

2

Parliament and the electoral system

Sources of the material used in this section

- www.number-10.gov.uk
- www.theyworkforyou.com
- <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk>
- ESOL *Skills for Life* materials, Level 1
- Pictures of the Houses of Parliament
- Pictures of MPs

Sources of other useful material

- *Living in Britain: Language and Citizenship Skills for Accessing Information, Help and Advice in the UK*, by Haenlein and Roffey (ISBN 978 0955040405).
- Local council and political party websites.
- Cambridge ESOL Activities, Entry 1, 2 and 3. Cambridge University Press, 2008. Photocopiable activities on citizenship themes: www.cambridge.org/elt/esol.
- *A Plain English Guide to Citizenship Terms*, NALA, 2005.
Downloadable from: www.nala.ie.

Useful Websites

Website	Web address	Description
10 Downing Street	www.number-10.gov.uk	The Prime Minister's website. Information about the PM, the Cabinet, a history of No. 10; short film available online; daily diary of the PM and an online 'tour' of No. 10 itself.
BBC	www.bbc.co.uk	Interactive tour of the UK Parliament.
BBC Learning Zone Broadband Class Clips	www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips	The site provides a wide range of authentic video clips on a wide range of topics suitable for schools and colleges.
Directgov	www.direct.gov.uk	A huge range of information about government and services, with useful links relating to all aspects of local government, and pages on how central government works.
MPs and Parliament	www.theyworkforyou.com	A website run by a small group of volunteers who comment on MPs and what happens in the UK Parliament.
Northern Ireland Assembly	www.niassembly.gov.uk	Information about the Northern Ireland Assembly and government in Northern Ireland.
Operation Black Vote	www.obv.org.uk	Website of 'Operation Black Vote', whose work includes: policy research, and shadowing/mentoring projects for decision-making roles in public life.
Scottish Parliament	www.scottish.parliament.uk	Information about the Scottish Parliament and government in Scotland.
UK Parliament	www.parliament.uk	Wide range of information about the UK Parliament and how it works: MPs, the two houses, and the history of Parliament.
UK Parliament Education Service	www.parliament.uk/education	The UK Parliament Education Service. An excellent site with graded language, it is useful for all learners. A range of resources for teachers.
Welsh Assembly Government	www.wales.gov.uk	Information about the Welsh Assembly and all aspects of government and policy in Wales.
Who runs London?	www.whorunslondon.org.uk	Information about London government, politicians, services and organisations.

Type of resource	Online or downloaded?	Level/adaptability
Some short, straightforward texts including biographies and descriptions. Brief straightforward summaries of the latest news. Useful for students, easy to navigate.	Online. Accessible for students. Possible to view videos online.	Some straightforward text E1+
Photos and text. Text is reasonably straightforward. Interactive floor plan of the Houses of Parliament with photos and information about each room.	Online. Can be difficult to find from BBC home page, but can be accessed by entering 'interactive tour of the houses of parliament BBC' into a search engine.	Some pre-teaching necessary for lower levels E1+
Entering 'laws', 'politics', 'government', 'Westminster' into the search box all produce a range of relevant videos.	Online.	High E2+
Very informative website with pictures.	Online resource.	E3/teachers' resource
Students can use this site to find out specific information about MPs, including what they do and how to contact them. With links to MPs websites. May be useful as part of a project.	Simple online search.	High E1+
Quick links, and 16 different language translations.	Online.	Dense, complex text, E3+
Straightforward home page. Link to the Assembly Education Service from the home page.	Live coverage of Assembly debates online. Fact sheets to download. Online tour of the Assembly building.	E2+
The site provides information about BME members of the Houses of Parliament, how Parliament works, and news. Extensive list of links.	Online. Enter 'photo gallery' in the search box to access a range of photos of people in public life.	E3+
Link to learning resources from the home page. Film archive , including topics such as a day in Scottish Parliament.	Video tours of the Parliament building can be downloaded. Information leaflets in a range of languages to download. Podcasts.	E2+
Virtual and podcast tours. A wide range of resources on the About Parliament pages, including fact sheets and visual guides.	Online , plus downloadable research and policy documents on topical issues. Also, podcasts.	E2+
Very colourful and well-set-out site. Information on all aspects of how Parliament works. Links to key stages.	Online videos, games, interactive whiteboard activities and downloadable printed booklets. Information provided for teachers: lesson plans and activities.	Text is straightforward, E1+
Mostly text but also has pictures of MPs.	Online details of all MPs. You can send messages to your MP. Sign up to your constituency mailing list.	Resource for teachers
Straightforward home page. Links to local government information, services and organisations. Interactive map.	Online resource.	E3+

All details were correct at time of publication.

2.1 The Houses of Parliament

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
Describe places and location using the pictures of Parliament. (Sc/E1.4a)	Learn key vocabulary using the vocabulary matching activity. (Rw/E2.2a)	Develop reading comprehension skills and government-related vocabulary. (Rt/E3.1a, Rt/E3.4a, Rw/E3.1a) Discuss the system of government in the UK, compared with learners' countries. (Sd/E3.1d)

Suggested procedure (Entry 3)

- Ask learners to look at the pictures of the Houses of Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords and elicit known vocabulary, such as, 'London', 'River Thames', 'Big Ben', 'House of Lords', 'House of Commons' – ask learners which is which.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary by asking learners to work in pairs to match the words with the definitions (Exercise 1). Drill for pronunciation – note the stress patterns.
- Explain that they are going to read a text about the UK's system of government and then answer the comprehension questions.
- Learners can work together or separately to read the text and answer the questions (Exercise 2).
- Feedback and discussion.

Differentiation

- For weaker learners, simplify or shorten the text; give fewer or simpler questions.
- For higher level learners, ask them to write some additional true/false questions that the other learners can answer.
- The text could be tape-recorded and used as a listening comprehension activity.

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

Grammar focus

- Ask learners to find the main verbs and identify the tenses.

- Identify the subject of each sentence.
- Identify the relative clauses with 'who'.
- Identify conjunctions.
- Before reading the text, learners devise their own questions.

Writing

- Make notes on the main points.
- Write a summary of the text.

Coherence and cohesion

- Cut up the text into paragraphs for a re-ordering exercise.
- Cut up the sentences from one paragraph, which learners re-order.

Extension activities

Project work

- Ask learners to research and then write about, or give a short presentation on, the system of government in their country.
- Learners compare the system of government in their country to that in the UK.
- Arrange for an MP to visit the class, or for the learners to visit their MP or the House of Commons.

Additional materials needed

- Dictionaries.

Answers to exercises 1 and 2 can be found in the answers section, p. 319.

The Houses of Parliament

2.1

The House of Commons



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The House of Lords



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2.1 The Houses of Parliament



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The British Parliament consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The House of Commons is made up of men and women who were voted in to represent their local areas by the people who live there. The House of Lords was once an assembly of hereditary aristocrats and landowners who used to have as much power as the House of Commons. In the last century the House of Lords has lost most of its powers, except to delay and debate decisions made by the House of Commons. Nowadays, most members of the Lords are nominated, for example ex-Prime Ministers can take a seat in the Lords and their rights and titles are not inherited.

The House of Commons has more power than the House of Lords and decides national policy. The men and women who form the House of Commons are called Members of Parliament (MPs) and each one represents a geographical area, called a constituency. There are currently 533 constituencies in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland. Some cover a large area, in places where not many people live. Others cover a very small area if the population is dense. For example, in the countryside a constituency can include a number of small towns and villages, but in a big city there will be a lot of constituencies.

When there is a general election, people vote for a person to be the MP for their constituency. The person who has the most votes wins, even if they have only one vote more than the next person. This system is called the 'first past the post' system. When all the MPs are elected, the political party with most MPs forms the government and the leader of that party becomes Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister selects some MPs to become ministers, and they run government departments, such as Education and Skills or Transport. But even if an MP becomes a minister, he or she still has responsibility for his or her constituency.

The Houses of Parliament

2.1

Exercise 1: Match the word with the definition

Constituency	Member of Parliament.
MP	To choose who you want to be your MP.
Minister	A group of people with similar political beliefs, for example Labour or Conservative.
General election	A geographical area represented by one MP.
Vote	An MP with some special responsibility.
Political party	A time when everyone in the country chooses the government.

Exercise 2: Comprehension questions

1. What are the names of the two Houses of Parliament?
2. Which of the two Houses has more power?
3. How many constituencies are there in the United Kingdom?
4. How many constituencies are there in England?
5. How many constituencies are there in Scotland?
6. Are they all the same geographical size?
7. Which party forms the government after a general election?
8. What is meant by the 'first past the post' system?

2.2

The role of the MP: Using reference material; reporting and discussing information

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
Describe people using pictures of MPs. (Sc/E1.3, Sc/E1.4) Listen to descriptions. (Lr/E1.1)	Describe people using pictures of MPs. (Sc/E2.3) Find out about MPs using reference material and ICT; develop reading skills. (Rt/E2.1, Rt/E2.3)	Find out about MPs using reference material and ICT; develop reading skills. (Rt/E3.4a, Rt/E3.5) Vocabulary development. (Rw/E3.1a) Discussion. (Sc/E3.4a, Sd/E3.1d, Sd/E3.1g)

Suggested procedure (all levels)

- The page opposite has six blank boxes (A–F). Learners will need to find (or be given) pictures of the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, their MP and three other Ministers from a list that you have provided (e.g. from a website). Learners stick the pictures in the boxes on p.37. They could use the Internet, newspapers or any other source.
- Discuss the role of the MP.

Suggested follow-up procedure (Entry 3)

Part 1: Discuss how learners can find out more about MPs.

- Go through the 'topics to research' and ask learners to choose one.
- Learners can work individually, in pairs or small groups, to research one of the topics on the Internet and/or in a library.
- Give learners copies of the 'Useful Websites' list. Suggest they visit www.theyworkforyou.com to find out about specific MPs.
- Learners fill in the information sheet.
- In the next lesson, ask learners to form groups and report back briefly on the information obtained. Other members of the group ask questions.

Part 2: Ask learners to consider the discussion questions in groups and then report back.

Differentiation

- For learners with weaker reading skills, allocate a simpler research task.
- Learners could work in pairs to support each other with the research task.

Suggested follow up procedure (Entry 1 and Entry 2)

- Describing people: learners could listen to a description of one of the MPs and identify which one was being described.

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

Reading skills

- The research activity involves a wide range of reading skills: skimming; scanning; extracting the main points; obtaining specific information; using a range of reference sources.

Vocabulary development

- Ask learners to record any new specialist vocabulary in their vocabulary notebooks.
- Use dictionaries to find the meaning of new words.

Speaking – Discussion activity

- Learners use useful phrases for introducing their opinions, such as *'In my opinion...'*, *'As I see it...'*.
- Learners express agreement, disagreement, uncertainty, and so on.
- Learners use modal verbs to discuss obligation and possibility.

Extension activities

- Arrange for an MP to visit the class, or for the learners to visit their MP or Parliament.
- Learners watch a video of an MP talking about different aspects of their work (www.parliament.uk/education).


Additional materials needed

- List of 'Useful Websites'.
- Dictionaries.

The role of the MP: Using reference material; reporting and discussing information

2.2

A



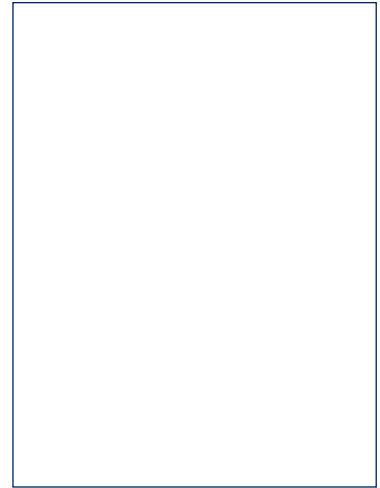
The Prime Minister

B



The Chancellor

C




Your MP

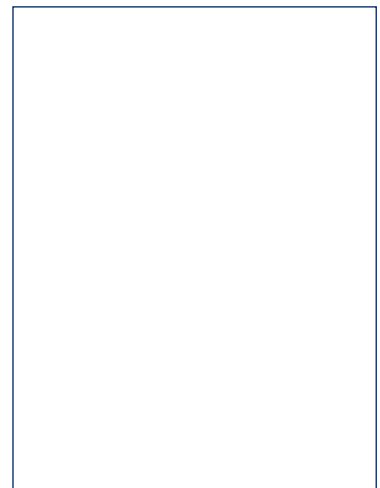
D



E



F



2.2

The role of the MP: Using reference material; reporting and discussing information

Find pictures of the Prime Minister, The Chancellor and your MP and stick them in the boxes provided on page 37. You can use the Internet, newspapers or any other source.

Choose three other Ministers from the list that your teacher has given you, find pictures of them and stick them in the boxes provided.

Choose a topic to research

Use the Internet or a library to find information about one of these topics:

- Find out anything you want to know about your MP. Select three interesting facts to tell other people.
- Choose another person on your picture sheet and find out anything you want to know about them. Select three interesting facts to tell other people.
- Research women MPs. How many are there at the moment? How many are ministers? Who was the first woman MP and when was she in parliament?

If you don't like these topics, choose your own about MPs.

The role of the MP: Using reference material; reporting and discussing information

2.2

Part 1

I decided to find out about

I used the Internet/the library/both

I used these Websites/books:

.....

.....

.....

I found out the following interesting facts:

-
-
-

Part 2

Discuss these questions in your group:

- Do you think there should be more women MPs?
- Do you think it is good for MPs to be young? At what age do you think MPs should retire?
- Should the Prime Minister still have to look after his/her constituency? Or is he or she too busy?
- Do you think MPs should live in their constituency?
- Do you think MPs should have other jobs?
- How much do you think MPs should be paid?

2.3

Contacting an MP: Reading and finding information

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
<p>Read about an MP, recognise and understand key words. (Rt/E1.1b, Rw/E1.1)</p> <p>Punctuation. (Rs/E1.1b)</p>	<p>Read about an MP. (Rt/E2.1b)</p> <p>Ask and answer questions. (Sc/E2.2d, Lr/E2.5b)</p>	<p>Find out about MPs using reference material and ICT; develop reading skills. (Rt/E3.4, Rt/E3.5)</p> <p>Make notes. (Wt/E3.1)</p>

Suggested procedure (Entry 1 and Entry 2)

- Ask learners to read the information sheet about Hywel Francis, MP, and answer the questions, orally or in writing, using the relevant question sheet (E1 or E2).
- Help learners to complete the first table on the information sheet about their MP by using the website: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk> to find out who their MP is (this website also provides basic contact details).
- Help learners to access their MP's website and complete the second table.

Differentiation (Entry 1 and Entry 2)

- *The information sheet could be made into an 'information gap' activity, with learners working in pairs.*
- *Read the questions aloud for lower-level literacy learners.*
- *Reduce the number of questions for lower-level learners.*
- *Some learners may need additional help in using or finding information on the Internet.*

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- learners underline the days of the week.
Drill, noting the stress patterns and any pronunciation difficulties;
- focus on the different ways to say the time:
10.00 am = 10 o'clock;

- use of prepositions with towns, for example 'in Aberavon', and expressions with time, for example 'between 4 and 6';
- question forms: jumble the words for learners to re-arrange into correct question forms. Focus on 'what' questions and modal verbs – 'can' (possibility).

Reading skills

- Finding information on websites involves a wide range of reading skills; for example, skimming, scanning and extracting the main points.

Vocabulary development

- Ask learners to record any new specialist vocabulary in their vocabulary notebooks.
- Use dictionaries to find the meaning of new words.

Suggested procedure (Entry 3)

- Ask Entry 3 learners to find out about their MP and answer the questions on the information sheet. They could then use the information to produce a fact sheet on him/her.

Extension activities

- Arrange for an MP to visit the class, or for the learners to visit the Houses of Parliament and meet their MP.

Additional materials needed

- Computers and Internet access.
- List of 'Useful Websites'.
- Dictionaries.

Contacting an MP: Reading and finding information

2.3



Hywel Francis

Labour MP for Aberavon

To contact me in my office you can:

Write to: Aberavon Constituency, Eagle House, Talbot Road, Port Talbot
SA13 1DH

Telephone: 01639 897660
Between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.
Monday to Friday

Fax: 01639 891725

Email: francish@parliament.uk

You can also see me:

■ every Saturday morning at 10.00 a.m. or 11.15 a.m. in Aberavon;

or

■ on the first Friday in March, June and November at 3.30 p.m., by arrangement.

You must make an appointment.

2.3

Contacting an MP: Reading and finding information

Question sheet (Entry 1)

Look at the information sheet about Hywel Francis MP and answer these questions:

1. What is the MP's name?
2. What is his telephone number?
3. What is his address?
4. What is his email address?
5. What is his fax number?
6. What time can you see him on Friday? Where?
7. What time can you see him on Saturday?
8. Do you need an appointment?
9. What is his political party?

Can you find three of these words?

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday

Contacting an MP: Reading and finding information

2.3

Question sheet (Entry 2)

Look at the information sheet about Hywel Francis MP and answer these questions:

1. Which political party does Hywel Francis belong to?
2. What is his constituency?
3. If you want to contact him, there are five ways to do so. What are they?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Can you phone him in the evening?
5. Can you see him on Friday at 5 p.m.?
6. You want to see him on Saturday 8 October. Is this possible?

2.3 Contacting an MP: Reading and finding information

Information about my MP (Entry 1 and 2)

Name	
Political party	
Website	
Email	
Telephone number (House of Commons)	

Go to your MP's website and find this information:

Telephone number (constituency)	
Information about when you can go and see him or her (surgeries)	

Contacting an MP: Reading and finding information

2.3

Information about my MP (Entry 3)

Instructions

Go to.....

Type your postcode.....

Questions

1. What is your MP's name?
2. What is his or her political party?
3. What is his or her address?
4. What is his or her telephone numbers (House of Commons and constituency)?
5. What is his or her email address?
6. What are the times you can go and see him or her (surgeries)? And where?
7. Do you need an appointment?
8. Have you ever seen your MP?
9. Have you ever met an MP?
10. Do you know anybody who has been to see an MP?
11. When the MP comes to talk to us about his/her work, what would you like to ask him/her?

2.4 Asking an MP for help: Case studies 1

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
<p>Read for information, recognise and understand key words. (Rt/E1.1b, Rw/E1.1)</p> <p>Take part in a role play which involves stating a problem and asking for help. (Sd/E1.1b)</p>	n/a	n/a

Suggested procedure (Entry 1)

- Prepare a tape recording of realistic dialogues between the people in each case study and their MP.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary as necessary.
- Tell learners that they are going to read two case studies about people who have a problem and who go to see their MPs to ask for help (probably with an interpreter).
- Learners can work together or separately to read the texts; alternatively, read them to the learners.
- Check orally that learners have understood the case studies.
- Tell learners to listen to the two dialogues to identify which problem belongs to which case study.
- Role play: learners use the tape-recorded dialogue as a model and practise the dialogues in pairs/threes.
- Discuss whether learners have had similar problems and what they would say to their MP.

Differentiation

- *More able learners can describe the problems in their own words.*
- *More able learners can make up their own dialogues with different problems.*
- *Encourage same-language learners to discuss the problems in their own language and whether they would use an interpreter or a bilingual friend.*

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

Pronunciation

- Drill key words, such as 'daughter' 'children' 'flat' 'live', and so on.
- Focus on sentence stress, rhythm and intonation in the role play.

Grammar

- Ask learners to find the main verbs; note 'have' and 'has' as main verbs, 'do' and 'does' as auxiliary verbs in questions.
- Focus on word order in sentences.
- Identify the subject of each sentence.
- Focus on how sentences form a paragraph.

Writing

- Learners write a similar paragraph about a different problem.

Coherence and cohesion

- Cut up the text into sentences for a re-ordering exercise.
- Cut up the words from one sentence, for learners to re-order.

Additional materials needed

- Dictionaries.
- Tape recording of the dialogues for the two case studies.
- Tape script.

Asking an MP for help: Case studies 1

2.4

Case studies

- A Marie is a refugee from Rwanda. She has a young daughter in Rwanda. She'd like her daughter to come to Britain, but this is very difficult. What does she say to her MP?
- B Fatima and Adnan live in a very small council flat. They have three children. They want to move to a big flat. What do they say to their MP?

Tape script

MP *Hello, how can I help you?*

Marie My name is Marie. I come from Rwanda and I live in Croydon. I have a problem.

MP *What is your problem?*

Marie My daughter is in Rwanda. She is 12 years old. I want my daughter to come to England.

MP *I see.*

Marie And this is my friend. She speaks English and my language.

2.5 Asking an MP for help: Case studies 2

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
n/a	Take part in a role play which involves explaining a problem and asking for help. (Sc/E2.1, Sc/E2.3, Sd/E2.1b)	n/a

Suggested procedure

- Pre-teach key vocabulary as necessary, such as *'operation'*.
- Tell learners that they are going to read two case studies about people who have a problem and who go to see their MPs to ask for help.
- Check orally that learners have understood the case studies.
- Role play: in pairs/threes, learners choose one case study to focus on.
- Learners prepare their dialogues using the prompt sheet.
- Practise the role play.
- Discuss whether learners have had similar problems and what they would say to their MP.

Differentiation

- *More able learners can make up their own dialogues with different problems.*
- *Tape-record or video the role plays. Use this for learners to identify areas to work on, for example difficulties with pronunciation, lexis, grammar, and so on.*

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- focus on the pronunciation features of key words, such as *'operation'* (stressed syllable) and *'visa'* (sounds);
- focus on sentence stress, rhythm and intonation in the role play;
- focus on useful discourse markers, for example, *'Actually'*, *'Well'*, *'In fact'*.

Additional materials needed

- Dictionaries.
- A model dialogue, prepared in advance.

Asking an MP for help: Case studies 2

2.5

Case studies

- A Paul had an accident six months ago. He needs an operation on his back. There is a very long waiting list at his local hospital. What does he say to his MP?
- B Chandra sent her passport to the Home Office in June last year. She is still waiting for a reply about her visa. She's going to meet her MP next week. What does she say to her MP?

Prompt sheet

Read the case studies and choose one to work on.

- You want to speak to an MP.
- Imagine you are Paul or Chandra.
- Do you want an interpreter to go with you to the MP?

- Think about your case study.
- What questions do you think the MP will ask?
- What answers will you give if the MP asks these questions?

Plan what to say to:

- introduce yourself;
- introduce your interpreter;
- explain the problem (don't read it);
- ask the MP to help.

Role play the conversation. Introduce yourself, explain the problem, answer any questions and ask for help.

2.6 Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
n/a	n/a	<p>Read for gist and for detail. (Rt/E3.4a, Rt/E3.8a)</p> <p>Take part in a role play which involves explaining a problem and asking for help. (Sc/E3.1, Sc/E3.2, Sc/E3.4)</p> <p>Write a formal letter requesting help with a problem. (Wt/E3.2a, Ws/E3.1, Ws/E3.2, Ww/E3.1)</p>

Suggested procedure

Part A – Asking for help orally

- Introduce the topic.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary as necessary, for example 'crowded', 'urgent'.
- Ask learners to read both texts quickly to get the gist, and then to choose one to read in more detail.
- Learners fill in the Information sheet on the case study that they read in detail and check their answers with a partner.
- Brief class feedback.
- Learners look at the prompt sheet and prepare their role play.
- Learners work in pairs, taking turns to be Hamid or David and the MP.

Differentiation

- *More able learners can make up their own dialogues with different problems.*

Part B – Asking for help in writing

- Tell learners to look at sheet B – 'Asking for help in writing'.
- Explain that Hamid has written a letter to his MP, but the paragraphs are not in the right order.
- Tell learners to number the paragraphs (or paragraphs could be cut up).
- Learners compare answers in pairs.
- Learners look at the paragraph plan and check order.

- Tell learners to work with the case study of David to write a similar letter. Use Hamid's corrected letter as a model.
- Hand out the results sheet to learners and discuss what actually happened as a result of contacting their MPs.

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- drill words that learners have difficulty pronouncing;
- focus on sentence stress, rhythm, intonation and linking in the role play;
- focus on useful discourse markers and conjunctions;
- focus on the tenses;
- formal letter writing – layout, position of address, date, signature, and so on.

Extension activities

- Ask learners to discuss what they think happened.
- Ask learners to match pictures of problems with their descriptions.

Additional materials needed

- Dictionaries.

Answers to 'Asking for help in writing' can be found in the answers section, p. 319.

Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

2.6

Case studies

1. Hamid is 26 years old. He is a refugee from Iraq and he lives in one small room in a private house. The room is cold, water comes through the ceiling and there is a large damp patch all down one wall. Hamid is often ill with frequent colds and even had to spend a week in hospital when he developed bronchitis.

The landlord is very unhelpful and is difficult to contact. He has been promising to sort out the damp problem for nearly a year. He rents other rooms out, sometimes to two people sharing, so the house is very crowded and there is only one bathroom and kitchen.

Last month, one of Hamid's neighbours broke into his room and stole his books, some money and his radio. Hamid confronted the man, but he became very aggressive and made racist comments and threats.

Hamid now feels very insecure and is getting depressed and ill. He contacted the council (who pay his housing benefit) and had to wait for a long time before council officers visited the house. They wrote a strong letter to the landlord and told him to fix the problems. Hamid wants the council to re-house him, but the housing department has not been helpful and say that his case is not urgent, even though he has a letter from his doctor to say that he is suffering from depression.

Hamid decides to contact his MP and asks a friend to help him write a letter.

2. David is a teacher from Kenya and is in the UK on a student visa, which runs out in a few months. His partner, Mary, is British and they have a young son. They got married last month.

David has a work placement as a classroom assistant in a primary school and is doing very well. He has gained a place on a teacher training course which starts next year. He wants to settle in the UK, where many of his Kenyan family already live.

Mary and David, with their young child, went to the Home Office to apply for a new visa for David. They explained the change in David's circumstances and showed the clerk their documents but David could not get a new visa.

They were very upset at this decision and when they discussed it later on they decided that they should ask their MP for help.

2.6 Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

A Asking for help orally

Information sheet

Read the text and write the *essential* details on this form:

Person's name	
Other personal information	
Type of problem (for example, a work problem)	
Most important details	
What happened	
Person's feelings	

Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

2.6

Prompt sheet

Read the case studies and choose one to work on.

You want to speak to an MP.

Either Imagine you are Hamid or David.

Or Imagine you are helping Hamid or David because they don't speak English.

- Think about the situation.
- What questions do you think the MP will ask?
- What answers will you give if the MP asks these questions?

Plan what to say to:

- introduce yourself;
- explain the problem (don't read it);
- ask the MP to help.

Role play the conversation. Introduce yourself, explain the problem, answer any questions and ask for help.

If you are acting as an interpreter, you will need to role play in a group of three.

If you are acting as an interpreter, make sure you allow the person to speak for him or herself as much as possible, and report to the MP what the person said to you.

2.6 Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

B Asking for help in writing

Hamid has written a letter to his MP to explain the problem and ask for some help. However, the paragraphs are not in the right order. Decide on the correct order for the paragraphs and number them from 1 to 7. Then check your order with the paragraph plan on the next page and add a suitable closing phrase at the end.

Dear Mr Davies

I contacted the council and it was a long time before they sent council officers to see the accommodation. They wrote a strong letter to the landlord but nothing happened.

I would like the council to re-house me and I would like your help in dealing with these problems.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

In addition to these problems, one of my neighbours broke into my room last month and stole my books, some money and my radio.

I feel very insecure now. I am also suffering from colds and bronchitis because of the damp, and I am having treatment for depression.

I am a refugee from Afghanistan. I live in your constituency. I am writing to ask for your help with a housing problem.

I rent a small room in a private house and I have many problems. The room is cold and damp and the house is very crowded as the landlord keeps renting out more rooms. The landlord is unhelpful and difficult to contact.

Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

2.6

Paragraph plan

Salutation	<i>Dear Mr Davies</i>
Introduction – who you are and why you are writing	
Background information	
What happened	
More detail	
Your feelings	
What you want	
Close	

2.6 Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

Hamid's letter (correct version)

Dear Mr Davies

I am a refugee from Afghanistan. I live in your constituency. I am writing to ask for help with a housing problem.

I rent a small room in a private house and I have many problems. The room is cold and damp and the house is very crowded as the landlord keeps renting out more rooms. The landlord is unhelpful and difficult to contact.

I contacted the council and it was a long time before they sent council officers to see the accommodation. They wrote a strong letter to the landlord but nothing happened.

In addition to these problems, one of my neighbours broke into my room last month and stole my books, some money and my radio.

I feel very insecure now. I am also suffering from colds and bronchitis because of the damp, and I am having treatment for depression.

I would like the council to re-house me and I would like your help in dealing with these problems.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Hamid Rahim

Hamid Rahim

Asking an MP for help: Case studies 3

2.6

Results

Case study 1: What the MP did

Hamid's MP replied immediately to his letter and Hamid got an appointment with one of the MP's caseworkers. The caseworker was also a councillor and had a particular interest in Afghanistan, as her husband's family came from Afghanistan.

The caseworker wrote to the director of the housing department, explaining Hamid's situation and complaining about the council's delay in helping him. Eventually, Hamid got an appointment with a housing officer and provided letters from his doctor and caseworker, explaining that the situation was making him clinically depressed.

In spite of all this, the council still refused to re-house Hamid until the caseworker threatened to take up his case with the local government ombudsman.*

Hamid was re-housed and is very happy in his new accommodation.

Case study 2: What the MP did

David and Mary made an appointment to see their MP at his surgery. He was sympathetic about their problems, but explained that new immigration guidelines meant that there was not much chance of David changing his status. He said that he would probably have to return to Kenya and re-apply to enter the UK as the husband of a British citizen.

David and Mary are now in Kenya, where David is applying for a new visa.

*An ombudsman is a person appointed by the government to investigate complaints by private persons against the government, and resolves disputes from a neutral, independent viewpoint.

2.7 Quiz: How much do you know about MPs?

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
n/a	Read and understand true/false questions. (Rs/E2.1b) Vocabulary development relating to MPs. (Rw/E2.3) Discuss answers to a quiz. (Sd/E2.1) Write compound sentences. (Ws/E2.1a)	Vocabulary development relating to MPs. (Rw/E3.1a) Discuss answers to a quiz. (Sd/E3.1d; Sd/E3.1g) Write compound and complex sentences. (Ws/E3.1a)

Suggested procedure (Entry 2 and Entry 3)

- This activity should be done after the other activities on MPs.
- Focus on the first four questions and ask learners to discuss them in small groups.
- Take feedback and clarify any uncertainties.
- Recap any necessary vocabulary, including pronunciation.
- Ask learners to work in small groups to answer the ten questions.
- Feedback: go through the answers.
- Ask one person from each group to write up their 'tie breaker' statement.
- The learners vote for the best answer.
- Then ask learners to identify any grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes. This is an opportunity to work on language accuracy – encourage self-correction and peer correction.

Differentiation

- *Less able learners can work with stronger learners.*
- *Learners who speak the same language could work together.*
- *Reduce the number of questions for lower-level groups.*
- *Provide answers and learners decide which answer matches which question.*

- *Learners visit the 'Explore Parliament' Website (www.parliament.uk/about/how) and go to the 'How Parliament Works' page and/or the FAQs page, which gives some very useful information and has downloadable factsheets.*

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- sentence structure and word order;
- consolidation of key vocabulary;
- writing compound or complex sentences;
- focus on word order: for example, using the statements in the quiz, Entry 2 learners could work on re-ordering the words in some of the sentences.

Extension activities

- Learners could devise a similar quiz about the local council and councillors.

Additional materials needed

- Dictionaries.
- Optional: previous activities on MPs.

Answers to the questions can be found in the answers section, p. 319.

Quiz: How much do you know about MPs?

2.7

What does MP stand for?

Why do we have MPs?

How did they become MPs?

What do they do?

In small groups, complete the following quiz. If the answer is 'False' try to think of the correct answer.

1. MP stands for Member of Politics.

True

False

2. MPs represent a particular area of the country (a constituency) because they are elected by the people who live in that constituency (the constituents).

True

False

3. Every problem a constituent takes to an MP will be debated by everyone in the House of Commons.

True

False

4. The House of Commons is one part of the Houses of Parliament.

True

False

2.7 Quiz: How much do you know about MPs?

5. MPs from all the different parties meet in the House of Commons to debate issues.

True

False

6. Anyone can try to become an MP.

True

False

7. The Prime Minister is not an MP.

True

False

8. There are 659 MPs in the House of Commons.

True

False

9. In Parliament, all MPs are on the same side as the government.

True

False

10. All MPs are able to oppose the government by voting against its proposed law.

True

False

Tie-breaker question

Make sure everyone on your table has a say and complete the following statement:

MPs have an important job because ...

When you have finished, write it up on the whiteboard. The rest of the class should read and then vote on what they think is the best answer.

(Information obtained from www.parliament.uk/about/how)

Quiz: How much do you know about MPs?

2.7

Useful vocabulary

Ballot box	The box where ballot papers are put.
Campaign	All the activities candidates and their supporters undertake to persuade people to vote for them.
Candidate	A person standing for election as an MP.
Canvass	To talk to people and try to persuade them to vote for a particular candidate.
Constituency	An area of the country, with around 67,000 voters, represented by one MP.
Electoral register	A list of people who are entitled to vote.
Electorate	All the people who can vote in an election.
Expenses	Money spent doing a specific job, or for a specific purpose.
General election	An election when people in all constituencies vote for their MPs.
Opinion poll	A poll carried out by phone or in the street to find out voters' opinions on particular issues and which party they are going to vote for.
Referendum	A general vote by all the electorate on a particular political issue.
Polling station	The place where people go to vote.

2.8 The Cabinet

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
n/a	Vocabulary development relating to government ministers – bilingual support needed. (Rw/E2.4)	Vocabulary development relating to government ministers. (Rw/E3.1)

Suggested procedure (Entry 2 and 3)

The Task sheet of some Cabinet ministers (p.63) can be used in various ways:

- for reference, as a glossary;
 - enlarged, laminated and made into cards for different kinds of matching activities, such as *'find your partner'*, *'pelmanism'*, and so on;
 - as a matching activity: jumble the words and descriptions on the sheet so that learners have to match the ministers to the correct descriptions.
- Introduce the activity, checking that learners understand the term *'Cabinet'* and *'minister'*.
 - Pre-teach and/or check key vocabulary, such as *'pollution'*, *'benefits'*, *'defended'*, *'attack'*, *'justice'*, *'finances'*.
 - As in b) above, enlarge and laminate the task sheets and make them into cards (one set per group).
 - Using the enlarged cards, focus on the pronunciation of the ministerial words.
 - Ask learners to work in small groups.
 - Give each group a set of cards (terminology and job responsibilities) and ask the learners to match each minister to the correct description.
 - Feedback.
 - Prepare pictures of the current ministers for the Task sheet activity on pp.64–65 (from the Internet or from newspapers/other sources) www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/government-holding

- Then ask learners to look at the Task sheet. Check understanding of task.
- Give learners the pictures and newspaper extracts/website information with the names of the current ministers so that they can stick the correct picture into each box (A–I) and add the minister's name.
- Learners fill in the gaps from memory, if possible, or use the vocabulary sheets for reference.

Differentiation

- *Lower-level learners use the cards to help fill in the gaps on the task sheet.*

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- focus on pronunciation of key words: stress patterns, the schwa in *'for'* and *'of'*, the elision of /m/ in Prime Minister;
- spelling of key words;
- focus on word building at E3, for example *'election'*, *'electoral'*, *'electorate'*.

Extension activities

- Discussion activity: learners rank ministers in order of importance or usefulness, and so on.
- Research: learners each research one minister and report back, giving a mini presentation.

Additional materials needed

- Sets of cards for the matching activities.
- Newspaper extracts and/or website information with names and pictures of current Cabinet ministers.
- Dictionaries.
- Computers and Internet access.

The Cabinet

2.8

There are 23 members of the Cabinet. Here are nine of them:

Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Responsible for looking after the environment and reducing pollution on land and in rivers and seas.
Prime Minister	The head of the government. The Prime Minister (PM) chooses the ministers in the Cabinet when she or he forms a government after a general election. The PM is the chairperson of the Cabinet and co-ordinates the work of the different government ministers.
Secretary of State for Transport	Responsible for building roads, dealing with issues to do with public transport and also for airport and air safety.
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs	Speaks for the United Kingdom in its dealings with other countries.
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions	Responsible for benefits of all sorts, for example unemployment benefit and pensions.
Secretary of State for Defence	Responsible for making sure that the United Kingdom is well defended in case of attack by other countries; also in charge of funding the Army, Navy and Air Force.
Home Secretary for the Home Office	Responsible for running the police force and the prisons, for law and order in the country and for overseeing the system of justice.
Secretary of State for Health	Responsible for the National Health Service (NHS) and its hospitals, doctors and nurses.
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Responsible for managing the finances of the government – how much is collected in taxes and how much is spent.

2.8 The Cabinet

Task sheet

Work in pairs to fill in the missing faces, names and words. Use the pictures, newspapers and information your teacher gives you.

<p>A</p>	<p>Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Responsible for looking after the _____ and reducing pollution on land and in rivers and seas.</p>
<p>B</p>	<p>Prime Minister The head of the government. The PM chooses the ministers in the _____ when she or he forms a government after a general election. The PM is the chairperson of the Cabinet and co-ordinates the work of the different government ministers.</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>Secretary of State for Transport Responsible for building roads, dealing with issues to do with _____ transport and also for airport and air safety.</p>
<p>D</p>	<p>Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Speaks for the United Kingdom in its dealings with other countries.</p>
<p>E</p>	<p>Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Responsible for benefits of all sorts, for example _____ benefit and pensions.</p>

The Cabinet

2.8

F	<p>Secretary of State for Defence Responsible for making sure that the United Kingdom is well defended in case of attack by other countries; also in charge of funding the Army, _____ and Air Force.</p>
G	<p>Home Secretary for the Home Office Responsible for running the police force and the prisons, for law and order in the country and for overseeing the system of justice.</p>
H	<p>Secretary of State for Health Responsible for the _____ (NHS) and its hospitals, doctors and nurses.</p>
I	<p>Chancellor of the Exchequer Responsible for managing the finances of the government – how much is _____ in taxes and how much is _____</p>

2.9 Local councillors

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
n/a	Find and read information about local councillors. (Rt/E2.4, Rt/E2.3) Vocabulary development. (Rw/E2.4) Make enquiries – role play. (Sc/E2.2d)	Find and read information about local councillors. (Rt/E3.5, Rt/E3.7) Vocabulary development. (Rw/E3.1) Make enquiries – role play. (Sc/E3.4a)

Suggested procedure (Entry 2)

This activity is based on an example – Croydon Council. If possible, use your local council and prepare similar information.

Part A

- Learners should understand the role of MPs and how to contact their MP.
- Clarify the difference between central and local government.
- Show learners the ‘Who’s who at Croydon Council’ poster or local alternative. Elicit the word ‘councillor’ and explain who they are and what they do. Pre-teach key vocabulary, such as: ‘*refuse collection*’.
- Find out if any learners have contacted their councillors and what the problem was.
- Show learners the picture prompts and elicit key words.
- Give learners the task sheet. Pre-teach key vocabulary. Provide an information sheet so that they can find out the answers.
- Learners complete the worksheet.
- Learners compare their information.

Part B

- Hand out copies of the ‘How to contact your councillors’ information sheet.
- Check understanding: ‘*Can you see X on Tuesdays?*’, ‘*Is the Town Hall in Beatrice Avenue?*’
- Set up the role play activity (prompt cards needed): one learner is the councillor’s PA or secretary, the other is a constituent. The

scenarios could be making enquiries, and so on.

Differentiation

- *Less confident learners can work together to find information about their councillors (Task sheet).*

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- pronunciation of the local place names;
- vocabulary: note the use of ‘*ward*’ and ‘*surgey*’;
- spelling and punctuation in names and addresses;
- focus on accuracy of pronunciation.

Suggested procedure (Entry 3)

- Learners use the material for Entry 2 as a model.
- Learners produce a similar ‘Who’s who’ poster for their local area and a similar ‘How to contact your councillors’ sheet.
- Tape-record or video the role plays. Use this for learners to identify areas to work on.

Extension activities

- Learners can write a simple letter to a councillor, requesting help with a particular problem.
- Observe a council meeting.
- Learners find out about their local mayor by accessing their local government Website.

Additional materials needed

- An information sheet for learners, telling them which ward they live in.
- Maps of the local area, simplified if possible.
- Prompt cards for the role-play activity.
- Dictionaries.
- Computers and Internet access.

Local councillors

2.9

Who's Who at Croydon Council

Croydon Council remains under Labour Party control following the May election

The new line-up, with the 1998 position in brackets, is: Labour – 37 (38) seats; Conservative – 32 (31) seats; Liberal Democrat 1 (1). Of the 21 new faces, two have previously served as Croydon councillors. Contact details for elected members are set out on the council's website – www.croydon.gov.uk Phone numbers and surgery details will be included in a future issue of *Croydon Reports*.

CROYDON North



Reproduced courtesy of Croydon Council

2.9 Local councillors

Task sheet

Councillors are democratically elected representatives. They are responsible for making decisions on behalf of the local community about local services, such as housing, healthcare, education, the environment, refuse collection, and leisure facilities.

Sometimes your MP cannot help you with a problem. If she/he cannot help, your councillor may be able to help you or tell you about another person who can help you.

For example, you may have a problem with one of these:

Housing



Healthcare



Childcare



Money



■ Look at the information your teacher gives you and answer these questions:

- What is the name of your local council?
- Which ward do you live in?
- Who is your local councillor?

Local councillors

2.9

Information sheet

How to contact your councillors (Norbury Ward)

Your councillors are:



Peter Hopson



Shafi Khan



Maggie Mansell

Surgery details

First Saturday of the month, 11a.m.–12.00p.m.

Norbury Library, Beatrice Avenue, Norbury, SW16 4UW

No appointment is necessary

You can write to your councillors at:

- Members' Room, The Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

Or you can email them:

- `firstname_lastname@croydon.gov.uk`

So, Shafi Khan's email address is: `shafi_khan@croydon.gov.uk`

True or false?

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. You can see Maggie Mansell on Saturday 17 December. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. You do not need to make an appointment. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The office is in Beatrice Street. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. You can email Peter Hopson. | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |

