortable in a 'formal' environment.

Representation: People will trust us more if they see more people like themselves represented in our work – people from minority groups, but also people from low-income or deprived backgrounds, people from rural areas, and children/young people. We could tell people more about our work with these groups.

Resource: People thought more resource was needed to tackle all the other barriers. This means more time and money to help people to be involved and have their voices heard. This could be targeted at education, support services and the voluntary sector, and at the Parliament's engagement services, for instance, helping to cover people's costs when they participate.

Citizens' Panel Recommendations

Source:

The evidence the Committee received was shared with a panel of 19 randomly selected and broadly representative citizens considered the question:

> **How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work?**

The Citizens' Panel on Participation ("the Panel") was selected via random stratified sampling based on 159 responses to 4,800 invitations sent in August 2022.

The Panel, which was broadly representative in terms of gender, age, location, ethnicity, disability and educational attainment, worked together for over 32 hours during two weekends and three remote online sessions in October and November 2022.

The Panel process included team building; learning about the Scottish Parliament, participation and deliberative democracy; questioning witnesses; deliberation and consensus-based decision-making.

The Panel were able to hear from a wide range of evidence and were able to request evidence sessions to ensure they received as much information as possible to help them answer the question.

As a result, the Panel heard evidence from Scottish Parliament staff; MSPs; members of the public who have experienced barriers to participation; political scientists and academics; deliberative and participative democracy practitioners; journalists; and a wide range of community organisations.

By the end of the deliberative process the Panel identified four broad areas and seventeen recommendations to improve how we engage with the people of Scotland. Annexe B sets out the full report of the Citizens' Panel. The Panel's recommendations are summarised below and grouped into four areas:

- Community Engagement

- How the Parliament uses Deliberative Democracy

- Public involvement in Parliamentary business

- Communication and Education

Community Engagement

1. Remove barriers to participation so that everyone has an equal opportunity to be involved in the work of the Parliament.

Follow up on previous research by researching different methods of engagement, who they work for, and the resource that is needed to use these methods.

Apply research to use different engagement methods to reach the whole of society, including non-digital and digital approaches.

Be mindful of solutions to reach all parts of society - work together with people to identify and create appropriate engagement methods for start to finish inclusion. Innovations like citizens' panels are good but be careful for how costly they are and how they may not engage people with other responsibilities or concerns such as child caring responsibilities, those on low incomes, those who don't have flexibility around work. Have an active approach to seeking out alternative voices and ensuring opportunities to engage are as flexible and as varied as possible: when, how and where people feel comfortable.

Raise awareness that the Scottish Parliament will provide payment which addresses the cost barriers that people face when coming to the Parliament and taking part in engagement activities, such as travel expenses, lost income from time off work, childcare and additional costs related to accessibility requirements.

This could also be expanded so that experts or individuals representing already

identified protected groups or minority communities could be paid for a couple of days a month to work with different teams. Paying for engagement isn't enough to make it effective though – training and education are crucial to make community engage effectively.

Ensure access for people with English as a second language including promoting and improving use of Happy to Translate[i] . Support participation from those with learning disabilities by promoting and increasing the of Easy Read.

2. Create opportunities for people to use and share their lived experience to engage on issues that they care about.

We heard that people are effective at being experts on things and can upskill and educate themselves very quickly if they need to - COVID-19 proved that. We don't have the bandwidth to feel passionate about everything all the time – but when we do we need to have the channels there to engage.

When identifying witnesses, ensure an even balance between academic and professional experts, and people with lived experience.

Experts by experience panels can be empowered by the process because they are treated as equal and the group can bond and build empathy. Committees could also build communities of practice embedded in communities across Scotland (e.g. farmers group, disability awareness and support groups) to work with members and Parliamentary staff.

3. Raise awareness of Parliamentary business in plain and transparent language including visual media

Core principle: Use clear and direct language and visuals to communicate information about parliament, including legislation.

Undertake research into the general public's level of trust and knowledge about the everyday work of the Scottish Parliament.

How many people are actually satisfied with their dealings with their representatives compared to those who are dissatisfied? What level of understanding do the public have around the difference between Parliament and Government? If people knew that Parliament was an independent institution here to represent the people of Scotland, pass laws and hold the Government and public bodies to account, they would be more likely to engage.

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i Happy to Translate is a national initiative developed to promote equal access to services by overcoming language barriers.

4. Bring the Parliament to the people.

The Parliament should test approaches to using regional engagement/information hubs and/or a travelling exhibition or mobile unit.

The Parliament should go to where people already are and where they feel safe and have a sense of community and support; and talk to people about their issues rather than politics. We would like to see the Parliament testing the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of:

- displays in public spaces where people are informed of the topical debates affecting their community and are able to communicate their views simply. These could be in schools, libraries, art galleries, community centres, shopping centres and parks;

- Information hubs in towns across Scotland; and,

- A mobile "Parliament bus" to make the Parliament visible in small or rural communities, where the public can share views, learn, ask questions, etc.

5. Ensure that community engagement by MSPs doesn't exclude people that are outwith community groups, including by using evenings, weekends and online services.

6. Create a system such as a webpage where people can register and be notified about opportunities to engage.

The Parliament should create and advertise means for people to register their details and interests with the Parliament. MSPs and Committees would be able to contact individuals about opportunities to engage in the work of Parliament when an issue arises that individuals are interested in. This idea was inspired by the amount of issues discussed at parliament at any one time passing the public by - this solution could ensure that no one misses the chance to engage.

How the Parliament uses Deliberative Democracy

7. Legislate for Deliberative Democracy in order to ensure that:

- **diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence Scottish Parliament's work, and**

- **the public are consistently informed and consulted on local and national issues.**

In drawing up this legislation the Parliament should:

- Recognise that there is not one engagement solution that fits all situations and issues.

- Design and implement a framework based on this panel's recommendations for ensuring diverse participation in deliberative democracy.

The framework should include:

- An annually recurring citizens' panel with agenda-setting powers to determine which local and national issues require either national or local people's panels (e.g., 'deliberative town halls').

- Protection for participants to improve participation. We do not agree that participation in panels should be mandatory, but protective elements such as the right to time off work should be included for people who are selected to take part.

- Rules around how MSPs consider and respond to recommendations from people's panels such as mandatory follow-up to people's panels' recommendations no later than 9 months and a response from the Parliament and Government.

- Potential for mixed MSP–people panels.

- Ability to form local panels with local MSPs with outcomes that are sent up to the national level.

8. Build a strong evidence base for deliberative democracy to determine its effectiveness and develop a framework for measuring impact

9. Build cross-party support for deliberative democracy as this is needed for it to work

10. We recommend that one of the panels which should be set up is a specific people's panel[ii] to discuss the MSPs' code of conduct

Public involvement in Parliamentary business

11. Carry out a cost-benefit analysis of the Parliament itself or committees

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[ii] Note: we heard various different terms used to describe this form of engagement including "mini-publics" or "citizens' panels". We have settled on the term "people's panels" as we think this is engaging and easy to understand.

meeting outside of Holyrood and compare this to (a) more support and targeted invitations for people to come to Holyrood and (b) reinstating Parliament days (MSPs going out into communities for a day of activity).

12. Set a 9-month deadline as a default for feedback on the outcome of any engagement with clear reasons where this deadline would not be met (if applicable). The live status of the decision making process should be clear and transparent throughout.

Parliament could create a minimum standard of response. For example:

- initial acknowledgement of engagement;

- follow up to explain how many responses and what happens next;

- a follow up with information on the outcome of the inquiry;

- signposting with more information;

- traffic light system for inquiries flagging up what has been addressed and what hasn't; and,

- Monitoring calls logged and establishing rules as to how long someone would have to wait for a response.

This would show people that their participation is worthwhile and make people feel that their voice is being heard. Legislation and inquires can take a long time, so set expectations and from the start and consider how you will keep people involved in the longer term. If you don't do this it will fuel apathy and mistrust.

13. Give the Presiding Officer the power to compel MSPs to give an answer to all questions asked: that is, a direct reply that is relevant to the question. This should include a process for a deferred answer if an immediate answer cannot be given. This will improve public trust and engagement.

14. Schedule specific time in the debating Chamber for individual public questions to be asked.

We recognise that there would need to be a process to filter questions and ensure they were relevant and to determine who asked the questions and how.

Communication and Education

15. Use media outlets, documentaries and short films to highlight Parliament

successes and real life stories of engagement to improve public perception and trust.

We heard that the Scottish Parliament needs to do more to tell people about its engagement and participation work, as those it reaches are positive about the experience. Then it is a matter of finding the best marketing practices to reach as many people as possible.

Use people who have had positive interaction and experience with Parliament to tell their story through national and local media (TV/radio/newspaper etc.) and community groups. The public sometimes find it easier to digest information by way of another person telling them. Make sure people know about the teams of staff working on engagement as well as MSPs.

16. The Parliament should run a general information campaign explaining the role of the Scottish Parliament – a single brochure or leaflet explaining who your local MSPs are, what a call for views is and the role of the Parliamentary service and its impartiality and separateness from Government.

All age ranges may need more information on what the Parliament does and what it can do for them. We think this is something that could be done quickly.

17. The Parliament should hold an inquiry into the relationship between the aims of the current curriculum and the Parliament to explore systematic changes that can be made throughout schools and in communities to improve children and young people's knowledge and awareness of Parliament - and deliberative democracy - including through mentorships, internships and competitions.

Our vision is that by the Parliament's 25th anniversary there should be a clear plan in place so that by the Parliament's 30th anniversary, all young people of voting age have clear understanding and knowledge about engaging with Parliament and Government and all see engaging with Parliament as a normal aspect of everyday life.

Next steps

The next stage is to hear views on the recommendations of the Citizens' Panel. We are asking which recommendations the Parliament should prioritise and what action we need to take.

We are asking people to share their views on 'Your Priorities' on the Scottish Parliament website.

The Committee will also carry out further evidence taking and fact-finding through January to March 2023

At the end of the inquiry the Committee will suggest improvements that can be made,

based on what people have told us. The Committee expects to produce a final report in May 2023.

Annexe A - SPICe summary of evidence

Public Participation at the Scottish Parliament - What people told us

Background and gathering views

Between May and July 2022, the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee ("the Committee") asked people to share their views on whether the Scottish Parliament's work involves, reflects and meets the needs of the full range of communities it represents.

The Committee did this in a few different ways. It ran two different surveys. A short survey aimed to find out about the people who have or have not been involved in the Scottish Parliament's work, and their experiences. A longer survey allowed people to share their views on what can be done to improve public participation in more detail. The Committee also held 10 focus group sessions, which gave people a chance to share their view directly with politicians. These groups were chosen because they included people who might be less likely to get involved in the Parliament's work, which includes people from minority ethnic groups, people living on a low income and disabled people. The groups were facilitated by:

- AboutDementia

- Active Inquiry

- Bridge End Farm House

- TPAS

- Regional Equalities Councils

- Connecting Craigmillar Kurdish

- Learning Disability Assembly

- Connecting Craigmillar Syrian

- All Highland and Island Disability

- RNIB

The focus groups took on various formats, from facilitated small group discussions and informal chats, to using character development, role play and theatre to express feelings about the Scottish Parliament. The Committee also held some online drop-in sessions that were run at different times of day to ensure people had the opportunity to participate at times that worked for them. If they preferred, people were able to email or write to the Committee.

Summary approach

In this summary, compiled by the Scottish Parliament's research service (SPICe), we have set out the key messages, learning prompts and suggested action points that people shared with us.

This is a little different from a traditional summary of evidence, where a summary of what people answered to each question is set out. The hope is that it will better reflect the issues, challenges and solutions that people spoke about in a clear and easy to understand way, and can be used for a range of audiences, including to feed back to the people who shared their views. Views and evidence have still been attributed, but not in every instance because there were a lot of points that were made by many people.

By breaking views down into messages and actions, we hope that the summary process will feel less academic, and more democratic.

This approach also reflects the fact that this is an unusual scrutiny activity, in that it is to a great extent the Committee scrutinising the Scottish Parliament as a whole. There will undoubtedly be learning points and ideas here that will not only influence the Committee's next steps and report, but will be used by the Parliamentary service

All of the responses that people asked to be made public will be published in full, and summaries from focus groups will also be shared alongside the published evidence.

Throughout this summary, researchers' notes have been added in *italics*. The intention here is to add some context to the data provided, giving a more holistic picture.

Who took part?

Our detailed survey had 35 responses, which came from a fairly even mix of individuals and organisations. Those representing organisations were from mostly voluntary organisations supporting communities, and from non-profit organisations with a specialist focus on democratic participation. We also heard from a number of academics. Most of the individuals who took part identified themselves as having a specific interest or being part or a group that they felt was underrepresented in the democratic process.

305 people took part in the short survey. People who took part came from, across Scotland, covering 25 of Scotland's 32 local authorities, and around 17% said that they had never been involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament before. Participants represented most age groups, from 13 years old to 65 or over (though most were 35 or older). We've explored some of the demographics of these participants in the next section, and have also published a separate summary dedicated to the results of this survey.

Overall, 119 people took part in our focus group sessions. These represented a broad range of individuals including those from minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds, those with physical and learning disabilities, those from low-income backgrounds, and those living in rural and island locations.

We also received 4 submissions sent directly to the Committee, which came from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, People First, and Dr Danielle Beswick of the University of Birmingham.

We invited people to submit in the language they felt most comfortable with. On our surveys, we had one response in Polish, and four responses from BSL users.

All in, this summary covers the voices of over 460 individuals and organisations, from a

diverse range of backgrounds.

Key messages

There were several key messages in the views people shared, which were often repeated and spread across the questions we asked.

Key message 1

The people who are under-represented in the work of the Scottish Parliament are more likely to be from lower income backgrounds than from protected groups

Protected characteristics

When asked to identify which groups are currently under-represented, the responses to our detailed survey were broad, and were very much replicated in the shorter survey. As might be expected, a number of groups mentioned belonged to groups with protected characteristics, as defined by The Equality Act 2010 and The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

The Equality Act defines the following as protected characteristics:

- age

- disability

- gender reassignment

- marriage and civil partnership

- pregnancy and maternity

- race

- religion or belief

- sex

- sexual orientation

Most of these characteristics were mentioned. Of these, people from ethic minority and migrant backgrounds, people with disabilities (physical and learning, along with mental health problems and the neurodivergent), and children and young people were mentioned/ selected the most. There was also several mentions of women and older people, which was reflected most strongly in the short survey responses.

Transgendered people were mentioned in one response to the detailed survey, but not as an under-represented group. Rather, it was suggested in the context of women's rights that Trans people have their own spaces. There was similarly a suggestion of a trade-off between supporting Trans people, and supporting women, in the short survey. One person replying to the detailed survey felt that straight, white (specifically Anglo-Saxon), Protestant males are under-represented, and there were several responses to the short

survey also suggesting men were under-represented. There were no other mentions in the detailed survey of people being under-represented because of their sexual orientation, or their religion/beliefs. Although there was more mention of these characteristics in the short survey, they were still lesser cited characteristics. There were a handful of statements in response to the short survey that suggested that some people in majority groups feel they are ignored in favour of minority groups (but statements contradictory to this were far more common).

Those not covered by equalities legislation

Moving away from the protected characteristics, people on lower incomes, and those with lower educational attainment and lower literacy were the most mentioned across both surveys. This covered both unemployed people, and people who were employed in low-income jobs and likely to have a lack of ability to take time out of work. Those with caring responsibilities, and young parents, were also mentioned as being 'time poor'.

Rural and island residents, and even non-Central Belt residents, were seen as being less likely to attend the Parliament and its events because of geographical barriers (especially around transport time and cost). Although there was a lot of support for digital and hybrid working, people highlighted that many people are digitally excluded (because of skill/ education, and money), with ties made to age group and social media use. Age Scotland gave a good overview—

"In Scotland, around 500,000 over 50s do not have access to the internet and up to 600,000 over 50s do not have a smart phone. The reasons behind not being online will vary from person to person, and for some this will be a deliberate choice. However, for others, it may be due to living in an area with poor connectivity, because they feel they don't have the confidence or skills needed, or because they cannot afford the necessary equipment or cost of a broadband connection. According to the Scottish Household Survey, older people in the 'most deprived' areas are less likely to use the internet than in the 'least deprived' areas – and this gap may widen as the cost of living rises and people cut back on spending. Evidence shows that disabled people are more likely to face digital exclusion. Ethnic minority older people are also at risk of digital exclusion due to language barriers, affordability concerns, or finding new learning challenging."

Some of the groups mentioned could be seen to some extent as self-selecting - non-voters, people who do not use Scottish-based media, and those with less confidence in the topics discussed. However, it's likely that many of these people are in fact affected by the issues above, making their participation less likely - educational attainment, language, income, and disability could all play a part in people's options and decisions.

In the focus groups held, we heard from a diverse range of audiences who did not usually confirm their economic status, however based on the geographic locations and communities we spoke to it's likely that many of the participants in the focus groups were from less affluent backgrounds.

Many submissions highlighted that intersectional individuals, i.e. ones with more than one of the characteristics or circumstances mentioned above, will be even more likely to be under-represented. Specifically, people from ethnic minorities on low incomes, disabled people living north of the Central Belt, migrants with mental health support needs, and young people with learning disabilities were among those mentioned. It was also suggested that people who don't belong to a community or a specific group can be hard to reach.

Finally, there was some mention of people grouped by profession – members of the police force, teaching staff, and veterans were all mentioned as people with whom the Scottish Parliament should be connecting with more.

Contradictions and discussion points

In the shorter survey, we asked people to identify groups/types of people who might be more or less likely to be involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, using opposing questions with the same list of possible responses. Because the same list for both was used, we essentially asked the same question in different ways, capturing a more nuanced scale of opinion.

The five groups considered the most likely to be involved, starting with the option with the highest number of respondents and working down, were 'people with a high income', 'older people', 'people of working age', 'men', and 'people from LGBTQ+ communities'. When people were asked the opposing question, the responses suggested a similar set of groups, but with 'people on average incomes' replacing 'older people'.

Those groups most rated to be least likely to be involved, were 'people on a low income', 'people with learning disabilities', 'children and young people', 'people who are neurodiverse (e.g. With autism, ADHD etc.)', and 'people from minority ethnic backgrounds'. Again, when we asked the opposing question, the results were similar, but 'children and young people' and 'people from minority ethnic backgrounds' were replaced by 'people with physical differences' and 'women'.

Across both questions, women were equally rated as more likely and less likely to engage, which demonstrates a diversity of views. Looking at ratings and comments together, there are contradictory beliefs about certain groups – many people suggested that older people are more likely to engage because they have time, but many others said they are an overlooked group. There are similar views on young people. People of working age were seen as likely to be one of the more involved groups, yet one of the most cited barriers to participation was having time around work commitments. People from minority ethnic backgrounds were seen as less likely to be involved (because of language, cultural barriers, and exclusion), but conversely many people felt that more had been done to seek the voices of these groups than of other groups. It is very clear from the more detailed comments people left that there is a feeling that people who are part of groups which have the support of the voluntary sector and lobbying groups, and strong communities, may be the groups most likely to be involved because of the support structures they benefit from.

Overwhelmingly though, across all evidence, there was a strong consensus that people who have a socio-economic and educational disadvantage were the least likely to be involved in the work of the parliament, and the wealthier, higher educated were more likely to be involved. The transcending factor that people felt broke this barrier is having a specific cause or interest, access to organised support, and an interest in, or at least knowledge of, politics.

Demographics of respondents

Because this was an opportunity for people to be involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament, and a self-selecting exercise, it's interesting to look at the demographic information people gave us. Put simply, whether the people who got involved in our short survey matched the profile of those we might have expected, based on who people *told us* would engage the most.

Note that we did not include demographic questions in the detailed survey as this was where we expected more people to be responding on behalf of organisations. Interestingly, this meant that people responding to that survey were generally citing research or evidence (or indeed choosing not to answer because their expertise did not lie within the Scottish Parliament's activities specifically), and in most cases citing a range of demographic groups. The people who responded to the short survey were individuals, and only around a quarter identified themselves as having never been involved in the work of the Scottish Parliament. This may or may not mean that they cited their own characteristics when naming groups more or less likely to be involved.

The largest group of people who responded were aged over 65, and over two-thirds of the people who took part were over 55. There were far fewer people aged 34 and under, and only a handful of children and young people took part.

Over half of the people who took part did not consider themselves to be on a low income, and the majority identified as White, and Scottish or Other British.

Religion was not mentioned much in comments, which may reflect the fact that the greater proportion of respondents identified as belonging to no religion or belief system than any other specific grouping.

Again, as per what people told us, we had a lower number of responses from people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and neurodivergencies than people who said they had a long-term illness/condition, or no illness or disability.

All these demographics reflect what people told us about those who were more or less likely to be involved in the Parliament's work.

However, far more women than men took part. There was also a far greater number of respondents who identified as heterosexual than LGBTQ+, and only a very small number of respondents identified as transgender. This contradicts many of the views expressed in both surveys. However, it may well be the case that topical issues (see Researchers Note below) and organised campaigns connected to these issues influenced the self-selecting demographic that took part.

RESEARCHERS NOTE: It's clear that, as with any survey, people will respond citing issues that are currently of high political and media interest. Although there are multiple comments which relate to a wide range of current discussion points (immigration, the war in Ukraine, UKG policy, isolated reporting on politicians, and wider 'scandals'), there is one topic which stood out for the high number of comments. Matters pertaining to gender recognition, other LGBTQ+ issues, and the recent Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 have all been cited more than any other grouping of issues, often with some of the more strongly worded statements. Accompanying comments centre around inappropriate power being given to lobbying groups, "politically correct" agendas pertaining to minority groups being pushed at the expense of the majority, and expressions of mistrust in politicians, political parties, political institutions and government. This context is important to note, because it adds some topicality to other categories – a high proportion of responses which identified women as under-represented also raised the issues above for example. This highlights the challenges of looking at any one point of data in isolation, and the need to be aware of wider social and political issues that will influence what people identify as key issues at any one point in time. Almost all the supplementary comments on each of the demographic questions "what is your sex" and 'do you consider yourself to be transgender" argued in favour of gender being binary, and there were

objections given to the ethnicity categories used (taken from the Census) based on the separation of 'Scottish' from 'Other British', which emphasises how topical issues can impact even on demographic questions. On demographics, it should also be noted that it will typically be the case that certain consultations will attract specific demographics because of those affected/interested. It is interesting to reflect that this is a consultation aimed at the Scottish population in the broadest sense, where no specific interest group has been targeted, yet the results may still have been skewed because of the timing of the consultation in relation to other, arguably unrelated, matters.

Key Message 2

People from disadvantaged backgrounds don't feel that engaging with the Scottish Parliament is worthwhile

What is overwhelmingly clear in the responses to both surveys is that people need to feel like their involvement has a purpose and is worth any sacrifice they may have to make to be involved. This could be an obvious sacrifice, like having to spend time and money to physically attend a meeting at the Scottish Parliament. But could also be far more subtle.

People spoke about the need to be clear about what would happen with people's views, and the extent to which they could influence outcomes and policy. This tied into timing – there was a clear suggestion that people would be more likely to participate if they knew it was at a stage in the consultation process where real change could be made. A lack of influence over the policies being debated was described by many as being 'tokenistic', and ultimately not worth people's time. The newDemocracy Foundation gave the example of work in Ireland, where "because of visibly successful projects (Eighth Amendment CA) response rates to random invitations now exceed 20% where 2-5% is more common elsewhere".

Age Scotland said "we sometimes encounter a sense of reluctance from older people to share their views as part of Government and parliamentary calls for views and scrutiny, as they feel that things "will not change" as a result. Those who have previously engaged tell us they find the lack of action, progress or change that follows frustrating – particularly if they have invested time and effort in sharing their views. Others feel that efforts to engage merely go over the same ground when the main issues at hand have not changed.".

People First (Scotland) said "We have spoken a lot about the difficulties that people with a learning disability face; politicians tell us they are doing something about, they tell us they listen to us but nothing much has changed.".

In our focus groups, themes were similar. A participant in the Active Inquiry session spoke of apathy, disenfranchisement and feeling ignored leading to feelings of depression and no desire to engage.

Some of the other 'costs' and barriers to taking part identified (in Involve's response) included:

- Being overburdened with other life responsibilities. Participants in our focus group with the Syrian community spoke about the pressure of personal life matters, such as family/financial demands. Others spoke of having little time for anything beyond working.

- Fear of reprisals for speaking out - including for those with precarious lives. This could include people being afraid to lose their tenancy if they speak out on housing issues, or people being afraid of losing their job.

- Fear of threats and harassment on social media for publicly sharing opinions.

- Feeling intimidated by the building and the official status of the Parliament.

- Because there is nothing in it for them.

- An inability to focus on issues, though lack of interest, a feeling of relevance, or through neurodivergence (ADHD was mentioned).

- A lack of budget available to mitigate challenges like translation, respite, travel support etc. was also mentioned in focus groups.

- People don't know what route to take to get involved, and at the focus groups in particular people spoke about the challenges of just understanding how to get in touch with their MSP for support, let alone being involved in wider parliamentary work.

Key Message 3

People often struggle to engage in the work of the Scottish Parliament as they don't feel representatives reflect them, or their communities needs and concerns

This was a common theme, both in the detailed survey and the short survey. Respondents spoke about not feeling represented on various levels – by MSPs, by government ministers, and by the staff they encountered from the parliamentary service. This connected with a notion of "hostility towards decision makers who seem remote and out of touch" (Involve).

CRER included some statistics on the diversity of MSPs and the Scottish Parliamentary service—

"Although the last Parliamentary election led to six MSPs of BME origin, all are of South Asian descent, leaving many minority communities in Scotland still unable to see people of their own ethnicity represented in elected positions. This under-representation is not limited to elected office – the data that is available still shows an under-representation of parliamentary staff who list their ethnicity as 'minority ethnic' and the SP Diversity Monitoring Report for 2020/21 does not provide ethnicity breakdown by grade (although a gender split by grade is provided). Perhaps more worrying, although the percentage of applications for positions in the Parliament from BME people was at an all-time high of 15%, the success rate for BME candidates to appointment was just 3%, compared to a success rate for White candidates of 10%, and the ethnicity pay gap increased year on year from 21.3% to 27.6%."

Interestingly, people also spoke about not seeing themselves represented within the people they see us engaging with – i.e., the people who give evidence to Committees. There is a perception (and evidence to support) that witnesses tend to be older, male, middle-class and university educated (Stephen Elstub, Newcastle University). As well as leading to people feeling that the Parliament 'isn't for them', it also gives the impression that the same voices are heard repeatedly, and that there is "little scope for fresh ideas"

(Forth Valley Migrant Support).

Together argued that the voices of children and young people are under-represented and suggested that decision-makers can be "resistant to change" and that at times "adults can be unwilling to engage with children and young people directly". This often leads to a reliance on third-sector services to help children and young people to share their voices.

Media representation was also mentioned. One individual responding to the detailed survey highlighted that he rarely saw his local area (Dumfries and Galloway) featured in national TV news coverage, or his veterans' organisation mentioned in Scottish Government news releases.

A key message from focus groups included the idea of the institution "expecting people to fit into the Parliament's environment and way of doing things". People said things like:

> "I wouldn't even think of that. I wouldn't know where to go. But seems like a battle to be heard unless you were a big group or had lots of money."

> "The only way I can see to get involved with the process is to be a part of a political party, you need connections. One lone person does not have the possibility of accessing, a committee. A general member of the public could not access a committee or get involved."

> "Your impression is, it's a huge building that you feel you are not allowed to go in."

Key Message 4

Education has a vital role to play in breaking down barriers to participation in the democratic process

In noting the demographics least likely to participate, Involve, citing other research, said that "the most significant determinant of political engagement is education. In general, the more education someone has received the more likely they are to be politically active (Verba et al. 1995). These are universal dynamics to political engagement and representation and apply to the Scottish Parliament too (Cairney and McGarvey 2013).". This notion was echoed across many responses.

newDemocracy said that most consultations are "dominated by the enraged and the articulate as they get the most benefit or have the most at stake", however the wider evidence would suggest that 'articulate' is the key word here.

Alan Renwick from the Constitution Unit at University College London pointed out that people feel they do not have the information needed to take part in democratic activities. This impacts on their self-confidence in stepping forward when opportunities arise – they may not feel they have anything useful to contribute. Involve said that a key barrier to participation was people "genuinely not knowing that there are options available to do so".

There were several suggestions that education goes both ways – decision-makers and the people that work with them need to understand more about the people they are engaging with, and different communication methods. Several responses spoke about the role of third parties in the engagement process, in particular voluntary organisations and support services. These services provide education and facilitation both ways – to those the

Scottish Parliament wishes to engage with on the democratic process, and to the Members and staff of the Scottish Parliament on the needs of different groups. This is, however, resource intensive for the organisations, and the process of supported engagement requires additional time and resources from a parliamentary perspective as well. CRER suggested that there is a lack of expertise in race equality issues amongst some elected officials, saying "we believe increased racial literacy by MSPs could improve understanding and awareness, and, therefore, improve policy and scrutiny, and this in turn would lead to increased participation."

Many people spoke about a lack of education on the democratic process and how to be involved explicitly. They also spoke about how off-putting legal disclaimers and long meetings could be to people. In focus groups, people highlighted that even where politics is taught in school, it very much focuses on voting, and there is little learning about being involved in the democratic process between elections. That said, in the online focus group we ran there was a feeling that when somebody has an issue, they don't understand or particularly care about the differences between the Parliament and the government, they just want their problem solved and it is very unclear who they need to speak to about that when current methods are not sufficient.

RESEARCHERS NOTE: What was also reflected in responses was a potential lack of understanding on the role of the Scottish Parliament (and scope of the inquiry), the Scottish and UK Governments, and where and how political parties fit in to this process. Rather than discount submissions where people have used the opportunity to speak about their grievances with leadership, political figures, policies and matters outwith the scope of the inquiry, Committee and Parliament, these submissions can illustrate how a lack of political knowledge can impact even where people are engaging.

Key Message 5

Cross Party Groups are integral to the involvement of those in minority groups and with protected characteristics in the work of the Scottish Parliament

In many cases, when organisations representing, and individuals from, minority groups spoke about the involvement of these groups in Scottish Parliament work, they spoke about Cross-Party Groups (CPGs). This included during our focus groups,

We asked people about the different methods of engaging with the Scottish Parliament. CRER said "We would have liked interaction with the Scottish Parliament Website to be included in the means of people being involved, and also included should have been participation in Cross Party Groups."

They also explained that "Cross Party Groups have been a major point of contact with MSPs, certainly for many members of Black / Minority Ethnic communities. This is particularly the case for smaller Voluntary Sector or volunteer-led organisations. One of the main strengths of the CPG system is that it allows non-Parliamentary members to easily identify a selection of MSPs with a particular interest in their subject area who may be receptive to information or lobbying activities. The opportunity to engage with these members on a personal level is valuable, and the group setting makes this easier to arrange and more cohesive – non-Parliamentary members often wish to put forward similar issues for discussion and the group setting allows a wealth of knowledge and experience to be explored. This consultation is a missed opportunity to consider further

how to make involvement via cross party groups more effective. Additionally, as an incidental benefit, CPGs can provide a useful introduction to lobbying for those with no previous experience and allow them to build practical knowledge of parliamentary issues and procedures through engagement with MSP members.".

People First (Scotland) also spoke about representation on CPGs but expressed concern about the move to online meetings because of the difficulty in people with learning disabilities feeling they are getting their point across this way. They also said that late-night meetings were harder to be involved in, long meetings needed to have more breaks, and papers needed to be provided in time to allow conversion to easy-read formats.

In focus groups, minority ethnic participants felt that cross-party groups could reach out to community groups to connect them to similar groups or relevant organisations, creating wider networks.

RESEARCHERS NOTE Because CPGs are established and managed outside of the Parliamentary service, this may be an area which could be seen as outside the scope of this inquiry. It's important to see the user's perspective though, where this distinction may not be clear. To a member of the public, going to a CPG or contacting their MSP about something IS engaging with the work of the Scottish Parliament. This raises a wider issue that may benefit from further exploration – how best to better connect engagement and participation work which takes place in these contexts with Parliamentary work?

Key Message 6

The Scottish Parliament needs to do more to tell people about its engagement and participation work, as those we reach are positive about the experience

Respondents gave examples of work that the Scottish Parliament had done, both from a participant perspective and more academic viewpoints, which had been good examples of participative democracy. There is evidence to suggest that some people feel very positively about the approaches used. Feedback on the work of the Parliament's Participation and Communities Team at the focus groups was very positive. Some people said that just being invited into the Parliament building or having MSPs and staff come out to talk to them at these events made them feel more connected. That said, when asked how connected they felt to the Scottish Parliament at the start of these sessions, on a scale of 1-10, over half of people asked gave scored at the lower end of the scale.

RESEARCHERS NOTE It would be useful for this question to be asked again during PACT's follow-up work with these groups to see if these sentiments have changed.

Together said "there have been several recent examples of promising practice" and gave the example of when the Equalities and Human Rights Committee examined the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. With support from Together, members held numerous engagement sessions with children and young people, and Committee also produced a child-friendly consultation paper and resources to help children build their understanding of the issues.

They also cited the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's creation of a 'Meeting in a Box'.

The crucial thing to note in many of these examples is that they have been cited by people

who were involved in the work or were/are in some way more cognisant of the engagement culture of the Parliament.

In the short survey, many people spoke about positive engagements with the Scottish Parliament – a warm welcome, enjoyable and informative tours, taking part in CPGs and attending Committee and Plenary meetings, and positive interactions with friendly and responsive MSPs and staff.

It's not possible, however, to consider these views without looking at the opposing views given, which were often from individuals (outwith interest or community groups), or people who had contributed and felt they had not been heard (see Key message 1).

Short survey respondents who had less positive experiences spoke about not receiving responses (from MSPs, and in relations to petitions), not seeing their submissions published, and feeling like they had no ability to influence decisions because the Committees and Scottish Government had already made up their mind.

RESEARCHERS NOTE It should be noted that a high proportion of people expressing that they hadn't been listened to or had been dismissed/ignored by MSPs referenced that this was in relation to the Gender Recognition Act.

There were some specific barriers highlighted related to the way the Scottish Parliament runs consultations. Together pointed out that many consultation exercises take place within a short timeframe and said that this was a barrier to engaging with children and young people in particular. People also spoke of finding it hard to find consultations on our web pages, and to find out the outcomes after the fact.

SCDC said that "Current opportunities to get involved such as petitions, cross-party groups and lobbying are relatively formal, complex and high-level. As such they are likely to be off putting for people from disadvantaged and marginalised communities who are often not as skilled and confident at navigating and making use of these opportunities. Opportunities to get involved in comfortable and informal ways, such as 'conversation cafe' type approaches should be made available."

It also pointed out that although it's aware of the education and outreach work the Scottish Parliament does, there's very little information on this in the public domain.

Involve spoke about the 2017 Commission on Parliamentary Reform and the changes that followed, including the establishment of the Parliament's Committee Engagement Unit, and said:

"It would be helpful for the Parliament to commission an independent review of the impact of the recommendations that have been implemented, and the reasons for any lack of implementation. Not only would this provide valuable internal monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) as to what difference the implemented recommendations have made and what might still stand to be improved, it would also inform resourcing at a level that can actually make a difference and it would also prove useful for other legislatures considering wider public engagement."

Key Message 7

Strengthening trust is essential to successfully involving people in the work of the

Scottish Parliament

Respondents made it clear that trust was an essential component in successfully involving people in the work of the Scottish Parliament. They told us this directly, and academics described the challenges, but it also came across less explicitly as people described their viewpoints and experiences. It relates to all the key messages above to one extent or another but given its prevalence it's important to emphasise and summarise some of the points made.

Key points include:

- People feel a lack of trust when they do not see themselves represented in policy or by the people that make policy. More pertinently, when people see people represented who they feel are very different or even directly opposed to them represented, it can reduce trust even more. The examples given suggested this happens in two very different ways.

The first might be more expected - people on low-incomes with lower levels of educational attainment feeling disconnected when they perceive that it is people from mostly wealthy, academic backgrounds who are making policy decisions.

The second is more surprising – people who feel that minority groups, or different minority groups from the one they belong to, are more represented than they are. There were, for example, several people who expressed dislike or distaste at what they felt was an unfair prominence given to LGBTQ+ people.

- People who have engaged with the Scottish Parliament, but do not feel their voice was heard, may lose trust and choose to not engage again. Again, this seems to happen for two reasons.

They may have contributed their voice to a single issue that was polarising (i.e., there was likely to be a 'winning' and a 'losing' side) and be unhappy with the outcome. This highlights a challenge for the Scottish Parliament and its participation specialists – how can trust and connection be maintained or restored with people who have had a negative experience, particularly when that negative experience was in this context?

The other situation was where people felt their voice hadn't been heard was later in the policy lifespan, i.e. well beyond the consultation stage. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 (*which was subject to a lengthy and extensive consultation/outreach programme at the Bill stage)* was cited by more than one respondent as an example of policy which had not achieved its aims, partly attributed to a lack of effective implementation, but also because of a wider need for decentralisation of power across all of Scotland's democratic institutions. This emphasises that events and factors outwith the Parliamentary consultation phase can impact people's feelings about the engagement they took part in. In focus groups, one person said that they felt there was no point in taking part if nothing changes as a result, or if policy is too complex for them to understand what had changed.

- As noted, education around political structures leads to confusion about who is leading on engagement and consultation. This links to the example above, where a disappointment in the Scottish Government is also reflected in views towards the Scottish Parliament. This could reflect a lack of trust in the entire political system, but it could also reflect a lack of understanding about the differences between and role of each institution, particularly in the role of parliaments in scrutinising governments.

There was also a suggestion that a lack of engagement was symptomatic of a wider mistrust of and disengagement in politics. Age Scotland, having highlighted that research shows that older people tend to be less trusting of politicians than younger age groups, said that "While distrust in politicians is not within the Scottish Parliament's control to fix single-handedly, it is good to be aware of this as an issue affecting engagement levels.".

Jane Jones, the Scottish Parliament's first Public Participation Officer (appointed in 2004), said that there is "a growing narrative within the media, including social media, that politics is 'a waste of time' or that politicians are 'only out for themselves', a disaffection for politics and politicians which is very dangerous for our democracy. If people have taken time to give their views, in the hope it may influence change and feel nothing has happened as a result, they will be reluctant to try again and may well adopt such views".

The Electoral Reform Society Scotland said that "the contemporary system of representative democracy leaves too few opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process and people feel increasingly shut out from those in power and their institutions.". A number of people referenced other democratic bodies, including local authorities and community councils, as having a number of the same issues noted above, and there were a few voices in favour of widespread redesign of our current political system. Obviously, this goes well beyond the scope of influence of this inquiry, but it illustrates the scale of the barriers which some feel influence people's ability and desire to interact with the Scottish Parliament.

Key Message 8

Breaking down barriers to participation will improve the diversity of participation and opinions in the work of the Scottish Parliament

People were asked in the detailed survey how we will know we have been successful in overcoming barriers to participating in the Scottish Parliament's work. It's useful to look at the picture of success before exploring the suggested actions so outcomes can be kept in mind.

Overwhelmingly, people suggested that a more diverse set of voices and views would be a marker of success. This might be reflected (outside of the evidence itself) in positive feedback, but more pertinently in people feeling involved and reflected in policy.

A willingness for participants to stand behind their work and that of the Parliament was also seen as a measure of legitimacy. Participation levels should increase, as should public satisfaction with, and trust in, Scotland's democratic system (expressed in part through the media).

Digging deeper, linked to many of the issues of trust mentioned, people felt that success could be measured by policy being changed as a result of engagement, and some of the everyday challenges people face in life being addressed. One anonymous respondent said:

"If you have been successful, the people who have felt under-represented will feel appreciated, more content and happier in their everyday life. This is meant to have an effect on everybody in their care/around them which should improve everybody's health and well-being, everybody's mental health, and perhaps help them make better lifestyle choices."

Several people suggested that there should be a monitoring and evaluation framework for participatory exercises. Together said to do this "Scottish Parliament ought to: measure what has been achieved and why; set rights-based indicators which take into consideration different cultural, social, and economic contexts; and gather both qualitative and quantitative feedback and ideas of improvement from children and young people". The use of audits, academic evaluation and stakeholder boards as part of a monitoring framework was suggested.

Improvements in the Scottish Parliament's work were also mentioned as a marker of success. One individual said quite simply "You will have changed! You will work and behave differently. 'CBT' for politicians and civil servants at national (Holyrood) and local government level."

The Democratic Society said:

"The clearest marker of success is that you feel a sense of continuous development in your engagement practice, and new groups are coming to you, seeking to be included in further developments. The Scottish Parliament's vision of being the national home for debate and deliberation is an essential anchor point for these conversations, but they need to be driven by engagement and inclusion inside and outside Holyrood."

Suggested actions

We asked people explicitly what the Scottish Parliament could do to make it easier for under-represented groups to be involved in the Parliament's work in our detailed survey, but suggestions were made throughout the surveys, so this section captures the entirety of comments on that theme.

These actions have been grouped by theme – some are things which could improve existing approaches, and some suggest wholly new models.

Overarchingly, Stephen Elstub (Newcastle University) said:

"Involvement in the work of Parliament can be made easier if it is CLEAR (Lowndes et al. 2006):

• Can do – that is, have the resources and knowledge to participate;

• Like to – that is, have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;

• Enabled to – that is, are provided with the opportunity for participation;

• Asked to – that is, are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups;

• Responded to – that is, see evidence that their views have been considered"

Transparency, openness, purpose and incentive

Reflecting key messages 2 and 7, people highlighted the importance of making it clear to participants how their input would be used, and more specifically, THAT it would be used – basically, that the effort of their participation would be worthwhile.

newDemocracy said that "A simple way to execute this online (where only the crazed and desperate contribute with any expectation of impact) is to make a clear Authority promise that a subsequent citizens' assembly will prioritise 20 (for example) ideas for detailed response. The incentives for an online contribution now change considerably."

Alan Renwick explained that:

"At the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK, 93% of members agreed with the recommendation:

'The results of deliberative processes like citizens' assemblies that are initiated by government or parliament need to have an impact. When they are convened, there should be a guarantee that their results will be made public, their recommendations will receive a detailed response from the convening body, and they will be debated in parliament.'"

One individual said, "Parliament must be a hub for bringing together the widest possible range of civil society organisations that can contribute on a given issue -not just in terms of building legitimacy and good legislation but also to develop capacity for subsequent implementation.".

Long-term engagement was also seen as important, to support repeat engagement and build relationships. Methods such as SMS or app-enabled engagement, and 'gamified' engagement where the key opportunity of an event might lie beyond participation, and in something more connected to the participants (i.e. connecting with neighbours, enjoying a free lunch), were suggested.

Listening and respect

Linked to the above, but perhaps less explicit, was the importance of listening to and having respect for under-represented groups.

Women, children, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities were mentioned specifically as groups who should have their views treated respectfully. Participation should take place in a safe environment, and there should be a commitment to accountability by following up with participants.

People should be able to participate and share their voice in a way which is comfortable for them and using more creative approaches to suit the needs of certain communities, such as island communities, is important.

CRER felt it was important that events be held where MSPs could meet community members from under-represented groups in order to build relationships.

SCDC suggested that an equalities and human rights-focussed approach, such as the the National Standards for Community Engagement would be a good model to use in engagement and participation. SCDC also noted the benefits of providing mentoring and emotional support to those participating, saying:

"Experience panels are beneficial for participants in terms of building skills, knowledge, confidence and connections, but they can also be a daunting prospect as well as emotionally draining. People should be provided with continual support, ideally from peers or recognised support organisations who understand the needs of particular groups. Support should also be impartial so that participants feel they are able to raise any concerns or ask any questions."

One focus group participant said:

"The person – me – who is approaching the Parliament needs to feel that they are being listened to, heard, and being recognised as someone who matters. So, getting feedback counts as you are not a voice in the wilderness crying out to this big body where your views can get lost – you don't know where your views go unless you get feedback.2.

In the focus groups in particular many people's self-reported experience of 'engaging with the Parliament' was through engaging with their local MSPs. They spoke about not knowing whether their concerns had been listened to because they had no feedback, or received only standardised responses.

A handful of respondents said that it was important that the voices of individuals be given as much credence as those from organisations when considering evidence.

Marketing and education

The general feeling was that the Scottish Parliament has a significant role to play in actively promoting and encouraging a culture of participation. One anonymous respondent said that it was important to recognise and represent people with a visible difference in staffing, culture, policies and commitment to representation.

Related to a need to be open about the potential impacts of participation, was the suggestion that more should be done to market and champion instances where people have had their voice heard, particularly where it has led to a change in policy, or their idea being used. Specifically, newDemocracy said this should be done through the mainstream media. SCDC pointed out that the 'community outreach' pages that were a part of the former Scottish Parliament website had not been replicated on the new site and suggested this was a missed opportunity to promote the good outreach work done.

Jane Suiter of Dublin City University said that it was not enough just to include diverse voices in participatory approaches – other participants needed to be made aware of the importance of including these diverse voices. Sortition Foundation suggested that publicising the involvement and work of demographically diverse groups would help to normalise the involvement of those groups in the Scottish Parliament's work.

In focus groups, people spoke about language on two different levels. Both diversity of languages used to communicate, and the ability to understand the processes, procedures and reports being discussed and the "over-reliance on the written word". Essentially, to reach people we have to work in their language, be that in a non-English or accessible language, or simply making this less formal and easier to understand. People from minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds asked for more support to be given to help people coming to Scotland to learn English.

Those carrying out engagement and participation work should be trained and educated on the needs of specific groups, including marginalised and disadvantaged groups (for instance how best to engage and work with children), as well as in facilitation methods. Connected was the suggestion that well-resourced information and outreach work was important to support people to be involved in the Parliament's work, and that "Staff working with communities should be skilled in deliberative methods, human rights and equalities" (SCDC).

Educating people about their right to be heard and the importance of taking part was a common theme, linking into transparency and purpose. One participant at a focus group

explained that as an migrant they had no knowledge at all on their democratic rights in Scotland. It was suggested by a few people that the Scottish Parliament website should be aimed at a wider audience (i.e., not just 'experts'). Jane Jones suggested that Open University courses on, and developed with, the Scottish Parliament, would be beneficial (with some emphasis on the need for these to be accessible to those on low incomes through bursaries funded by the Parliament).

Alan Renwick of UCL said:

"people need information. In part, that means information about the engagement processes in themselves: people need to know what they are being asked to do and what will be done with the inputs that they provide. But there is a wider point: people will view the prospect of participating in a specific engagement exercise as very effortful if they feel alienated from politics more broadly: they will feel they do not know enough and that it will be hard work to keep up. So improving education and information about politics is vital."

He went on to share findings from the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK, which gave a very clear directive that in general, education on politics and democratic participation in the UK needs to be improved, and that many people feel ill-prepared by their formal education to engage with politics. It also found that most people feel that more needs to be done to make information on what is happening in Parliament and Government more accessible and available.

Accessibility

Simply increasing access to the democratic process was a common theme, with some people simply saying, 'make it easier for people to be involved'.

The EHRC said that "Compliance with the Equality Act and, specifically, the Public Sector Equality Duty will integrate consideration of non-discrimination, equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of the Scottish Parliament.", and that "data on the experiences of people sharing different protected characteristics who participate in all engagement activities should be collected, disaggregated without identifying individuals, published and used to tackle under-representation issues.". It asserted that "ongoing monitoring of equality data will help to measure the success of suggested improvements".

Zoom and other online forums were mentioned as opportunities to increase attendance numbers, with people citing their experience of increased participant numbers when some activities moved online during the pandemic. Conversely though, it was emphasised that non-digital means of engagement should be protected and maintained, and that "people who do not have digital access must be able to follow parliamentary proceedings and be given the same opportunities to contribute" (Age Scotland).

The need to work with specific groups (and community groups) on designing services and activities was made clear – quite simply, asking groups what works for them and taking a collaborative approach. There was also mention of making sure accessibility measures to support people with barriers to engagement were taken, such as making sure information is provided in different language options and different formats, including easy read, audio, large print and Braille. Audit Scotland suggested that developing a presence within community groups may be beneficial.

CRER spoke about the need to be able to accept evidence beyond the submission of a formal written document. Formality was a common theme, with the suggestion that breaking this down with more informal meetings and optics (fewer suits and uniforms, and

less hierarchy of voices for example) could help people to feel more comfortable.

Relevance was emphasised by Together, quoting work done by the UN committee in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In order to make participation accessible for children, the issues being discussed should be relevant to children, and delivered in a child-friendly way.

Practical barriers to participation, such as being able to take time to attend meetings (especially around working and childcare commitments), being able to afford to attend meeting (in terms of travel and costs related to time barriers), and overcoming technological barriers, should be mitigated for. Many respondents felt that funding specifically targeted at these barriers was needed to help those on low incomes participate. Suggestions around this included compensating people for their time, giving extra support for those with caring responsibilities, paying travel costs up front where necessary, and offering training and equipment to those who might lack the necessary IT skills to fully participate.

The Sortition Foundation suggested, interestingly, that ensuring that "remuneration is sufficient to attract people who are often both time- and cash-poor" could help to diversify not only the voices, but also the views heard. They gave the example of Scotland's Climate Assembly, where there was an unusually high response rate from people for whom climate change is not a significant issue. The assumption here is that, without the remuneration, it would be likely that only participants with a strong interest in climate change would have come forward.

Changes to the parliamentary timetable and week were suggested by CRER, which explained:

"At times when there are few bills to be debated and voted upon, many (if not most) of the debates can be seen as tokenistic exercises, with MSPs voting along party lines and without a tangible outcome. It may be that this time could be better spent in committees, conducting site visits, meeting with civil society and constituents, or engaging with the public."

Going to people, rather than expecting them to come to the Parliament, was mentioned be a few respondents, though not as prominently or frequently as other measures of accessibility. Most pertinently, it was seen as a way of engaging with people in a space where they felt comfortable and already had access to. At a focus group session, All Highland and Island Disability Group spoke about using community hubs:

"We should work towards a community hub set up throughout local communities, locally designed, allowing a group setting surgery with an MSP or 1 on 1. These hubs should be a modernisation of a village hall, locally designed, so taking accessible bathroom and seating requirements into account.".

Hubs would be informal and comfortable, and accessible transport would be made available to help people use them and could be used to signpost opportunities people to get involved in committee work and support people to access consultations and engagement processes. This was seen as a good way to overcome technological barriers.

Whilst most respondents spoke about making opportunities to participate accessible and overcoming educational/awareness barriers, newDemocracy suggested that "focusing citizens on the hardest part of a problem (through the remit/question), giving them the capability to select experts of their own choosing (not just being fed a pre-agreed list of

speakers where perceptions of bias are unavoidable) and allowing them to self-write reports is fundamental.".

Recruitment of 'voices'

It was suggested that using diverse recruitment methods including door-knocking, roadshows, YouTube and TikTok videos promoting activities, talking to people in public places like shopping malls, having posters advertising opportunities in public spaces, and different presentations of invite materials, could help to diversify those taking part.

The use of sortition, civic lotteries and random selection, like the approach used for Jury Duty, was cited by several people in conjunction with discussion of establishing citizens' assemblies, panel and juries. As noted above, it was widely agreed that people should be paid for their time and able to take leave from work to participate in democratic processes. It was also suggested that it should be clear that those in receipt of benefits would lose them if they took time to participate. Random selection was seen as a very important step to diversifying voices and views, with a general feeling that self-selection led to repetitive, limited and unrepresentative views.

Involve did, however, express that participation should be voluntary, explaining that "participation can be encouraged, supported and made more attractive, but it is inherently about a free choice to take part (or not) without coercion. People participate because they want to."

There was a nod to supporting sortition approaches to avoid exclusion. The Sortition Foundation gave the example of the National Digital Ethics People's Panel, which "actively supplemented its randomised recruitment approach with some direct recruitment from a group of people with less digital experience, who were being supported by a government initiative to become more digitally engaged."

CRER suggested that the Scottish Parliament could be "maintaining a list of community organisations which represent under-represented groups and issue specific invitations to respond to calls for evidence, submit briefings, or attend debates if relevant.", and said that clerks and colleagues should have more time to find new voices and incorporate these into inquiries and evidence sessions.

Age Scotland said that "widely advertising opportunities to feed into the work of the Parliament and work programme of Committees via a range of channels, including traditional print media and radio" was important. In a focus group with About Dementia, it was suggested that open days where people could visit and find out about how they could get involved in the work of the Parliament would be welcome.

Permanent structures for participation

There was a wide range of suggestions on models of participation, but they all had one main feature in common – in most cases these were seen as permanent, as opposed to ad-hoc, structures and approaches.

newDemocracy suggested a need to establish a permanent institution for citizen deliberation. They linked this to increasing trust:

"Citizens tend to feel 'last in the queue' behind the bureaucracy and the professional political class (including lobbyists, media, advisors et al): trusting them enough to move them to the centre is core to changing this."

We had a lot of evidence around the role of community groups, and Forth Valley Migrant Support took this further by suggesting that permanent structures that helped to link and connect community groups to one another could help to unite communities.

Audit Scotland suggested that it would be good to:

"build communities of practice: this can be done in many ways but key here is to reach out and keep hold (in terms of data/contacts/issue of interest) of who you are reaching out, and linking the different engagement initiatives together. One could see for instance different committees developing different communities of practice. Petitions can be a good way of reaching out to groups of people with an interest on a specific issue (though for that you'd need to put more emphasis on the need to collate signatures than you do now)."

Similarly, SCDC (among others) suggested "establishing lived experience panels consisting of marginalised groups, which can generate insight into what currently prevents people from participating in the parliament's work, and what can be done to support increased participation.", and that the Scottish Parliament "should support the growth of deliberative democracy, including the use of citizens assemblies to inform decision making in Scotland.".

Involve thought that the creation of a public panel to advise on the selection of committee witnesses could be useful, and that it would be interesting to see how this diverges from the lists currently collated by the clerks (*N.B. this was a statement based on their understanding of current committee processes*). The Sortition Foundation suggested there be a "diversity and inclusivity oversight citizens' panel" as a permanent structure to support participation and monitor actions and outcomes.

There were several mentions of the use of mini-publics, both as ad-hoc events and more permanent structures, and a need to make these more widespread. The suggestions of a Chamber of Citizens, shadow public panels (to mirror committee inquiries) and Citizens' Committees were given as possible approaches to establishing permanent models for participation, with the suggestion that this could "embed citizen participation and collective deliberation in the everyday work of the institution".

Oliver Escobar (Edinburgh University) mentioned some other participative approaches, but these were not widely cited - digital crowdsourcing, participatory budgeting and deliberative e-petitions.

As a slightly alternative approach, newDemocracy suggested that "most small advocacy groups and niche communities welcome the opportunity to be heard by a jury of their peers rather than a bureaucracy which many of us strongly believe has their own views on a policy.".

Wider-reaching suggestions that the Scottish Parliament could play a role in included Jane Suiter (Dublin City University's) suggestion that:

"It would be useful to produce an overarching strategy for inclusion in parliament. This could begin with the adoption by the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, local government and the Open Government steering group or collective principles and values with a view to institutionalising participatory and deliberative democracy."

She also suggested that:

"Parliament could be even more ambitious and proactively seek a scrutiny role over

government-initiated citizens' assemblies. For example, in Ireland in a number of instances, the parliament has commissioned a special Oireachtas or parliamentary committee to scrutinise the output of citizens' assemblies and to ensure the radiation of its recommendations. If this is not achievable then existing committees e.g. the Net Zero committee could take on a scrutiny and oversight role of governmental citizens' assemblies."

SCDC spoke about the Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Working Group, which recommended "that the Scottish Government embed participatory and deliberative democracy by committing to regular, carefully designed and well-resourced citizens assemblies, including an assembly for children and young people, as a key element of strengthening democracy in Scotland.". It called on the Scottish Parliament to collaborate closely in the development and delivery of the above, explaining:

"The key elements of the Scottish Parliament's involvement would be:

• Helping to establish and agree clear agenda setting guidelines for all Citizens' Assemblies

• Connecting in the Scottish Parliament Committee system as a means of scrutiny for Citizens' Assembly processes and recommendations

• Helping to establish an Oversight Board to review and guide democratic innovations

• In the longer term, considering the proposals of the Citizens' Assembly of Scotland for new infrastructure associated with the Scottish Parliament, including a Citizens' Chamber or Citizens' Committee

• The Scottish Parliament should ensure it has access to expertise, advice and support in the area of deliberative democracy.

• Committing to and implementing any recommendations from the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee for how the parliament utilises deliberative engagement."

Wider challenges and change

There were some suggestions clearly outwith the scope of this inquiry – these included a wider imbalance between "people and power", calls for further devolution (particularly around immigration, benefits and pensions), decentralisation of power, a cultural change across society more widely towards participative democracy, and changes to the structure and operation of the civil service (including locating Govt. departments in more rural settings and using home-working more).

There were also suggestions that access to democratic processes should be restricted for 'opaque' lobbying groups (including those funded by or perceived to be funded by, Government), and that digital infrastructure across Scotland should be improved. These could be seen as more within the competence of the Scottish Parliament, but potentially outwith the areas where the Committee feels it has influence.

CRER noted that people who give evidence to the Scottish Parliament are usually experts in their field, and that barriers to employment and career advancement for BAME individuals is part of a wider societal issue which prevents people from ethnic minorities appearing before committees. It called on the Scottish Parliament to "use whatever power and influence it has to address this". As noted in key message 3, a lack of representation

of diverse groups in politics is a barrier which goes far beyond the realms of the Scottish Parliament.

As could be expected based on some of the frustration expressed by respondents (see key message 1), there were calls for changes in political leadership, and pay reductions for both elected representatives and public/civil servants. Related to this, Stephen Elstub said "There are many reasons why trust is declining, but one of the contributing factors is the culture of politics in the Scottish Parliament, which is perceived as being elitist, competitive and combative."

Involve summed up the wider challenge in a context that goes beyond the status quo at the Scottish Parliament effectively, making it clear of the overall context which needs to be addressed:

"Whilst the ambition of the Parliament to be accessible and welcoming is laudable, and it is more approachable than some other government / parliament buildings, it is nonetheless a symbol of power and patronage that many will find intimidating and will feel is not 'for them'

…

The way that government, parliament, policy development, consultation and engagement have been designed and developed means that it is not just typically under-represented groups that don't get involved in the work of the Parliament. Instead typical formal consultation structures tend to reinforce the voices of the already over-represented. The vast majority of 'ordinary' people do not have a reason, awareness or motivation to seek out these opportunities or see them as relevant if/when they come upon them. Just because it was possible for the public to contribute their views does not mean they are willing or able to act on that possibility. Many, particularly those under-represented groups, will not have had the time, inclination, resource, confidence, or enough faith that their contribution will influence the outcome."

Stephen Elstub (Newcastle University) used the wider context to give an optimistic and guiding message:

"From our research through What Works Scotland, and various developments over the last decade, we understand the current moment of democracy around the world as era-defining. There is an ongoing global democratic recession and no political system is immune to this wave of upheaval. But there is also an emerging and vibrant field of democratic innovation which seeks to support the renewal of democracy. And from this evidence base we know that people still love the idea of democracy but despair at how it is practiced. The time for top-down, elite-driven institutions has passed. The governance of the future requires more networked, participatory and deliberative governance capable of grappling with the complexity of the issues we're facing in Scotland and globally. Therefore, Parliament should aim to become a house where different forms of democracy (e.g. representative, electoral, participatory, deliberative) are productively brought together to advance legislation and scrutiny."

Learning

Throughout the detailed survey in particular, people shared details of examples of engagement model that the Scottish Parliament could learn from, and useful research from

a variety of sources.

Parallel work

One important thing to note is that a similar investigation on diversity and participation to the Committee's inquiry has been carried out by the Select Committee Engagement Team in the UK Parliament. In November 2019 they asked Dr Danielle Beswick from the University of Birmingham to produce a report on barriers to public participation in select committee events. The full report provided to the UK Parliament remains confidential, but a summary report was provided by Dr Beswick in response to the Committee's call for views. The barriers identified and measures to reduce those barriers match almost perfectly with the key messages and actions summarised above.

The project made a range of recommendations to the Select Committee Engagement Team based on the information gathered from individuals and organisations. These can be summarised as follows:

- Work more closely with community organisations and value their expertise – this means building in time to take their advice on how to reduce barriers, to reach people, and to support them to engage as they wish to. It also means supporting them with costs they incur in helping committees reach the public, and acknowledging their contribution to the work of parliament.

- Provide multiple opportunities to engage with committees – this means offering ways to engage in different formats, including online and face-to-face, in different locations and at different times. There is no one-size-fits-all way to reduce barriers, and flexibility is needed.

- Work to ensure that people have a positive experience when they engage – this includes reimbursing costs, providing refreshments and small tokens of appreciation where possible, using accessible venues and providing well trained facilitators to ensure people can share their experiences in the way they are most comfortable.

- Show people how their contributions can make a difference – develop clear, short case studies of what is possible. This could help organisations to overcome scepticism and justify the time spent on their work supporting parliament.

Based on this research, the Select Committee Engagement Team have committed to the following steps:

- Developing case studies of past engagement to host on their website. These will show how members of the public have been heard, and the results of this, in previous inquiries.

- Creating a new offer to community organisations, post Covid-19, to strengthen their capacity to engage with Parliament. This will include presentations, training, guidance on submitting evidence and tours.

- Working more closely with community organisations, particularly harnessing their expertise to focus on increasing accessibility and reducing barriers.

- Keeping people and organisations updated on all inquiries via a new newsletter.

- Holding both in person and virtual events post Covid-19, to add flexibility for

participants.

RESEARCHERS NOTE: In carrying out analysis work, SPICe chose specifically to look at this piece of evidence post-analysis to ensure it did not skew our findings. From a research perspective the similarities here are reassuring; we can be confident to some extent that the messages, barriers and actions identified in this summary correspond with those from very similar research exercises. It also adds some weight to the evidence we've received that suggest the challenges faced by the Scottish Parliament are not unique and are widespread in democratic engagement.

Organisations and groups that provided evidence, or helped us to gather evidence

About Dementia

Active Inquiry

Age Scotland

All Highland and Island Disability Groups

Audit Scotland

Bridgend Farmhouse

Connecting Craigmillar

Constitution Unit, University College London

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)

DemocracyNext

Democratic Society

EHRC

Electoral Reform Society Scotland

Healthcare Improvement Scotland – Community Engagement

Forth Valley Migrant Support

Involve

Learning Disability Assembly

newDemocracy Foundation (Australia)

People First (Scotland)

Regional Equality Councils

RNIB Scotland

The RSA

Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)

Sortition Foundation

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

NB. Three submissions came from individuals representing organisations who wished to remain anonymous.

Annexe B - Report of the Citizens' Panel on Participation in the Scottish Parliament

The report of the Citizens' Panel sets out the selection process for the Panel, the deliberative approach to considering the question: How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work? and sets out the recommendations of the Panel to the Scottish Parliament.

Introduction

This Citizens' Panel was commissioned by the Scottish Parliament's Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee ("the Committee "). Its findings will support the Committee's inquiry into public participation. The inquiry explores how people's voices are heard in the work of the Parliament.

The Committee wants to make sure that the views and opinions of everyone in Scotland are included in the work of the Scottish Parliament. The inquiry started with the Parliament consulting with people across Scotland. We heard from over 460 people and organisations who told us what improvements they would like to see to make engaging with the Parliament easier.

The Committee wanted to ensure that its work into public participation in the work of Parliament was informed by lived experience.It wanted to talk to people in Scotland who have had the opportunity to learn about the issues relating to public engagement in the work of Parliament. In order to do this, it decided to establish a broadly representative Citizens' Panel.

What is a **Citizens' Panel** and how does it work?

12 to 24 randomly selected citizens

They get to hear and question expert witnesses

They debate, deliberate and make informed recommendations

Source:

The Citizens' Panel met in person at the Scottish Parliament over two weekends, one in October and the other in November. It also met virtually over three Thursday evenings in

November 2022. The Panel was made up of 19 randomly selected individuals who were broadly representative of Scotland's population. The Citizens' Panel was asked to develop recommendations in response to the following question—

> **How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work?**

The Panel spoke to a range of expert witnesses to help them to consider the evidence and ideas that were relevant to answering this question. The participants used facilitated discussions, video conferencing and an online platform to deliberate over these issues and form their recommendations.

This report is divided into three sections:

- The first section provides background information on how the Citizens' Panel was formed and who took part.

- The middle section provides an overview of the Panel's sittings, including how evidence was presented to the participants and their process of deliberation.

- The final section outlines the participants' recommendations.

How the Citizens' Panel was formed

Choosing the question

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee agreed at its meeting on 1 December 2021 that a Citizens' Panel should be established in Autumn 2022 to support the Committee's inquiry into public participation. The Committee agreed that the Citizens' Panel should broadly focus on the public participation in the work of the Scottish Parliament.

The Parliament carried out engagement and evidence gathering for the inquiry in the first half of 2022. This included Committee evidence sessions, a written call for views, a survey, and a series of focus groups with under-represented groups to explore the barriers to public participation in the work of the Parliament. The findings of this initial work helped to inform the issues and topics that could be considered as part of the Citizens' Panel. A summary of the evidence can be found on the Parliament's website.

The Parliament's Citizens' Panel model involves the appointment of an expert Steering Group to support the formation of the question and format. Members of the Steering Group were chosen to form a relevant and balanced group of experts to support the process.

The Steering Group Members were:

- David Reilly, Communities and Networks Manager, Poverty Alliance.

- Kevin Ditcham, Insight and Engagement Lead, Police Scotland.

- Professor Jane Suiter, Professor in the School of Communications, Dublin City

University.

- Professor Min Reuchamps, Professor of political science, Université Catholique de Louvain.

- Dr Paolo Spada, Lecturer, Southampton University.

- Susan Duffy, Group Head of Engagement and Communications, the Scottish Parliament.

The Steering Group developed the overarching question, the design of the sessions, the topics being discussed, and the expert witnesses invited to present on each topic.

When the Steering Group first considered how to frame the overarching question (on 25 August 2022) it agreed to the following wording: "How can the Scottish Parliament ensure that diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work?".

The PACT team designed a Citizen" Panel delivery framework for the sessions, topics and proposed witnesses to be invited to workshop sessions with the panellists.

The Steering Group then met again on 8 September 2022 and agreed that the session design, topics and types of witnesses proposed for the Citizens' Panel were appropriate to support the participants to answer the set question. They also agreed that space should be made available for the panel to choose additional witnesses and information. This was to give the panel some ownership over the evidence presented to them.

The role of the Steering Group is to help ensure that the process is conducted fairly, credibly and transparently. In order to make sure that these principles were also followed through the Citizens' Panel events, and that the Panel's work is accurately reflected in the final outcomes of the inquiry, an external evaluation process was also put into place. This involved an evaluator, recruited by tender through a research contract, reviewing the preparations for the Citizens' Panel, surveying and observing the Panel at work, and gathering feedback from participants and staff.

Participant recruitment

PACT worked with a not-for-profit organisation, the Sortition Foundation, to recruit a randomly selected and stratified sample of 24 people, based on Scottish Census data. Throughout this report the Panel members will be referred to as 'participants'.

Invitation letters from the Committee Convener, Jackson Carlaw MSP, were sent in August 2022 to 4800 residential households across Scotland, selected at random from the Royal Mail's address database. Recipients were invited to register their interest in participating in the Citizens' Panel on Participation. When registering their interest, potential panel members provided the following demographic information: gender, age, ethnicity, disability, educational attainment level and postcode.

We received 159 responses, a 3.3per centresponse rate, and the information provided by potential panel members was then used to select a sample that was broadly representative of the Scottish population. Citizens' Panel participants had their travel and accommodation costs covered and received a participation fee of £330 in recognition of the time and commitment they gave over the two weekends. The payment of expenses

and the participation fee helped to remove barriers to participation and ensured that the voices of those who traditionally may not participate in public engagement exercises were included in the process.

Impact of date changes and change of circumstances

The Citizens' Panel was originally scheduled to meet in September and October. However, due to the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, the original dates had to be rearranged because of the logistical demands on the Parliament during the National Mourning Period.

As a result, three participants were no longer able to attend the rearranged dates. A further two more participants' circumstances changed before the first sitting on the weekend of 18–20 October, which meant they were no longer able to take part. In the short time available, no new participants were able to be recruited to join the panel before the first sitting. The remaining 19 panel members met together at the Scottish Parliament for the first time on the weekend of 18 October, and then for a further weekend and three online sessions between the two weekends.

The data below illustrates that the participants represented a diverse group of citizens and demonstrates the benefits of random stratified selection methods. These methods were used to make sure that the membership of the group includes a balanced selection of participants across a range of characteristics such as gender, age, location, ethnicity and educational attainment. This ensures that the group is broadly representative of the wider population of Scotland.

There were challenges to ensuring a small group were fully representative across all categories. Creating a broadly representative panel and considering participants' multiple characteristics can sometimes lead to slightly varied results in comparison to the Census data. Where this has happened, an explanation of the difference between the selected panel makeup and the Census data is provided below.

The data below shows the demographic makeup of Scotland, the demographic makeup of the original 24 panel members and the demographic makeup of the final 19 panellists. The percentages outlined in brackets below highlight the difference between the make up of the panel and the associated demographic make up of Scotland. For example –3 per centwould mean the panel under-represented a certain group by 3 per cent, or +3 per cent would mean the panel over-represented a certain group, compared to the Scottish population.

Gender

Gender was broadly representative of the Scottish Population

One participant described themselves as 'non-binary or other' and the rest of the panel was evenly split between women and men.

Proportion of gender representation at each stage of the selection process.
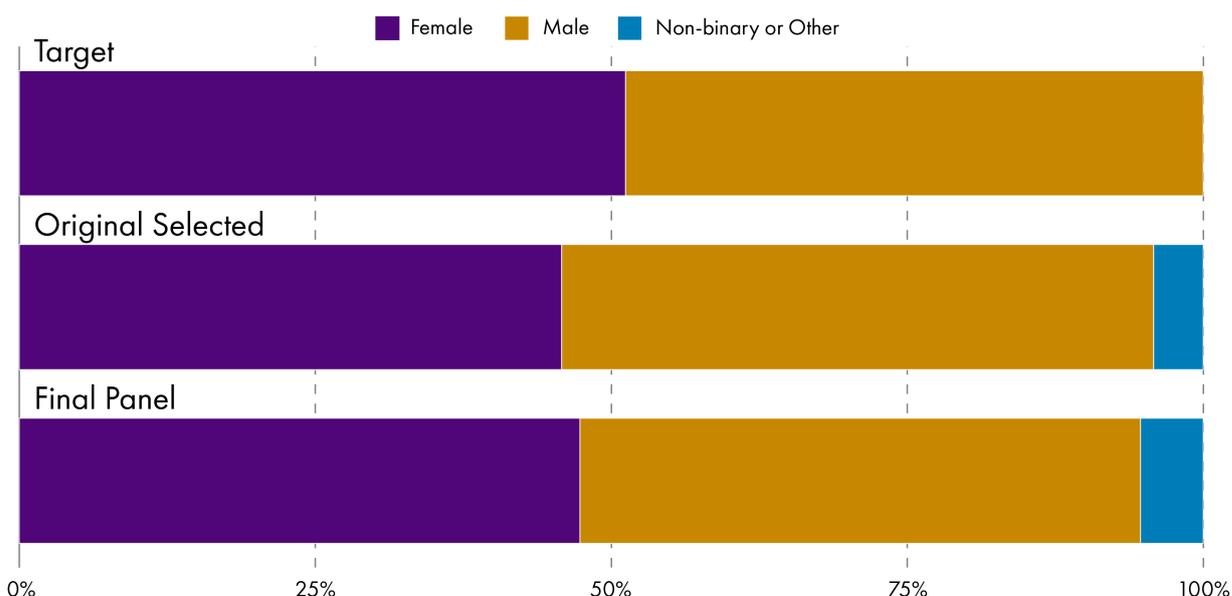
Source:

Age

16-24-yea-olds were under-represented due to last minute changes in circumstances

The original 24 participants closely matched Scottish Census data for age, with only slight variations:

- Age 16-24 years - 4 per cent under-represented compared to whole population.

- Age 25-34 years - broadly representative.

- Age 35-49 years – 2.5 per centover-represented.

- Age 50-64 years – broadly representative.

- Age 65+ - 2 per centover-represented.

However, the impact of the change of date and change of circumstances meant that four participants aged between 16-32, and one participant aged between 50-64 could no longer take part.

The comparison with Scottish Census data for the final panel was:

- Age 16-24 – 12.5 per cent under-represented compared to the whole population.

- Age 25-34 – 1 per cent under-represented.

- Age 35-49 – 4per cent over-represented.

- Age 50-64 – 6.5 per cent over-represented.

- Age 65+ - 3 per cent over-represented.

The final 19 participants were aged between 26-81, and as there were no participant aged 16-24 steps were taken to ensure that voices of younger people were included in the evidence provided during the process.

16-24-year-olds were under-represented due to last minute changes in circumstances.

Proportion of representation by age group at each stage of the selection process.
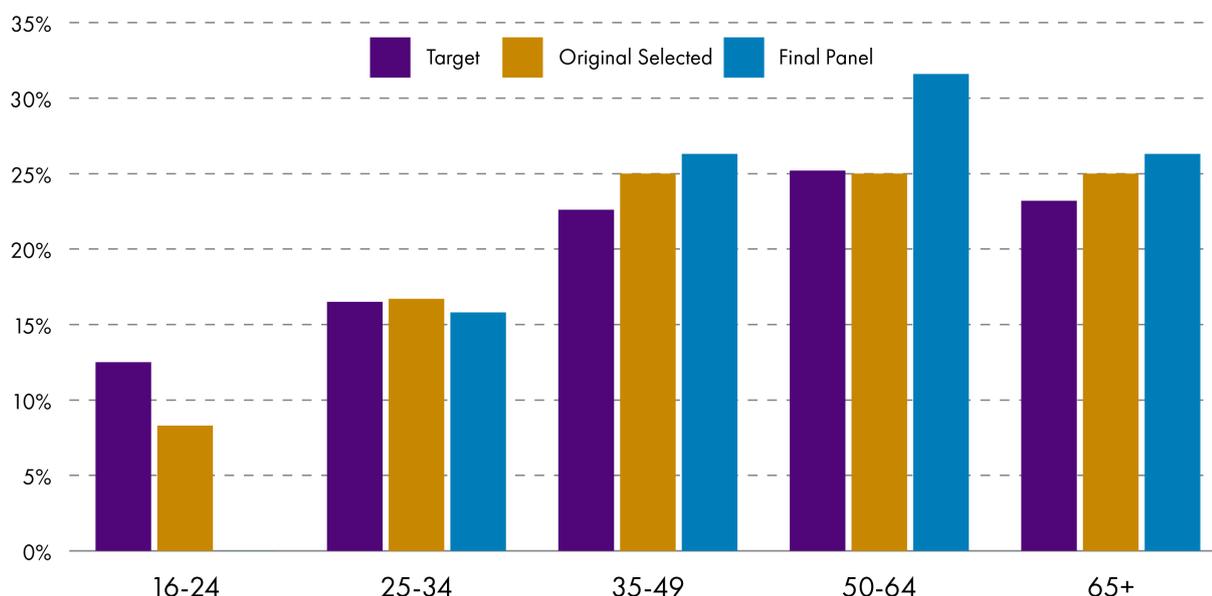
Source:

Region

All eight parliamentary regions were represented but Lothians was under-represented due to last minute changes in circumstances.

We aimed to have participants from every parliamentary region broadly in proportion to their population size. Three of the five participants who could no longer take part following the unexpected change of date were from the Lothian region, one was from Glasgow, and another was from South Scotland. This had an impact on the final geographical mix of the participants.

Some regions were overrepresented compared to the whole population:

- Central Scotland - 4 per cent over-represented.

- Highlands and Islands – 2.5 per cent over-represented.

- North East Scotland – 7 per cent over-represented.

- Glasgow – 1.5per cent over-represented.

Other regions were under-represented:

- Lothians - 10 per centunder-represented.

- Mid-Scotland and Fife - 7 per cent under-represented.

- West Scotland – 2.5 per cent under-represented.

- South Scotland – 2.5 per cent under-represented.

Despite this, the panel included people from all over Scotland, and all eight Parliamentary regions were represented.

Proportion of representation by Scottish Parliamentary region at each stage of the selection process.

Source:

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of participants was broadly representative of the Scottish population

Participants' ethnicity was considered when selecting the panel. Good practice highlighted in the recent report to the Scottish Government from the Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Working Group recommends that participants from marginalised

groups, such as minority ethnic people, should be slightly over-represented in smaller sized citizens' panels. Otherwise, if the panel was selected in line with current census data, there would be only one participant representing minority ethnic communities. In the final panel, 15 of the recruited participants described their ethnicity as 'White Scottish/ British' (79 per cent); twoas 'White Other'; one participant described their ethnicity as Asian and onedescribed their ethnicity as from 'mixed or multiple ethnic groups'.

Disability

The number of participants with disabilities was slightly higher compared to the Scottish population.

To make sure that that those with disabilities were represented on the panel, participants were asked if they were living with a long term physical or mental health condition.

- 32 per cent of the panel said they lived with a long term physical or mental health condition that was limiting their everyday life – this is eightper cent higher than the population as a whole.

- Five per cent said they lived with a long term physical or mental health condition that was not limiting – this is one per cent lower than the population as whole.

- 63 per cent said they had no long term physical or mental health conditions – this is 7 per cent lower than the population as whole.

Education level

**Participants with no qualifications were under-represented**

Educational attainment was defined by the levels set out in the 2011 Census questionnaire:

- No Qualifications.

- Level 1: National 4 or 5, Standard Grades, O Grades, or equivalent.

- Level 2: Higher, Advanced Higher, A Level, or equivalent.

- Level 3: HNC, HND, SVQ level 4 or equivalent.

- Level 4 & above Degree, Postgraduate qualifications, Masters, PhD, or equivalent.

People with higher levels of education tend to be more likely to respond to the initial invitation to take part. However, the use of stratified sampling meant that the final panel included participants from different educational attainment levels to make sure that people with all levels of education were represented.

Participants with no qualifications were under-represented

Proportion of representation by level of education at each stage of the selection process.
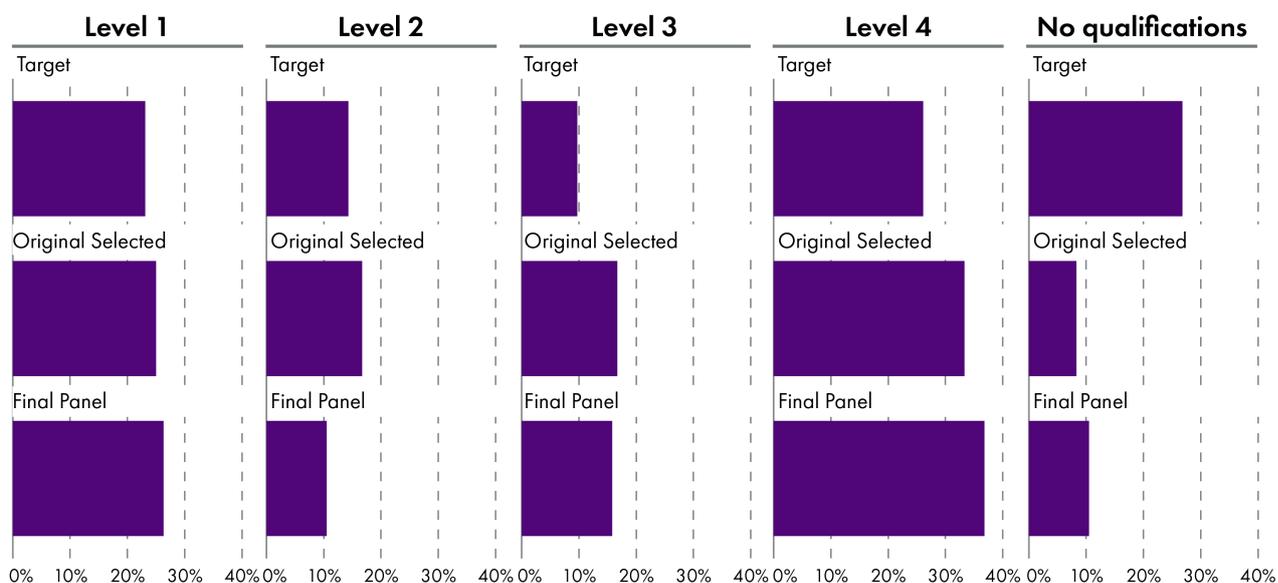
Source:

Despite the use of stratified sampling, people with some of the lower levels of educational attainment were under-represented compared to the overall population:

- People with no Qualifications – 16 per cent under-represented.

- People with Level 2 attainment (Higher or equivalent) –6 per cent under-represented

- People with Level 3 attainment (SVQ level 4 or equivalent) – 1 per cent under-represented

Two groups were overrepresented:

- People with Level 1 attainment (National 4/5 or equivalent) – 3 per cent ove-represented

- People with Level 4 attainment (degree and above) – 11 per cent over-represented

Facilitation process

Who is involved in the process?

Facilitators

Guide and support participants through the process

Expert witnesses

Provide evidence, expertise and potential solutions

Source:

The Citizens' Panel process involved team building; learning about the Scottish Parliament, participation and deliberative democracy; questioning witnesses; deliberation and consensus-based decision-making. A team of 12 facilitators and note takers from the Scottish Parliament supported this, guiding the participants through the activities and ensuring all participants had the opportunity to contribute to discussions and participate in the exercises.

After being selected and agreeing to take part, participants were asked if they required access to a laptop or internet to help them in their role as a panellist. One participant was provided with a tablet and a SIM cardfor data to access the internet for the duration of the Panel to ensure they could take part in the process. All participants were given training and written guidance to use the video conferencing software Zoom and the online discussion site Your Priorities.

During all sessions, steps were taken to ensure every participant had an opportunity to take part and contribute to discussions. These steps included:

- working in small groups to ensure participants had time to fully explore and make sense of evidence and provide reasons for their opinions in a relaxed environment;

- whole group discussions to ensure all participants were involved in key discussions and decisions at the same time;

- providing opportunities for participants to quietly reflect on the evidence they had heard before discussing issues with the wider group;

- ensuring the participants could contribute to the design of the second weekend of the Citizens' Panel, including having the opportunity to suggest the types of witnesses they wanted to hear from to help them answer the question; and,

- providing an online platform where participants could reflect on the information provided between sittings, pose questions and identify potential recommendations to

be explored in future sittings.

Facilitators also ensured participants worked in groups with as many different people as possible to expose them to a range of views and to prevent individual voices dominating discussions, and maintaining, as far as possible, a balance of gender and age in each breakout space.

Note takers supported participants during each session to capture information from discussions on flipcharts. These were used to keep track of the issues raised and to prioritise questions and topics. A section was also set up in the online platform, Your Priorities, to keep track of the issues and ideas that arose during sessions so that participants could review the evidence in between panel meetings.
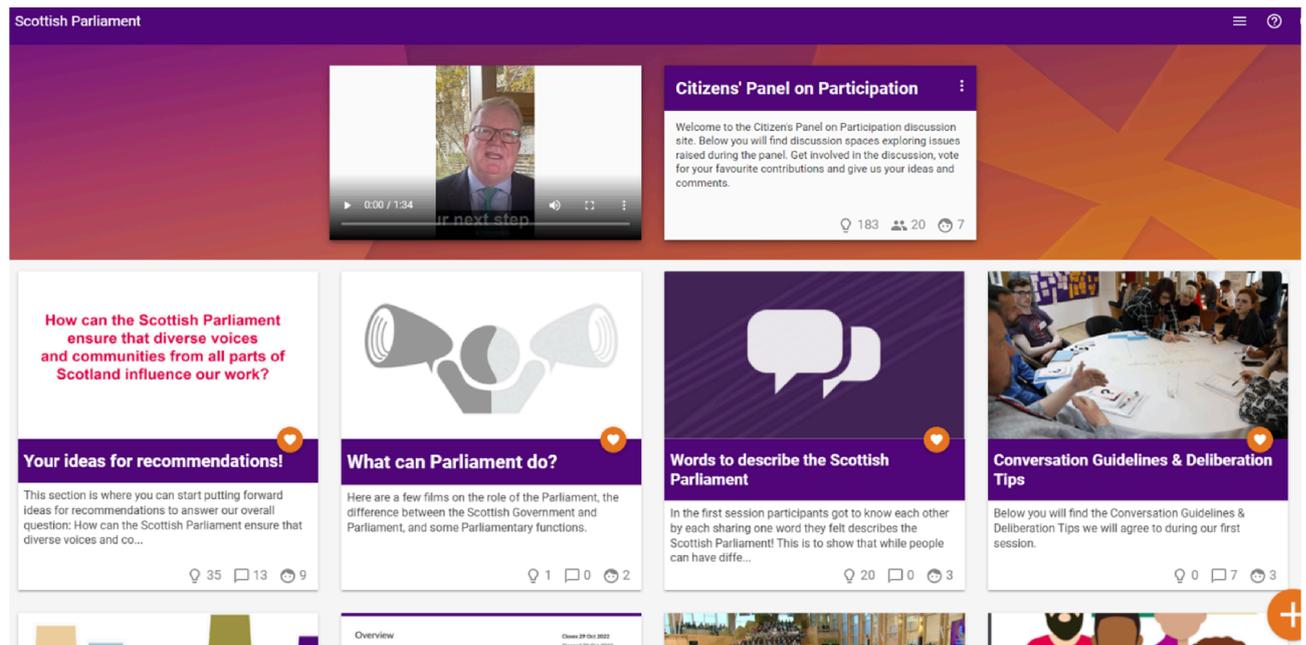
Source:

Evidence-gathering and deliberation

Friday 28 October 2022

Parliamentary awareness

Jackson Carlaw MSP, Convener of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee, welcomed participants at the start of the first weekend and explained the reasons why the panel had been formed, the background to the Committee's inquiry and how the panel's recommendations would be used by the Committee.

PACT facilitators then delivered interactive activities in different parts of the Parliament building to help participants learn about how the Scottish Parliament works. This included explaining the Scottish Parliament's role in holding the Scottish Government to account and the devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament, as well as demonstrating how committee meetings and chamber debates work.

Saturday 29 October 2022

Conversation guidelines and introduction to critical thinking

Participants were supported to agree conversation guidelines to underpin how they would work together. These included, for example, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute and disagree respectfully. The agreed guidelines were displayed in the room throughout the process so they could be referred to by facilitators and participants if necessary.

Dr Oliver Escobar, Senior Lecturer in Public Policy at the University of Edinburgh, then spoke to the participants about assessing evidence and applying critical thinking during the process.

The participants worked in small groups, each supported by visiting participants from previous citizens' panels run by the Scottish Parliament. The visitors shared their experiences of what had been helpful to them in working together as a panel.

Learning from the CPPPC inquiry

Source:

A Senior Researcher from the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) presented a summary of the findings from the Committee's consultation with people across Scotland in the first phase of its inquiry. The 460 responses from written submissions, surveys and focus groups were distilled into a series of key messages about barriers to public participation in the work of the Parliament.

Participants asked questions and then discussed and rated the key messages to explore the findings from the inquiry and the Panel's initial thoughts on the question they were answering.

Participants' attitudes to democracy

To help participants consider how public attitudes to democracy might influence participation, they were presented with the results of a survey of their own opinions as a group. This covered issues around political involvement, capacity to influence decision making, and trust in MSPs and the Scottish Parliament.

They then worked together to identify and prioritise the questions they wanted to ask witnesses at a future session on public trust and motivation to participate

Meeting with MSPs

Source:

Participants were given the opportunity to question three MSPs from different political parties about the value they saw in public participation in Parliament's work and what barriers they felt existed to people taking part. The MSPs who took part were Maggie Chapman MSP, Pam Gosal MSP and David Torrance MSP. (Daniel Johnson MSP also agreed to attend but unfortunately had to withdraw on the day of the Panel.)

Sunday 30 October 2022

Why does Parliament struggle to engage with certain groups?

The Panel worked in small groups to view and discuss short videos from members of the public who had participated in the early stages of the Committee's inquiry.

The video evidence came from people across Scotland who are part of groups the Parliament traditionally struggles to engage with including:

- young people;

- people from ethnic minorities;

- people with disabilities;

- those who live in rural areas; and,

- people who have lived experience of low income.
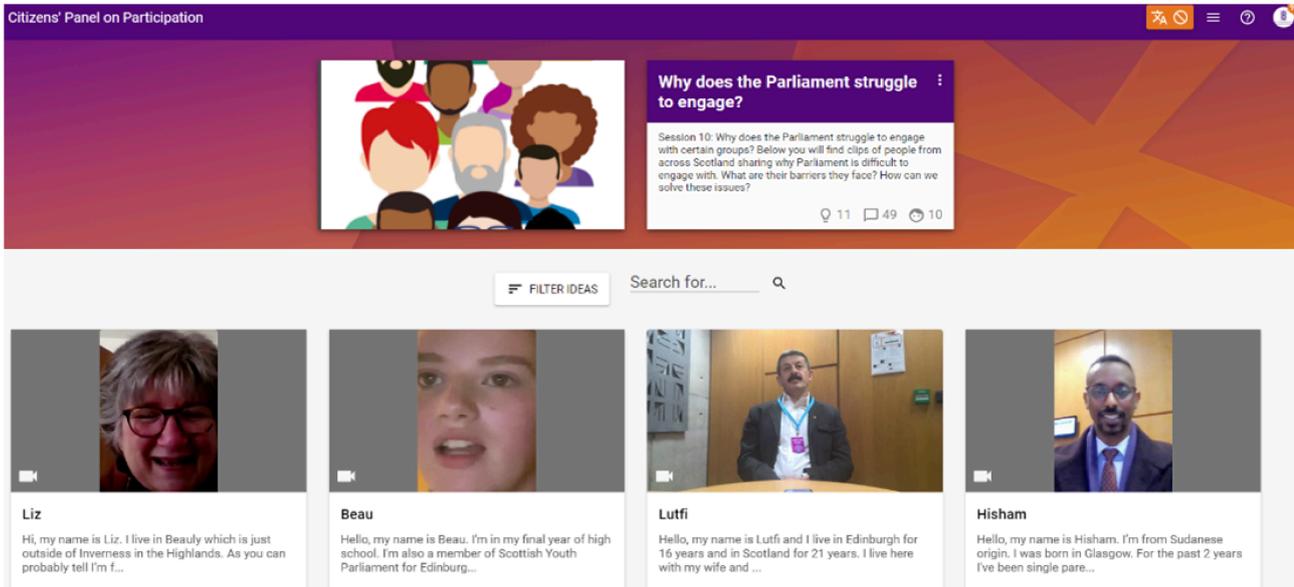
Source:

The Panel discussed their initial reactions and thoughts on the barriers people faced. They then put forward ideas for how the Parliament could reduce barriers for those who find it a challenge to participate in the work of Parliament.

How to build trust and motivation to participate?

Source:

The Panel were joined by political scientists to discuss issues relating to lack of trust in democracy and overcoming apathy and barriers to participation.

The Panel put questions to:

• Dr Danielle Beswick, University of Birmingham,

• Professor Cristina Leston-Bandeira, University of Leeds

- Professor Will Jennings, University of Southampton.

The Panel and guest witnesses discussed:

- behaviour of politicians;

- public mistrust in politics;

- using local issues and local media to support engagement on national issues;

- the best ways to engage under-represented groups;

- lack of public knowledge about the work of Parliament;

- the influence of lobby groups and organisations; and,

- the civic duty to participate.

Representation and relatability

Source:

This session was used to help the participants consider core Parliamentary business (debates, questions and legislation) and how relatable and accessible it is or could be to the public. Participants moved around three stations, and in each they were shown a short video from a member of Parliament staff from the relevant team, who explained their role, the significance of the business area they supported, and where there were opportunities for the public to get involved. Sample materials such as video clips from the Chamber and extracts from Official Reports (the written record of Parliament meetings) were also available. Participants then discussed what could be done to increase understanding and awareness and any ways that the public could or should be more involved in Parliamentary business.

Education & awareness

Three stations were set up summarising what activities the Parliament currently undertakes in the Holyrood building, online, and in communities to inform and educate the

public. Participants moved round each station in turn identifying what they liked, didn't like or felt was missing. Participants then fed back their reflections to each other and asked questions of the Scottish Parliament's Head of Outreach Services, Public information and Resources.

What should we keep doing or try?

Participants were divided into three small groups, each of which reviewed a case study about engagement approaches taken in the Scottish Parliament or elsewhere. The three case studies covered:

- the Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee's low income and debt inquiry which used an experts by experience panel (people with direct experience of the topic) to advise the Committee;

- the Scottish Parliament Covid-19 Committee's use of an online platform to generate questions for MSPs to put to Ministers; and,

- an example from Australia of an MP running a deliberative "Town Hall" on an issue linked to a conscience vote.

Participants fed back to the whole group at the end on the strengths and challenges of the approach they had considered and any possible recommendations about how they might be used in the Scottish Parliament in the future.

Preparation for the second weekend

At the end of this weekend, participants were given the opportunity to discuss and recommend what should be included in two planned online sessions and in the second weekend to allow them to answer the question they had been set.

Between the two weekends, all the evidence to date was summarised on the online platform, Your Priorities, and the participants were encouraged to review and comment on the various ideas.

After the first two online sessions (see below), a space was also created where participants could review all the ideas generated for possible recommendations and suggest their own additions.

Thursday 3 November 2022 (online session)

Deliberative democracy

A key part of the Committee's remit is to explore the use of deliberative democracy, Citizen's Assemblies or other forms of participative engagement. The first online session, held over Zoom, focused on this.

To help discuss issues around the use of deliberative democracy participants heard short presentations from:

- Kelly McBride, Deliberative Democracy Lead, TPX Impact.

- Dr Oliver Escobar, University of Edinburgh.

- Professor Ian O'Flynn, University of Newcastle.

- Professor Cristina Lafont, Northwestern University (Illinois, USA).

The presenters spoke about::

- what deliberative democracy is;

- the use of "mini-publics" in Scotland;

- principles of a good mini-public;

- thoughts on the potential of deliberative democracy to involve the public in the work of Parliament; and,

- the potential benefits and issues related to the use of deliberative democracy to support Parliamentary scrutiny.

The participants then worked together to question the presenters and to help each other learn more about the risks and rewards related to the use of deliberative democracy processes like citizens' panels.

Thursday 10 November 2022 (online session)

Communications and the media

The participants had proposed a session on the Parliament's use of communications tools and the role of the media in encouraging public participation. In this second Zoom session, a Senior Communications Officer from the Parliamentary Communications Office and Colin Mackay, Political Editor for STV, talked about their roles and answered questions from the Panel.

Thursday 17 November 2022 (online session)

Participants were offered an optional Zoom session before the second weekend to discuss the evidence to date and the ideas being posted on the online platform, and to ask the facilitators any questions they had. Nine participants attended.

Friday 18 November 2022

Review of evidence

A display of the evidence heard to date was set up in the room and participants worked together to create a visual representation of what they had learned so far.

Saturday 19 November 2022

How should the Parliament use mini-publics?

The purpose of this session was to review the evidence from the online session on 3 November, and to consider further how mini-publics (processes like Citizens' Panels where randomly selected broadly representative groups are supported to make recommendations on an issue) can be used to support the work of Parliament, including the range of options and challenges to overcome.

The participants were put into smaller groups which moved in turn between three different experts. Each expert gave a short introduction to their experience and the participants could then ask questions. The experts were:

- Claudia Chwalisz, founder of Democracy Next.

- Jonathan Moskovic, Advisor in Democratic Innovation to Brussels French-speaking Parliament.

- Andy Williamson, Head of Research at the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Under-represented groups – testing our ideas

At the previous weekend, participants explored whether there were any gaps in the evidence they had heard so far. These discussions resulted in a requested session with young people and with community groups working with under-represented communities, as participants felt the issues faced by these groups had not been fully covered.

Before this session, participants agreed who would meet which contributors in this session. They then reviewed their draft recommendations to date to identify which ones they wanted to test with the contributors.

Participants broke into their agreed four groups to learn more about the work of contributors and then to discuss the benefits, drawbacks and scope of their selected recommendations in order to test their relevance. These discussions generated new ideas for recommendations, and also suggestions to amend existing ideas. The groups heard from:

Group 1

- Artemis Pana, Scottish Rural Action.

- Kimberley Somerside, Voluntary Health Scotland.

- Ross Gibson, Children and Young People Centre for Justice.

Group 2

- Bill Scott, Inclusion Scotland.

- Olivia Ndoti, Expert by Experience.

- David Reilly, Poverty Alliance.

- Ron Graham, Expert by Experience.

Group 3

- Zaffir Hakim, Engage Renfrewshire.

- Parveen Ishaq, Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equalities Council.

- Mitra Rostami, Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equalities Council.

Group 4 (young people)

- Gavin Stewart, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament.

- A volunteer from Aberlour Children's Charity.

Sifting recommendations

Over the course of the first weekend, the evening online sessions and the first day of the final weekend, the panel had collectively produced over 60 draft recommendations. In order to help the panel process these, facilitators sorted the recommendations into broad themes of education and communication; deliberative democracy; public involvement in the work of parliament; and community engagement.

Participants moved around themed tables adding red or green dots to ideas that they thought had more or less potential. At the end of the session participants had selected a smaller number of recommendations to explore with the Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament in the following session.

The challenge of implementation

The Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament, David McGill, answered questions from the panel about the potential opportunities and challenges of implementing some of their draft recommendations selected from the previous session. The Chief Executive gave his thoughts about how they might be implemented. He also discussed with the panel what they might consider while refining their recommendations including resource needs, the current political context and what the Parliament currently offers.

Sunday 20 November 2022

Agreeing recommendations

Participants worked throughout the day in several phases to refine and agree their recommendations. The clerk to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee outlined her experience of what makes a good recommendation in a committee report to help the participants consider what their recommendations should look like. Around 60 ideas were available on cards, grouped at different tables under the same broad headings that were used on Saturday.

In the first phase, participants chose which table to start at, with the option to move to another table at any point. At this stage participants considered which recommendations could be merged or made more specific, and also marked with a red dot any recommendation that they disagreed with or that they felt needed a lot of improvement.

In the next phase, working in plenary, participants reviewed all the recommendations that

had a significant number of red dots and made a decision collectively to remove them or to improve them, agreeing wording that would strengthen them sufficiently.

Over lunch, all the remaining recommendations were recorded digitally by facilitators in a single master document, which participants then worked from for the final sessions. Paper copies of the master document were printed and the participants again chose which themed table to start at and were free to move between groups during the session. Facilitators stationed at each of the tables captured revised wording in the master document once it was clear that there was consensus between a majority of participants visiting each table.

For the final plenary session, participants worked through the master document on screen to agree their final recommendations. The final decision-making stage was based on a consensus model. The whole group suggested and reviewed potential recommendations and agreed as a group. If the panel member agreed with the proposal, they would show a green card. If they had further questions, or changes they wanted to make, they would hold up a red card to prompt further discussion in order to reach a consensus.

Because of weather-related travel disruption, some participants had to leave early (and one had not been able to join in person for the second weekend but attended virtually on Teams wherever could be accommodated). The remaining participants worked through all the recommendations, but agreed that there should be a further sign-off via email and another online meeting to ensure all participants agreed with the final recommendations.

Thursday 24 November 2022

The revised recommendations were circulated to all the panel members, making clear that this was their final opportunity to make any changes. Some confirmed via email that they were content and had no further comments. Nine members attended a final online session where some refinements to wording were agreed and the final text was approved.

Recommendations

The Panel agreed on 17 recommendations in total, along the themes of community engagement, how the Parliament uses deliberative democracy, public involvement in Parliamentary business, and community and education. Some of these recommendations stands alone, and others have further sub-recommendations and explanations which support the aim of the main recommendation or suggest how it might be taken forward.

Community Engagement

1. Remove barriers to participation so that everyone has an equal opportunity to be involved in the work of the Parliament.

Follow up on previous research by researching different methods of engagement, who they work for, and the resource that is needed to use these methods.

Apply research to use different engagement methods to reach the whole of

society, including non-digital and digital approaches.

Be mindful of solutions to reach all parts of society - work together with people to identify and create appropriate engagement methods for start to finish inclusion. Innovations like citizens' panels are good but be careful for how costly they are and how they may not engage people with other responsibilities or concerns such as child caring responsibilities, those on low incomes, those who don't have flexibility around work. Have an active approach to seeking out alternative voices and ensuring opportunities to engage are as flexible and as varied as possible: when, how and where people feel comfortable.

Raise awareness that the Scottish Parliament will provide payment which addresses the cost barriers that people face when coming to the Parliament and taking part in engagement activities, such as travel expenses, lost income from time off work, childcare and additional costs related to accessibility requirements.

This could also be expanded so that experts or individuals representing already identified protected groups or minority communities could be paid for a couple of days a month to work with different teams. Paying for engagement isn't enough to make it effective though – training and education are crucial to make community engage effectively.

Ensure access for people with English as a second language including promoting and improving use of Happy to Translate [iii] **. Support participation from those with learning disabilities by promoting and increasing the of Easy Read.**

2. Create opportunities for people to use and share their lived experience to engage on issues that they care about.

We heard that people are effective at being experts on things and can upskill and educate themselves very quickly if they need to - COVID-19 proved that. We don't have the bandwidth to feel passionate about everything all the time – but when we do we need to have the channels there to engage.

When identifying witnesses, ensure an even balance between academic and professional experts, and people with lived experience.

Experts by experience panels can be empowered by the process because they are treated as equal and the group can bond and build empathy. Committees could also build communities of practice embedded in communities across Scotland (e.g. farmers group, disability awareness and support groups) to work with members and Parliamentary staff.

3. Raise awareness of Parliamentary business in plain and transparent language

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[iii] Happy to Translate is a national initiative developed to promote equal access to services by overcoming language barriers.

including visual media

Core principle: Use clear and direct language and visuals to communicate information about parliament, including legislation.

Undertake research into the general public's level of trust and knowledge about the everyday work of the Scottish Parliament.

How many people are actually satisfied with their dealings with their representatives compared to those who are dissatisfied? What level of understanding do the public have around the difference between Parliament and Government? If people knew that Parliament was an independent institution here to represent the people of Scotland, pass laws and hold the Government and public bodies to account, they would be more likely to engage.

4. Bring the Parliament to the people.

The Parliament should test approaches to using regional engagement/information hubs and/or a travelling exhibition or mobile unit.

The Parliament should go to where people already are and where they feel safe and have a sense of community and support; and talk to people about their issues rather than politics. We would like to see the Parliament testing the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of:

- displays in public spaces where people are informed of the topical debates affecting their community and are able to communicate their views simply. These could be in schools, libraries, art galleries, community centres, shopping centres and parks;

- Information hubs in towns across Scotland; and,

- A mobile "Parliament bus" to make the Parliament visible in small or rural communities, where the public can share views, learn, ask questions, etc.

5. Ensure that community engagement by MSPs doesn't exclude people that are outwith community groups, including by using evenings, weekends and online services.

6. Create a system such as a webpage where people can register and be notified about opportunities to engage.

The Parliament should create and advertise means for people to register their details and interests with the Parliament. MSPs and Committees would be able to contact individuals about opportunities to engage in the work of Parliament when an issue arises that individuals are interested in. This idea was inspired by the amount of issues discussed at parliament at any one time passing the public by - this solution could ensure that no one misses the chance to engage.

How the Parliament uses Deliberative Democracy

7. Legislate for Deliberative Democracy in order to ensure that:

- **diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence Scottish Parliament's work, and**

- **the public are consistently informed and consulted on local and national issues.**

In drawing up this legislation the Parliament should:

- Recognise that there is not one engagement solution that fits all situations and issues.

- Design and implement a framework based on this panel's recommendations for ensuring diverse participation in deliberative democracy.

The framework should include:

- An annually recurring citizens' panel with agenda-setting powers to determine which local and national issues require either national or local people's panels (e.g., 'deliberative town halls').

- Protection for participants to improve participation. We do not agree that participation in panels should be mandatory, but protective elements such as the right to time off work should be included for people who are selected to take part.

- Rules around how MSPs consider and respond to recommendations from people's panels such as mandatory follow-up to people's panels' recommendations no later than 9 months and a response from the Parliament and Government.

- Potential for mixed MSP–people panels.

- Ability to form local panels with local MSPs with outcomes that are sent up to the national level.

8. Build a strong evidence base for deliberative democracy to determine its effectiveness and develop a framework for measuring impact

9. Build cross-party support for deliberative democracy as this is needed for it to work

10. We recommend that one of the panels which should be set up is a specific people's panel[iv] to discuss the MSPs' code of conduct

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iv Note: we heard various different terms used to describe this form of engagement

Public involvement in Parliamentary business

11. Carry out a cost-benefit analysis of the Parliament itself or committees meeting outside of Holyrood and compare this to (a) more support and targeted invitations for people to come to Holyrood and (b) reinstating Parliament days (MSPs going out into communities for a day of activity).

12. Set a 9-month deadline as a default for feedback on the outcome of any engagement with clear reasons where this deadline would not be met (if applicable). The live status of the decision making process should be clear and transparent throughout.

Parliament could create a minimum standard of response. For example:

- initial acknowledgement of engagement;

- follow up to explain how many responses and what happens next;

- a follow up with information on the outcome of the inquiry;

- signposting with more information;

- traffic light system for inquiries flagging up what has been addressed and what hasn't; and,

- Monitoring calls logged and establishing rules as to how long someone would have to wait for a response.

This would show people that their participation is worthwhile and make people feel that their voice is being heard. Legislation and inquires can take a long time, so set expectations and from the start and consider how you will keep people involved in the longer term. If you don't do this it will fuel apathy and mistrust.

13. Give the Presiding Officer the power to compel MSPs to give an answer to all questions asked: that is, a direct reply that is relevant to the question. This should include a process for a deferred answer if an immediate answer cannot be given. This will improve public trust and engagement.

14. Schedule specific time in the debating Chamber for individual public questions to be asked.

We recognise that there would need to be a process to filter questions and ensure they were relevant and to determine who asked the questions and how.

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including "mini-publics" or "citizens' panels". We have settled on the term "people's panels" as we think this is engaging and easy to understand.

Communication and Education

15. Use media outlets, documentaries and short films to highlight Parliament successes and real life stories of engagement to improve public perception and trust.

We heard that the Scottish Parliament needs to do more to tell people about its engagement and participation work, as those it reaches are positive about the experience. Then it is a matter of finding the best marketing practices to reach as many people as possible.

Use people who have had positive interaction and experience with Parliament to tell their story through national and local media (TV/radio/newspaper etc.) and community groups. The public sometimes find it easier to digest information by way of another person telling them. Make sure people know about the teams of staff working on engagement as well as MSPs.

16. The Parliament should run a general information campaign explaining the role of the Scottish Parliament – a single brochure or leaflet explaining who your local MSPs are, what a call for views is and the role of the Parliamentary service and its impartiality and separateness from Government.

All age ranges may need more information on what the Parliament does and what it can do for them. We think this is something that could be done quickly.

17. The Parliament should hold an inquiry into the relationship between the aims of the current curriculum and the Parliament to explore systematic changes that can be made throughout schools and in communities to improve children and young people's knowledge and awareness of Parliament - and deliberative democracy - including through mentorships, internships and competitions.

Our vision is that by the Parliament's 25th anniversary there should be a clear plan in place so that by the Parliament's 30th anniversary, all young people of voting age have clear understanding and knowledge about engaging with Parliament and Government and all see engaging with Parliament as a normal aspect of everyday life.