

Parliamentary briefing:

Correcting the Record

Full Fact is calling on MPs to support the recommendations made by the [Procedure Committee on correcting the record](#), so that the Ministerial corrections process is extended to all MPs and the visibility of corrections on Hansard is increased. We are also calling for MPs to go further and introduce new ways to hold MPs accountable when they fail to correct false or misleading claims.

Background

The Procedure Committee has published a report on its [inquiry on the current system for MPs to correct the record](#) and what changes could be made to improve the process.

The current corrections process stems from a 2007 Procedure Committee report which introduced a system for Ministers to be able to correct inaccurate information provided to the Commons to improve the clarity and visibility of corrections.

Sixteen years on there has been a significant transformation in how information is communicated, with same-day publication and online video coverage - making what is said in Parliament available more quickly and widely than ever before.

At present, only Ministers can correct the official record (although they do not always do so). Most MPs, including the Official Opposition and Shadow Frontbench, do not share the same privilege and are unable to correct the record officially. Instead MPs have to make a Point of Order in a separate debate to correct their mistake, but this does not cross-reference to the original debate nor change the official record on Hansard.

Why the Procedure Committee's recommendations need to be adopted

1. Extending the corrections process for all MPs

Full Fact has long called for MPs to be able to correct the record in the same way Ministers can, and we fully support this recommendation.

The current lack of a parliamentary corrections process means that MPs are being hampered in acting in the spirit of honesty. MPs have to rely on Points of Order, which are inefficient and a waste of House time.

Because many MPs already use Points of Order to address mistakes, we know this recommendation would be welcomed and used by the majority of MPs.

The Scottish Parliament already has a system for corrections for MSPs. It gives clear guidance on how this could work and what would be in scope. For MSPs this has become an everyday part of fulfilling their personal responsibility to be accurate and truthful in their contributions.

Extending the process to all MPs would also reduce political point scoring. Because at the moment only Ministers can correct their mistakes on the record, allowing all MPs to do so would be a balanced, impartial, and non-partisan process.

It would also reduce errors on the official record, this includes mistakes about individual constituents, including distressing life events that may have happened to them, or inflammatory allegations about members of the public.

2. Improving the visibility of corrections on Hansard

The way Ministerial corrections are currently hyperlinked on Hansard does not make it clear that a correction has been made. Full Fact welcomes the recommendation to replace the existing code with clearer wording that states that the link directs the reader to a correction.

As it stands, it is also unlikely a person reading a debate that contained an error would see a Point of Order correction raised at a later date. The recommendation to cross-reference Points of Order corrections to the original statement made would improve the information environment.

These changes would reduce the potential for misleading statements made in Parliament to fuel misinformation. Full Fact sees claims similar to ones occasionally made by MPs being used in health misinformation and disinformation by bad actors outside of Parliament. Content can be taken out of context and the authoritative parliamentary website can give false or contextless claims legitimacy.

Additionally, **the current corrections page on Hansard is inaccessible.** As the Committee notes, it is unnecessarily difficult to navigate and does not include all corrections such as those made through Written Ministerial Statements. Full Fact supports the recommendation to create a more central corrections page that includes all corrections that have been made, including through Written Ministerial Statements and points of order, in chronological order, with the topic and link included.

What is missing from the Procedure Committee's recommendations

1. Holding MPs and Ministers to account when they fail to correct themselves

Full Fact is calling on MPs to go further than the Procedure Committee's recommendations and introduce new measures to hold MPs accountable when they fail to correct their false or misleading claims.

In [our evidence to the Committee](#), we set out the challenges MPs face calling out bad behaviour and holding their fellow MPs to account under the current system. The Committee responded in its report and stated that they “do not believe the introduction of new procedural mechanisms to be necessary” and that they instead encourage MPs “to take advantage of existing mechanisms available to them”.

We agree with the Committee that the House of Commons does provide numerous ways that MPs can challenge the accuracy of contributions by other MPs. But **we do not believe the current mechanisms are sufficient**. If they were, MPs would not have to ask repeatedly, without success, for Ministers to correct their mistakes.

MPs have an obligation to uphold standards of Honesty as set out in the Members' Code of Conduct, and for them to be able to do that, there must be a better system for MPs to use to hold others to account when they fail to correct their mistakes.

2. Correcting mistakes outside of Parliament

The Committee did not respond to Full Fact's calls to extend the corrections process for mistakes made by MPs outside of Parliament.

Full Fact recognises that the Members' Code of Conduct does not seek to regulate what MPs do in their purely private and personal lives, nor does it seek to regulate MPs' views and opinions. We also recognise the complexities that a system to address inaccuracies made outside of Parliament would have.

However, when MPs make a contribution in a public setting, such as on social media, on television, in a newspaper, or during a speech, they are making statements in their capacity as public representatives. **Full Fact sees the extent to which a post on social media that contains an inaccuracy by a high-profile MP with hundreds of thousands of followers, or a statement by**

a senior Government or Shadow Minister on television, can reach and inform public debate. This reach can be far greater than an inaccuracy made in the House of Commons.

We urge the Procedure Committee to commit to a future inquiry in this area as soon as possible.

What do the public think of honesty in Parliament

The public is increasingly concerned about the lack of accountability and transparency in politics and wants to see an honest Parliament. Adopting the Procedure Committee's recommendations would help improve public perception of MPs.

- [2021 Full Fact research](#) shows that **71% of Britons believe there was more lying and misuse of facts in politics and media than 30 years ago** - a 15% increase in three years.
- [Last year the Constitution Unit](#) found that **the public most valued honesty and owning up to mistakes in politicians**.
- [The June 2023 Ipsos Issues Index](#) shows that a **lack of faith in politicians and politics remains a key concern for the public**, with 14% citing this concern unprompted.
- [Full Fact's petition](#) has received nearly **50,000 signatures**, it calls for "MPs to admit publicly when they get things wrong, and along with all MPs, agree new rules to make it easy to correct mistakes and stop politicians from misleading Parliament".
- **76% of the public** would back a criminal offence covering politicians who lie, with over 200,000 signatures on a 2022 [Compassion in Politics](#) petition to bring in such an offence.

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