

EVIDENCE WEEK 2019



In June 2019 more than 100 MPs and peers got involved in Evidence Week in the UK Parliament. They received 3-minute briefings at 'evidence pods' on how to handle the evidence on 20 pressing policy issues in the Upper Waiting Hall in the House of Commons.

Evidence Week in Parliament aimed to equip MPs with the tools they need to interrogate evidence across a range of policy issues. Between elections, Parliament is fundamental to scrutinising the evidential reasoning of policy. Increasingly, this means asking searching questions of new sources of data, as well as complex interactions between variables and trade offs to consider.

To open Evidence Week community speakers brought to life the same evidence issues that the MPs are currently dealing with, as outlined in new results released at the event from Ipsos MORI's MP survey, produced by SAGE Publishing.

Innovative 3-minute evidence briefings

Evidence Week was run by Sense about Science, in partnership with the House of Commons Library, POST (the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology) and the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee.

We brought in 20 research groups from partner organisations to host innovative evidence pods. These 3-minute briefings tackled issues such as how to visualise community inequalities, work out the effect of pupil premium or see the scale of the drone noise problem. We counted 163 of these innovative briefings given to MPs and peers across the two days.

“Worrying about whether politicians have science backgrounds is a mistake. What we should ask is, what are the insights and resources from research that would help politicians? That’s what Evidence Week is for.” - Tracey Brown, Sense about Science

“I think Evidence Week is really important – we politicians often seem to shoot from the hip.” - Rupa Huq MP



Norman Lamb MP at the opening event in Strangers Dining Room in the House of Commons



Paul Sweeney MP at the 'Visualising community inequalities' pod



Chi Onwurah MP at the Evidence Week opening event

MPs found the 3-minute format to be something they could work with...

“What was great about this was that it encouraged us to see it as it was just 3 minutes. Now, I did not take just 3 minutes, I took longer, because I was really interested.”

“I learnt more in five minutes than in a very long time.”

“I thought the pods were an excellent concept and coupled with the enthusiasm of individuals was a good partnership for promoting science”

A summary of Evidence Week's impact...

- 83 MPs engaged (13% of all MPs), plus 20 peers and 29 government/parliamentary staff
- Committees particularly well represented at Evidence Week included the Science and Technology Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee among others
- 237,000 views and 2,265 engagements on Sense about Science Evidence Week tweets, with even more MPs, peers and researchers connecting using #EvidenceWeek
- The BBC (Today in Parliament programme) and The Times picked up the story. It was also listed on relevant parliamentary publications



Matt Western MP
@MattWestern_

Follow

Great to hear from @UniofNottingham about their latest research which could help improve safety and prevent fatalities on our roads. Really glad to see academics engaging with Parliament during #EvidenceWeek!
[#SeeBikeSayBike](#)

5:45 PM - 27 Jun 2019



Catherine McKinnell
@CatMcKinnell

Follow

Good to drop by the Durham University Evidence Centre for Education #EvidencePod in Parliament yday & hear more about their work on the impact of Pupil Premium as part of #EvidenceWeek @DECE_DU
[#DECEatEvidenceWeek](#)



David Anderson
@bricksilk

Follow

Replying to @senseaboutsci @PublicPolicyUoS

Thanks for laying this on – you did a great job. It was interesting to discuss the role of predictive analytics in managing electricity consumption, and how it may impinge on protection of personal data.

6:22 PM - 26 Jun 2019

THE TIMES

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RED BOX | JOHN PULLINGER
JUNE 17 2019, 12:01AM, THE TIMES

Why evidence matters: cutting through the noise

JOHN PULLINGER



Last week we ran #EvidenceWeek in the UK parliament. The BBC asked MPs why they came:



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Evidence Week 2019

Evidence Week 2019

24 Jun 2019 - 19 Jun 2019, 16:00 - 17:00

Opening: Stranger's Dining Room, Evidence Pods: Upper Waiting Hall, UK Parliament

Contact: amelia@senseaboutscience.org

Contact POST

Parliamentary Technology
Houses of Parliament
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

An overview of the week

Opening event, 24th June

Government civil servants, citizens, researchers from UK universities and partner organisations attended the opening event in the Strangers' Dining Room in the House of Commons. We brought in people from constituencies across the UK to Parliament, many for the first time, to tell parliamentarians and partners why evidence matters to them and their communities.

These speakers brought to life the range of evidence-related issues that MPs face in their role, highlighted in the findings launched at the event from Ipsos MORI's MP survey and in opening remarks by Penny Young, House of Commons Librarian and Director of Research and Information.

We were also pleased to hear three MPs speak at the event: Sir Norman Lamb, Chi Onwurah and Stephen Metcalfe.

Evidence pods, 25th - 26th June

Last year's inaugural Evidence Week showed us that speed-briefings are a particularly popular and useful way to engage parliamentarians and can lead to a greater number of conversations and opportunities for follow up compared with traditional talks or panel events. In 2019 we presented 20 speed briefings. For the full programme, please [see the brochure](#).

In total, we counted 136 briefings to MPs and their researchers and 27 to peers. Other attendance was from parliamentary staff, including clerks of committees and committee specialists (20) plus government staff, including staff at the Cabinet Office, BEIS, and DEFRA (15).



Penny Young, House of Commons Librarian, and Director of Research and Information at the opening event



Shannon Trust declaring why evidence matters to them in their mission to teach adults in prison to read



Jim Fitzpatrick MP at the 'Understanding the psychology of road users' pod



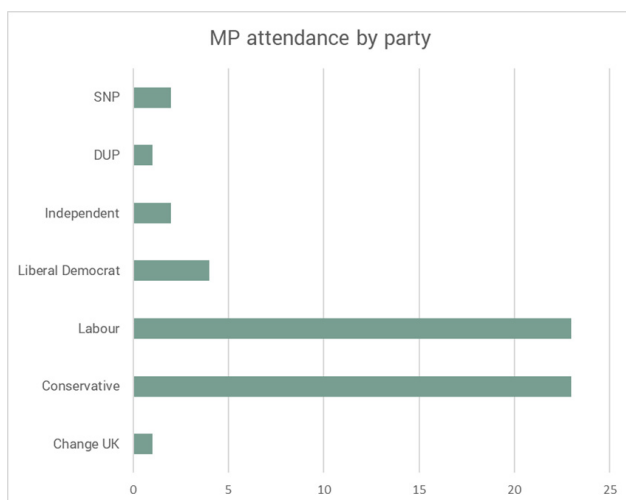
Thank you to Soapbox for the pod design

Engagement

We reached 370 people at Evidence Week, including 83 MPs - that's 13% of all MPs. This figure is up from 61 in 2018. In addition to this, every single MP received the full programme of the partners' briefings by email.

An additional 29 government and parliamentary staff attended, giving a total parliamentary engagement at Evidence Week 2019 of over 100.

MPs representing constituents from all regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland engaged.



In terms of media engagement...

- » Evidence Week featured on BBC Radio 4 Today in Parliament with MPs and partners having the opportunity to speak about the event.
- » John Pullinger, UK National Statistician, spoke about Evidence Week in his opinion piece in The Times.
- » Information about the week was included in several parliamentary publications.
- » Attendees, partners, and members of the public used #EvidenceWeek and #EvidencePods on social media to draw attention to discussions and issues related to Evidence Week
- » Evidence Week tweets from the Sense about Science account were seen 230,000 times, with over 2,000 engagements.



Lilian Greenwood MP at the 'Virtual human' pod



Stephen Metcalfe MP at the 'Census 2021' pod



Lord Lucas at 'The impact of automation' pod



Maggie Throup MP at the 'Antimicrobial resistance' pod

Working in partnership

We had some fantastic feedback from partners this year about the quantity and quality of conversations. In particular it was great to see so many partners arranging follow up meetings with MPs and their researchers.

Evidence pod partners also boosted their researcher and especially Early Career Researcher (ECR) experience of policy engagement – researchers learned how to brief in a way that we know works well for a parliamentary audience

Some partners also encouraged their ECRs to attend Evidence Week and meet their MP and/or volunteer at the event, providing further career-enhancing benefits to those who did.

“Anecdotal evidence and intuition is not quite enough, you need to have the scientific evidence behind it. This event has proved very helpful to everybody” - John McNally MP

“Evidence Week, Should we do it again? Absolutely!” - Bill Grant MP



“People peddle easy solutions to complex problems, and the danger is that if we pursue that approach we will come a cropper, we will not solve these problems.” - Norman Lamb MP

Voice of Young Science

Sense about Science is grateful to the six excellent volunteers, including those from the Voice of Young Science network, who supported the Evidence pod partners during their sessions. To find out how your organisation's early career researchers/members can join the Voice of Young Science network, receive free training from Sense about Science in public and policy engagement and get hands-on experience please contact hamid@senseaboutscience.org or visit <https://senseaboutscience.org/voys/>

Looking to next year

We are grateful to SAGE, LSE, Wiley and our pod partners for coming with us on our Evidence Week journey. We are already planning Evidence Week for 2020 and would love your feedback and ideas. Please contact samia@senseaboutscience.org