

THE MP-CONSTITUENCY LINK IN THE UK: CHANGING ROLES

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REPRESENTATION

- GENERAL

- *Party* [largely dictating behaviour in chamber and committees – speaking and voting]

- SPECIFIC

- *Constituency* [dictating behaviour largely outside the chamber]

THE ROLES OF THE CONSTITUENCY MP

- 1. safety valve
- 2. information provider
- 3. local dignitary
- 4. advocate
- 5. benefactor
- 6. powerful friend
- 7. promoter of constituency interests

CHANGING ROLES

- DECLINING ROLE
 - benefactor
- EXPANDING ROLES
 - Safety valve
 - Local dignitary
 - Information provider
 - Advocate
 - Powerful friend
 - Promoter of local interests

COSTS AND BENEFITS - MP

- COSTS
 - Time
 - Opportunity cost (constituency v. Westminster)
- BENEFITS
 - Job satisfaction
 - Meeting expectations of local party
 - 'Personal vote'

COSTS AND BENEFITS - GOVERNMENT

- COST
 - Civil service/ministerial time
 - Resources

- BENEFITS
 - Identifying specific problems
 - Identifying systemic problems

COSTS AND BENEFITS - CONSTITUENTS

- COSTS
 - Inefficient means of resolving grievances
 - Dissatisfaction with responses
- BENEFITS
 - Outlet for views
 - Information
 - Resolution of grievances
 - Support from powerful friend
 - Satisfaction with local MP