

Adapted from <https://www.gov.uk/good-law>

Guidance

Good law

Good law principles, current challenges and what the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel are doing to promote good law.

The good law initiative is an appeal to everyone interested in the making and publishing of law to come together with a shared objective of making legislation work well for the users of today and tomorrow.

Good law: the challenge

People find legislation difficult. The volume of statutes and regulations, their piecemeal structure, and their level of detail and frequent amendments, make legislation hard to understand and difficult to comply with. That can hinder economic activity. It can create burdens for businesses and communities. It can obstruct good government, and it can undermine the rule of law.

This is not a new problem, and many things have been done to address particular aspects of it. More people now get involved in the legislative process, through the publication of draft Bills; this is good for democracy and also improves the quality of legislation.

Parliamentary Counsel use a plain English style for writing laws, and are keen to try new drafting techniques rather than simply follow precedents. The Law Commission produces special bills for law reform, consolidation and repeals. The Red Tape Challenge is tackling the stock of unnecessary or unduly burdensome regulations. And The National Archives have vastly improved user access through [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk).

But this last development also brings into sharp focus the continuing difficulty with legislation. Law has a wider readership than ever before. The web has made it possible for people to find sources of law more easily. Once there, they tend to find the experience

confusing. Reading legislation is not intuitive. One part of a statute often needs to be read alongside another; the last dated version is not the complete story; regulations have to be read alongside Acts of Parliament, and sometimes case law as well.

The digital age brings new opportunities as well: tools for publishing and arranging law, and techniques for diagnosing and predicting how law is used. So this is an exciting time for re-thinking how legislation can be made easier for users.

Good law: the vision

The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) would like the user to experience good law - law that is:

- necessary
- clear
- coherent
- effective
- accessible

We are asking a range of partners – in government, in Parliament and beyond – to help us get there. For some this may mean challenging their current approach to preparing, making, scrutinising, or publishing legislation. It may mean working more closely together with partners, or knowing better how the user finds legislation, or what they do with it. We want to build a shared accountability for (and pride in) the quality of our law, and to create confidence among users that legislation is for them.