Public Services Level 3 – Representation from Outside Government

1 of 19 – Welcome

Not all government policies start their lives within government departments. The creation of a policy may be a result of representations that have been made from outside government, possibly through one of the following routes:

* Opposition MPs
* MPs’ constituency surgeries
* Letters to MPs
* Pressure groups

By the end of this session you will be able to:

* Know how to contact your local Member of Parliament (MP)
* State the different ways a petition can be presented
* Identify different pressure groups

2 of 19 – Getting your voice heard

If someone wants to raise the profile of a campaign, or change the law or government policy, speaking to their local MP is a good way to get their voice heard.

An MP can be contacted when people living in their area are affected by the decisions made by the UK Parliament or by the government. MPs represent all the people in the local area, whether they vote for them or not.

3 of 19 – MPs

Many MPs have two offices. One in their constituency and one in the House of Commons.

You can find out information about your MP online, such as their present post in the government, the committees they sit on, and the issues they are interested in.

Visit the website below to view a list of current MPs. Pick someone in the present cabinet, and follow the link to see what you can find out about them:

[MPs – UK Parliament](https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/)

4 of 19 – Your local MP

You should now know a little bit about your chosen MP, but what do you know about your own MP?

To find out who your local MP is, enter your postcode into the search function. Do this now to see what you can find out about them. Here’s the link again if you need it:

[MPs – UK Parliament](https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/)

5 of 19 – Contacting your MP

The information below shows some ways that you can contact your MP.

**Writing**

Writing to an MP is probably the best method as it provides a written record that can be referred to later on. You can write to an MP at: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

**Telephone**

To ask a quick question or to make an appointment you can telephone 020 7219 3000, and ask to be put through to your chosen MP’s office.

**Social Media**

MPs now have a media presence and can be contacted using social media or through their website.

**Local surgery**

MPs hold sessions where they meet constituents to talk about issues of concern. They are useful as it is an opportunity to get direct answers to specific questions or issues.

6 of 19 – Questions to parliament

MPs can put questions to parliament by:

* Submitting written questions to government departments
* Asking oral questions in the House of Commons Chamber

They can ask the government about any of the following:

* What they are doing about an issue?
* How many people have been affected by a problem?
* How many people have been helped by a government policy?

7 of 19 – Requesting a debate

Debates provide a useful opportunity for MPs to make a case directly to Ministers, who can then take action on the matters that have been raised.

All debates can be viewed live on parliamentlive.tv and everything that is said in a debate is recorded and published. Here is the link:

[Parliament Live TV](https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Commons)

Follow the link below for an example of a debate on car insurance for young people:

[Car Insurance: Young People](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-03-20/debates/E796B9EB-F7DB-4376-A615-AF50A04E69E2/CarInsuranceYoungPeople)

8 of 19 – Car insurance debate

The debate took place following a petition which was signed by 185,000 people, asking for something to be done about the high cost of car insurance premiums for young drivers.

You will have seen that a lot was discussed during the debate. Debates can become quite difficult to follow so the main points have been highlighted for you below.

Key Points:

* 1 in 5 drivers has an accident within 6 months of passing their test
* Young drivers are 10 times more likely to make a claim
* Accidents are often a result of failure of current tuition and test procedures
* Present driver training teaches young people to pass a test rather than how to become a safe and competent driver
* High insurance premiums exclude young people from work. 1 in 5 jobs advertised requires a driving licence and 63% of people need a car to get to work
* Excludes young people from the societal norm of the freedom to run and own a car
* Leads to isolation, alienation and a sense of failure
* Consideration should be given to passing on costs of expensive whiplash claims to premium holders whether they are young or old
* Moving the age of responsibility from 17 to 18 should be considered
* The high cost of insurance could lead young drivers to drive without insurance, having disastrous consequences for both themselves and other road users
* Research for the RAC foundation showed that although teenage drivers make up only 1.5% of full licence holders, they are involved in 12% of accidents where someone is killed or seriously hurt
* Insurance premiums can be reduced by completing a *Pass Plus*practical course that helps drivers to improve their skills and drive more safely
* Introducing telematics could encourage safer driving
* Introduce graduated driving licences, providing restrictions on aspects such as time of day or number of passengers in a car
* In rural communities, a driving licence is a means of getting out and about, as well as promoting work opportunities
* Insurers may not reduce premiums even if risks have been lessened
* The cost of young drivers is lives lost and families in mourning. Premiums can be prohibitively expensive, but a greater concern should be the cause. Novice drivers are much more likely to be involved in fatal accidents
* There may be other reasons for the rise in premiums and consideration should be given to spreading it across a wider age group
* Due to high premiums younger drivers buy older cars which might not be safe
* There is a reliance on the bank of mum and dad to cover the high cost of driving

9 of 19 – What do you think?

Now that you have had a look at the key facts, what do you think?

Revisit the debate if you want to look at it in more detail:

[Car Insurance: Young People](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-03-20/debates/E796B9EB-F7DB-4376-A615-AF50A04E69E2/CarInsuranceYoungPeople)

If the key facts give you all the information you need, then download the **Representation from outside Government – task PDF** and decide which of the key facts support reducing the high premiums and which of the facts support keeping the premiums as they are. When you have done this, decide which side you would be on and write your response to the debate.

10 of 19 – Government response

Now you have completed your response, take a look at the main arguments the government put forward.

**Government response:**

The Government response stated that the issue being discussed was about road safety and that it was the root causes of high insurance premiums that should be addressed rather than the premiums themselves.

It argued that the root causes included the rate at which fraudulent, minor, and exaggerated whiplash claims have increased in the UK and this was being addressed through the Prison and Courts Bill.

The other root cause was seen to be the high levels of risk associated with young drivers. To counteract this root cause the following aspects were being considered:

* £2 million research programme to test effectiveness of a range of technological solutions and educational and behavioural measures
* Focusing on a number of measures to ensure young people are fit and safe to drive
* Ensuring driving tests assess the skills needed for safe, independent driving and therefore they are looking at changing the driving test
* Looking at innovative applications, such as augmented and virtual reality, to improve drivers’ hazard perception

They are not looking to introduce graduated driving licences. They are seeking to improve road safety and reduce risks which will lead to reductions in the amount paid for insurance premiums.

11 of 19 – Public petitions

MPs can be asked to present a public petition to the House of Commons.

Petitions can make clear requests to the House of Commons to take action on issues.

Public petitions can be handwritten, printed out, or submitted as an e-petition.

Any e-petition with more than 10,000 signatures will automatically receive a response from the Government. Any e-petition with more than 100,000 signatures is then considered for debate, as you saw with the debate about insurance premiums for young drivers.

12 of 19 – Pressure groups

Pressure groups are organisations which campaign for changes in the law or new legislation in specific areas. The different kinds of pressure groups include:

**Cause or ‘promotional’ groups**

These are open membership from the public. They promote a cause, for example, Friends of the Earth, which is concerned with protecting the environment. Other examples include Liberty and the RSPCA.

**Interest or ‘sectional’ groups**

These are open only to certain individuals, like the members of a trade union, e.g. the National Union of Journalists, the Farmers Union, or the Fire Brigades Union.

**Insider groups**

These have close links with the government. They will give advice and will be consulted prior to legislation which may affect that group, e.g. the British Medical Association will be consulted on matters relating to health.

**Outsider groups**

These groups often take action of which the government disapproves. Organisations like Greenpeace often engage in civil disobedience or direct action in order to reinforce their point.

Some outsider groups are also wealthy and use a great deal of publicity to attract people to promote their cause. Other examples of outsider groups include Fathers 4 Justice and CND.

13 of 19 – The influence of pressure groups

Pressure groups can have an influence on both policy formulation and policy implementation.

**Policy formulation**

They give the government ideas, information and advice. As the governments are generalist, they listen to the advice that has been given to them. They provide them with a network to consult with. The larger groups can have an influence on their members and consequently on the government.

**Policy implementation**

They can get involved with how the policy is actually implemented. For example, the National Farmers Union works with DEFRA on issues such as animal welfare and farm subsidies.

14 of 19 – Question 1

Which of the groups from the choices below are cause or ‘promotional’ groups?

Choose all that apply:

1. Friends of the Earth
2. British Medical Foundation
3. Greenpeace
4. National Union of Journalists
5. Liberty
6. National Farmers Union
7. CND
8. Fathers 4 Justice
9. RSPCA

The correct answers are A, E and I, Friends of the Earth, Liberty and RSPCA.

15 of 19 – Question 2

Which of the groups from the choices below are interest or ‘sectional’ groups?

1. Friends of the Earth
2. British Medical Foundation
3. Greenpeace
4. National Union of Journalists
5. Liberty
6. National Farmers Union
7. CND
8. Fathers 4 Justice
9. RSPCA

The correct answers are D and F, National Union of Journalists and National Farmers Union.

16 of 19 – Question 3

Which of the groups from the choices below are insider groups?

1. Friends of the Earth
2. British Medical Foundation
3. Greenpeace
4. National Union of Journalists
5. Liberty
6. National Farmers Union
7. CND
8. Fathers 4 Justice
9. RSPCA

The correct answer is B, British Medical Foundation.

17 of 19 – Question 4

Which of the groups from the choices below are outsider groups?

1. Friends of the Earth
2. British Medical Foundation
3. Greenpeace
4. National Union of Journalists
5. Liberty
6. National Farmers Union
7. CND
8. Fathers 4 Justice
9. RSPCA

The correct answers are C, G and H, Greenpeace, CND and Fathers 4 Justice.

18 of 19 – End

You have completed this session on the role of government committees in creating policy.

During this session you have looked at:

* Contacting your local MP
* The different ways a petition can be presented
* Identifying different pressure groups

If you have any questions about any of the topics in this session, speak to your tutor for more help.