

Operation Black Vote & the Department for Communities & Local Government

Parliamentary Shadowing Scheme



'Greater representation and greater involvement from our communities will undoubtedly enhance our democracy'

Simon Woolley, OBV Director



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Participants from the 2010 Parliamentary Shadowing Scheme pictured at Downing Street, London

Why do we need a Parliamentary Shadowing Scheme?

Following the 2010 General Election, there are currently 27 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) MPs. Whilst this number is in itself an achievement on the previous 14—it is still not enough.

A more representative Parliament would see approximately 60 BME MPs of which half would be women. This level of systematic under-representation means that people from BME communities, by design or default, feel that there is little or no place for BME communities to have a clear and just voice. OBV in partnership with the CLG is trying to change this.

Pictures on Front page: (L-R) Adam Afriyie MP, Baroness Meral Hussein-Ece, Rt. Hon David Lammy MP, Shabana Mahmood MP, Diane Abbott MP, Rt. Hon Sadiq Khan MP, Helen Grant MP and Lord Navnit Dholakia

What is the Parliamentary Shadowing Scheme?



Shadow, Gurvinder Sandher talks to Trevor Philips, Chair of the Equality & Human Rights Commission, Houses of Parliament, London

The Parliamentary Shadowing Scheme was launched in 1999, to increase the number of BME MPs. The aim of this cross party project is to address the deficit of BME individuals in all areas and at levels of political life and nurture a new generation of BME leaders

The Scheme pairs BME individuals - called Shadows - with a Member from either the House of Commons or Lords.

Over the course of 5 months, Shadows will see life in Westminster and in the constituency. By doing so they will experience both national and local politics and gain an insight into the 'corridors of power'.

What does the Parliamentary Shadowing Scheme Offer?

The Scheme gives participants the chance to:

- Find out more about the life and work of an MP, through Shadowing both in Westminster and in the constituency
- Find out more about the policy process
- Become a Parliamentary Ambassador by encouraging others to get involved in the political process.

The training sessions will look at:

- National and local democracy
- Candidate Selection process
- Leadership: how to be an effective ambassador and representative
- The Media



Participants from the 2010 Scheme with CLG Under-Secretary of State Andrew Stunell OBE MP, Portcullis House, Westminster

Case Study 1: Helen Grant MP

Helen was on the 2006 MP Shadowing Scheme and was paired with Rt. Hon Oliver Letwin MP.

With a background in law, Helen ran her own specialist firm before being selected in 2008 as the Prospective Candidate for Maidstone and The Weald, the seat formerly held by Ann Widdecombe. At the 2010 General Election, she made history by not only becoming the first Black woman to win the Maidstone and Weald seat, but also by becoming the first female Conservative MP of African heritage.



Case Study 2: Cllr Mahroof Hussain MBE



Mahroof was on the very first MP Shadowing Scheme in 1999, where he shadowed Marsha Singh MP.

Following this, Mahroof was elected as a councillor for Boston Ward 2002 and he is currently the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Equality and Young People. In 2005, he stood as the Parliamentary Candidate for Sheffield Hallam.

Mahroof has advised the government on tackling extremism following the 2005 London Bombings and is a Magistrate having been appointed to the Rotherham Bench in 2001.

Speaking about the scheme, Mahroof said '*OBV was a precursor to my career which helped me to focus and gave me an excellent background into politics*'

Political Supporters

Some of the Politicians who have supported the scheme over the years include:

- Rt. Hon. Tony Blair
- Rt. Hon Harriet Harman MP
- Rt. Hon. Theresa May MP
- Rt. Hon. Oliver Letwin MP
- Rt. Hon. Ed Miliband MP
- Rt. Hon. Francis Maude MP
- Rt. Hon. Andrew Lansley MP
- Rt. Hon. Simon Hughes MP
- Baroness Ros Scott
- Rt. Hon Oliver Letwin MP
- Caroline Lucas MP
- Rt Hon. Elfyn Llywd MP



Rt. Hon Francis Maude MP, Simon Woolley OBV Director, Priti Patel MP and a Shadow deep in conversation

What has been said about the Scheme

“The OBV Scheme is helping us change faster, pushing us forward to be more open and inclusive. And to be inclusive with enthusiasm not just the begrudging tolerance of the past.” **Rt. Hon Francis Maude MP**

“The OBV Shadowing Scheme is a really important part of ensuring a diverse democracy for the future. Unless we all take responsibility we cannot complain later .”

Rt. Hon Simon Hughes MP

“Without a doubt it is the personal conversations I was able to have with my MP. There is nothing more useful in my eyes, than being able to sit with an elected official and talk ‘off the record’ about all of the issues pertaining to politics and elected office for BME Candidates. “

Labour Party Shadow

“Hearing from the various MPs during the training days was very uplifting. “

Liberal Democrat Shadow

Is this for you?

The Scheme is open to BME individuals aged 18 and over. If you have a thorough knowledge of the main issues faced by BME communities, and are serious about seeking public office this might just be for you.

You need to be able to commit to 10-12 non-consecutive days over 5 months, these will comprise of shadowing and training days. You must have the time, enthusiasm, dedication, dynamism and commitment to make a real and positive difference to society. Please note that because of the nature of the scheme you need to be broadly sympathetic to the MP's political views and Party.



*Lord Ouseley talking to a Shadow.
Portcullis House, Westminster*

By the end of the scheme you'll be equipped for a leadership role and be armed with all the skills needed to become actively involved in political life. You'll also join the OBV alumni, which will continue to provide support, assistance and opportunities as you develop your political aspirations.

Want to find out more or request an application form?
Then get in touch with Francine Fernandes or Jyoti Bhojani
on 020 8983 5426 or e-mail mp@obv.org.uk
or visit the OBV website: www.obv.org.uk
Deadline for receipt of completed applications is
Monday 1st August 2011 at 12 noon

About OBV

OBV is a non-partisan political organisation that aims to address the Black democratic deficit. OBV's goal is for a fair, just and inclusive democracy—one that offers rights to all and demands responsibility from all sections of society.

Our vision is of a talented, energetic and creative Black and minority ethnic community that will improve British democracy and British society: a celebration of difference in the building of new partnerships. We aim to make this vision real through political education, participation, and representation.