

CARIBBEAN CLERKS PROGRAMME

REPORT

13 - 14 JANUARY 2021

IMPACT, OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

Impact

To strengthen democracy across the Caribbean region by supporting parliaments to be effective, accountable and inclusive.

Outcome

Through this two half-day programme of theoretical learning, workshops and discussions, this programme aims to have the following outcomes:

- Increased capacity and knowledge of clerks and parliamentary staff in parliamentary practice and procedure, specifically in relation to (virtual) communication skills.
- Clerks and parliamentary staff have strengthened their network across the region, allowing for future collaboration and sharing of knowledge and skills.
- Increased collaboration between the UK Parliament and the parliaments in the Caribbean region.

Outputs

- A two half-day virtual training programme delivered, attended by at least 20 parliamentary officials from at least five parliaments across the Caribbean region.
- Enhanced knowledge and understanding of (virtual) communication skills by participants.
- A post-programme report produced and shared with key stakeholders and published online.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

From 13-14 January 2021, CPA UK organised a two half-day programme for clerks and parliamentary staff across the Caribbean region focussed on improving communication skills for virtual working during Covid-19 and in person. The programme included over 25 clerks and parliamentary staff from 9 legislatures in the Caribbean and was conducted on Zoom.

The programme included speakers from across the UK and the Caribbean region and facilitated several training sessions which covered the following areas:

- Virtual working of parliaments including committee business
- Public Engagement and Outreach
- Clerk and Member relationships

More than 25 parliamentary staff members took part in interactive activities including group discussions and role play exercises. During the programme participants heard from expert speakers and were given the chance to ask questions.

Building on the success of this programme, CPA UK will be running programmes for clerks and parliamentary staff in the Caribbean region on an annual basis. The next programme is expected to take place in January 2022.



The delegates met virtually from across the Caribbean region.



MAINTAINING FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Virtual Working

Virtual working and maintaining the normal functioning of parliament during the Covid-19 pandemic has posed challenges for legislatures across the Caribbean. **Some parliaments have adopted hybrid means of working with a combination of virtual and in person functions**, whilst others are operating with precautions such as reduced members in the chamber, the use of social distancing and face masks.

Fay Bowen, Clerk to the Public Accounts Committee in the Welsh Parliament and, Laura-Jane Tiley, Chamber and Committees Clerk in the UK Parliament shared how the Welsh and UK Parliament have adapted to virtual working during Covid-19. Both shared challenges:

- Ensuring members have correct technological equipment and access to secure web meetings to conduct committee hearings
- Ability to share confidential documents in a secure format
- Maintaining open communication channels whilst staff work from home.
- Clerks and parliamentary staff noted that virtual committee hearings reduce the opportunity for informal discussions and impromptu networking, which is often useful in creating a good working relationship with the committee.

Delegates also discussed the benefits of virtual working for committees. The Welsh Public Accounts Committee engaged a variety of stakeholders using Zoom and this created greater accessibility for witnesses appearing before the committee. In the UK Parliament, using virtual platforms has increased witness diversity and ensured that all members of the public can participate in committee hearings without the need for extensive travel. Appearing on Zoom can also be less overwhelming for vulnerable witnesses, compared to coming to Parliament and appearing in person before a committee.

Briefing Members and Witnesses

Briefing of members and witnesses before committee hearings and how clerks and parliamentary staff can continue to provide detailed briefings during virtual working was another challenge for Caribbean legislatures. Nicholas Wade, Senior Specialist in the International Affairs Team in the UK Parliament highlighted the differences between written and oral briefings, and emphasised that **there is no correct way to provide briefings. Some key principles of a brief are:**

- Clear and easy for members to understand
- Accurate information to assist in members' work
- Impartial and non-biased
- Referenced with credible sources
- Relevant to the committee hearing and business

The UK Parliament has made changes to how clerks brief members due to most staff working from home, this has included using video recordings to brief members. House of Commons Committees meet in private before their public sessions and oral briefings emphasise key points within written briefs and can identify any sensitive issues to members.

Layla Moran MP, former member of the UK Public Accounts Committee, emphasised the importance of giving clear briefings to members backed with accurate research. **Trust between members and clerks is central to building a strong working relationship and continuing to work effectively when conducting virtual business.**

“Briefings should be clear, accurate, impartial, referenced and relevant”

Nicholas Wade, Senior Committee Specialist, UK Parliament

BUILDING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEMBERS

Working virtually has posed additional demands on clerks and staff. Across the Caribbean, there is a strong culture of duty for staff, which places a huge demand on parliamentary staff's time. They want to offer sufficient support, but it can be difficult to manage conflicting priorities in their professional lives.

Parliamentary Codes of Conduct

Parliamentary Codes of Conduct can be useful tools to create boundaries for working relationships and create a healthy working environment based on mutual respect between members, clerks and parliamentary staff. Chloe Challender, Senior Clerk in the Table Office in the UK Parliament shared the reasons for developing the UK Parliament Behaviour Code in 2018 and explained how it is used. The UK Parliament Behaviour Code expects those visiting or working in parliament to respect and value everyone. Bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated. It also expects that people speak up about unacceptable behaviour that they witness or experience themselves. The code of conduct in the UK Parliament is enforced using the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS), which serves as an impartial forum for complaints. Delegates discussed the **importance of having a set of rules or code in place that supports clerks and parliamentary staff to say no, as well as yes, in their roles as stewards of parliament.**

Keiba Jacobs, Procedural Clerk from the Financial Scrutiny Unit in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, shared how the Parliament's behaviour guidelines for staff ensure a quality service. There are three guidelines for staff;

1. Performance Standards in relation to client relations and communication;
2. Coaching and Mentoring for teamwork and leadership;
3. Peer Consultations to provide feedback on clerks' professional attitude.

Each competency is then broken down into observable behaviour and performance targets which become the basis for the behaviour guidelines used by parliamentary staff. The foundation of positive communication with members is built on these competencies which guide the work of clerks and parliamentary staff within the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. A discussion with delegates



ABOUT CPA UK

The international Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is the professional association of all Commonwealth parliamentarians, an active network of over 17,000 parliamentarians from 185 national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch (CPA UK) is one of the largest and most active branches in the CPA community and delivers a unique annual programme both in Westminster and overseas. Overseen by the Houses of Parliament and governed by an Executive Committee of cross-party bicameral parliamentarians, CPA UK undertakes international parliamentary outreach on behalf of the UK Parliament and the wider CPA.

With a specific focus on parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary strengthening activities, CPA UK seeks to foster co-operation and understanding between parliaments, promote good parliamentary practice and advance parliamentary democracy through a variety of international outreach activities and multilateral programmes. Its work is divided into three regions, which include national, regional and provincial legislatures and the legislatures of Overseas Territories:

- Americas, Caribbean, and Europe
- Africa
- Asia- Pacific

Working closely with parliamentarians and parliamentary officials, CPA UK focuses its bilateral and multilateral outreach activities on a number of areas, including parliamentary practice and procedure, and themes including human rights, public financial scrutiny, sustainable development, equal access to political and economic empowerment and democratic strengthening

focused on ways that other parliaments in the Caribbean region can start to implement behaviour codes and guidelines for parliamentary staff and members.

Communicating with Members: How to be Clear and Authoritative

Communicating clearly and authoritatively with members of parliament is an important part of building a successful professional relationship. Ginny Radmall, public speaking coach, shared tips on how clerks can improve their confidence and public speaking skills in person and online. Delegates were given different exercises to improve their posture, their voice projection and to calm their nerves using breathing techniques. Linking to the conversation around behaviour codes and guidelines to clerks working patterns, delegates also discussed the difficulty in saying 'no' to requests from members and the sense of duty they feel working in parliament.

- **Different ways to say 'no' well through providing alternatives such as;**
- **Gratitude through thanking them for asking you**
- **Asking someone else such as looking within your team for support**
- **Alternative support such as offering to provide something else**
- **Asking for time to think about the request so you can plan your work accordingly**

Delegates practised some of the techniques using difficult scenarios to say 'no' to. Using their voice and body language delegates were able to improve their communication skills and sound confident when dealing with difficult requests from members.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Parliaments across the Caribbean region have faced challenges and new opportunities to engage the public in the business of parliament during the Covid-19 pandemic. Communicating internally within parliaments has been a process of adapting to new working methods and virtual platforms for committee business. External communication, such as requests for submissions to committees and public tours of parliament have also been adapted.

Tashana Sewell, Public Relations Officer in the Parliament of Jamaica, shared some challenges her department has faced during the Covid-19 pandemic in educating the public about the functioning of parliament. These included the temporary suspension of several education programmes including the public tours of parliament since March 2020. To mitigate this challenge the Jamaican Parliament have instead been using Zoom to conduct virtual tours of the parliamentary estate, which has proved a popular alternative to visiting in person. Tara-Jane Lee Kerpens, Select Committee Engagement Manager in the UK Parliament, shared that similarly to the Parliament of Jamaica, her team had been using online platforms to continue to connect with members of the public and share the work of parliamentary committees.

It is important to engage young people in the work of parliament. This increases their understanding

of parliament from a young age and increases their confidence when engaging with democratic institutions. Both the Parliament of Jamaica and the UK Parliament engage with young people through outreach initiatives in schools and universities which have had to be adapted. Delegates also discussed the benefits of virtual communication in broadening the reach of public engagement to a wider audience across the whole country and the positive benefits of using social media platforms to publicise and live-stream parliamentary debates and committee hearings. There was also a conversation surrounding resources and capacity of public relations teams in different parliaments in the Caribbean region and the challenges that some smaller teams face managing all aspects of internal and external communications. Delegates shared solutions to similar challenges that they faced across legislatures and discussed in detail activities that have been adapted to run safely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CPA UK recognises that time is limited for our delegates and therefore seeks to make its programmes as tailored and relevant as possible to their needs. CPA UK asks participants to complete pre- and post-workshop assessments where delegates rate their own levels of understanding against key areas covered, before and after the workshop.

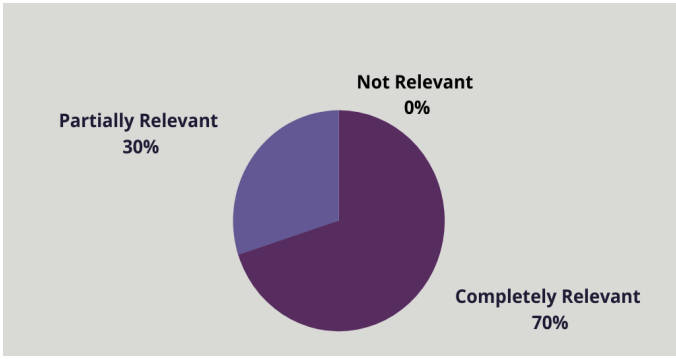
On average there was an increase in knowledge, with highest increase of 21% in Adapting committee hearings for virtual working. When delegates were asked how relevant the programme was to their role, around two-thirds said it was fully relevant to their role and the remainder stated it was partially relevant. When asked about their expectations for the programme, roughly one third said it exceeded their expectations and around two thirds said it met their expectations.

Delegates were asked how they plan to apply any learnings from this programme to their future work, a random sample of answers has been included below:

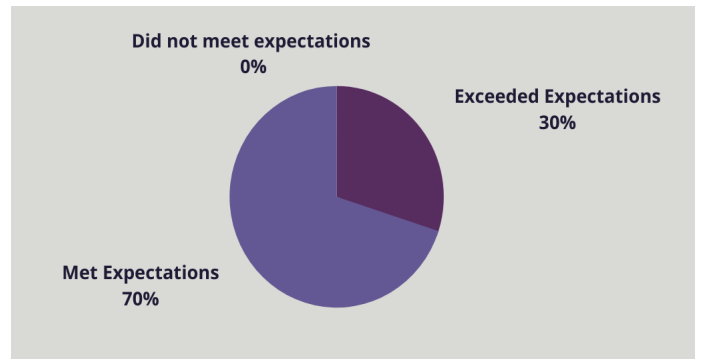
- I plan to apply the various communication techniques learnt to all my interactions with our parliamentary members, auxiliary staff, and the public.
- Verbally brief governmental and non-governmental stakeholders prior to virtual committee meetings.
- Look into a code of conduct for parliamentarians
- I plan to apply the various communication techniques learnt.
- I will use the communication techniques in speaking confidently and with authority to members.

CPA UK looks forward to continuing to work with clerks and parliamentary staff in the Caribbean region. This programme will be an annual event to connect delegates from across the region to share their challenges faced and experiences with each other and to learn and develop skills.

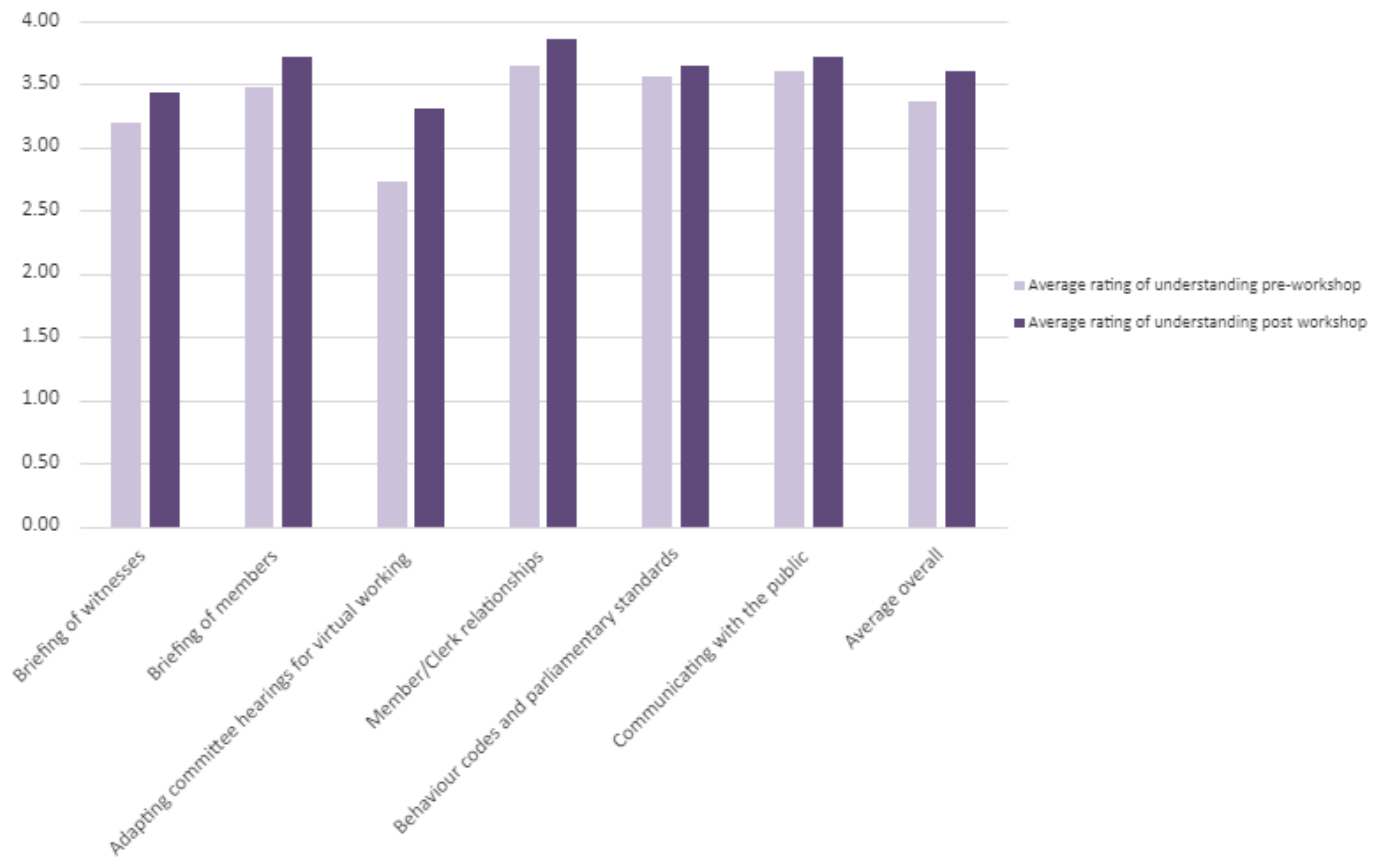
Was the workshop relevant to your role?



Did the workshop meet your expectations?



Did the workshop meet your expectations?



PROGRAMME

Day 1: Wednesday 13 January 2021

Zoom Meeting

SESSION

08:30-09:00
UTC-6
14:30-15:00
UK

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome address given by Jon Davies, Chief Executive of CPA UK, and the official start of the programme.

09:00-09:45
15:00-15:45

Session 1: Conducting Virtual Committee Hearings

This session will examine how to support members remotely during virtual committee sessions. Speakers will share their experiences of adapting to virtual working during Covid-19 and how they were able to continue to support members. Followed by a 5 minute break.

Speakers: Fay Bowe, Clerk of the Public Accounts Committee, Welsh Assembly and Laura-Jane Tiley, Clerk in Chamber and Committees, UK Parliament

09:55-10:55
15:55-16:55

Session 2: Communicating with Members: How to be Clear and Authoritative

This session will explore how clerks can be clear and authoritative in their communication with members. Ginny Radmall will use interactive exercises, including role play scenarios and practical tips, to work on increasing their confidence and skills when communicating in person and virtually.

Speaker: Ginny Radmall, Director, The Ivy Way

10:55-11:05
16:55-17:05

10 minute break

11:05-11:50
17:05-17:50

Session 3: Briefing Members and Witnesses Virtually

This session will focus on how to brief members and witnesses for virtual committee hearings and how this has changed from physical briefings. There will also be the chance to hear from a Member of Parliament in the UK on how briefings help her.

Speakers: Layla Moran MP, UK Parliament and Nicholas Wade, Senior Specialist, International Affairs Unit UK Parliament

11:50-12:00
17:50-18:00

Questions and Feedback

There will be the chance to share comments and ask any questions at the end of Day 1.

12:00
18:00

End of Day 1

PROGRAMME

Day 2: Thursday 14 January 2021

Zoom Meeting

SESSION

09:30-09:00
UTC-6
14:30-15:00 UK

Reflection of Day 1 and Networking

Participants will start the day by discussing lessons learned from the previous day and will be split into small groups to share their experiences in parliament.

09:00-09:45
15:00-15:45

Session 4: Communicating with Members: UK Parliament Behaviour Code

This session will explain the UK Parliament Behaviour Code, the process of creating it and the way it affects clerks work in the UK. There will be the chance to reflect on positive changes and challenges to parliamentary staffs' working environments.

Speakers: Chloe Challender, Table Office, UK Parliament and Keiba Jacob, Procedural Clerk, Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago

09:45-09:55
15:45-15:55

10 minute break

09:55-11:00
15:55-17:00

Session 5: Public Engagement

Delegates will learn about how parliaments publicise the work of their committees and share information with stakeholders and the public. This session will explore challenges faced and look to new opportunities in the future.

Speakers: Tara-Jane Lee Kerpens, Select Committee Engagement Manager, UK Parliament and Tashana Sewell, Public Relations Officer, Parliament of Jamaica

11:00-11:30
17:00-17:30

Evaluation and Next Steps

This session will provide delegates with a chance to provide feedback to CPA UK and to create networks with clerks from across the region. A short presentation from ParlAmericas on their upcoming activities will follow.

11:30
17:30

End of Day 2 and Close of Workshop

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Tashana Sewell

Tashana Sewell is an experienced communications specialist who has served as the Public Relations Officer for the Jamaican Parliament since 2009. She manages the Parliament's public relations and communication function. Her areas of responsibility include media relations, internal communications and public education activities.

Ms. Sewell holds a Master in Business Administration (General Management), a Bachelor of Arts (Mass Communications) and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (Modern Foreign Languages), all from the University of the West Indies.



Nicholas Wade

Nicholas Wade has been working for the Committee Office in the House of Commons for five years, first as a Specialist for the Foreign Affairs Committee and most recently as the Senior Specialist leading the International Affairs Unit: a team of Specialists that supports the Defence, Foreign Affairs, International Development, and National Security Committees. He has managed Committee inquiries relating to UK policy in the Middle East, to rights such as media freedom, and to the strategy behind the UK's approach to the world. Separately, Nicholas managed the House of Commons' former parliamentary-development programme in Myanmar between 2018 and 2019.



Laura-Jane Tiley

Laura-Jane Tiley is the Private Secretary to the Deputy Speakers in the House of Commons. Before this role, she has held roles as deputy clerk to a number of select committees, including the Public Accounts Committee and Committee on Standards.



Layla Moran MP

Layla has been the Member of Parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon since 2017. She is the Liberal Democrats' Foreign Affairs and International Development Spokesperson, an issue that she is deeply passionate about having grown up around the world. She was previously, as an ex-teacher, the party's education spokesperson.

Once elected to Parliament, Layla got to work campaigning to tackle climate change, make our education system world-class and protecting and promoting internationalism, including as a member of the Public Accounts Committee between 2017 and 2019.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Ginny Radmall

Ginny Radmall is the Director of The Ivy Way. She works with startups and corporates, equipping companies to communicate their message clearly. She has worked with the likes of Microsoft, Google, Salesforce, IKEA, WeWork and Moody's Analytics, as well as running all of the pitch training for Google for Startups across their global Demo Days. Over the last few months Ginny has been training companies on how to exercise good leadership in video calls, when it can often feel like you're speaking into a void.



Chloe Challender

Chloe is a Senior Clerk in the Table Office at the House of Commons, where she has worked for the past twelve years. She is also a member of the Parligender Committee (the Workplace Equality Network on gender equality in Parliament.)



Fay Bowen

Fay Bowen is Clerk to the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee. Previous roles include Clerk to the National Assembly for Wales Legislation Committees, which involved assisting Members in scrutinising and amending Welsh Government legislation. Prior to joining the National Assembly for Wales she was a Committee Clerk in local government, working with a range of committees across various local authorities. Fay has been actively involved in the CPA UK Overseas Territories Financial oversight project since 2016 including a Clerking attachment to St Helena during May 2018.



Tara-Jane Lee Kerpens

Tara-Jane leads the Select Committee Engagement Team. A bicameral team that delivers a varied programme of public engagement activities for committees in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The team is part of the Education and Engagement Team in Participation that works with people, schools and communities across the United Kingdom to increase public understanding of, and engagement with, the UK Parliament.



Keiba Jacob

Keiba is the clerk of the Public Accounts Committee in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. She was first appointed in 2013 and has also served as a procedural clerk to the Financial Scrutiny Committees.



Jessica Onion, Programme Officer

As a Programme Officer for CPA UK Jessica works across all regions of the Commonwealth. She has experience in designing and leading programmes on Public Financial Oversight and Management in the Caribbean region and across the Commonwealth.

Prior to joining CPA UK, Jessica worked for UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific supporting programmes to increase women's political participation in Thailand. She holds a BA (Hons) in History from the University of Bristol and an MSC in Human Rights from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



Nikki Eames, Programme Assistant

Nikki is a Project Assistant at CPA UK. Since joining in October 2020, Nikki has supported the delivery of CPA UK's flagship Westminster Seminar and our first Climate Forum.

Prior to CPA UK Nikki studied Politics and Sociology at the University of Cambridge. During this time, she also gained experience supporting a wide range of international NGOs in two different consultancies, Cambridge Development Initiative and Aleron.

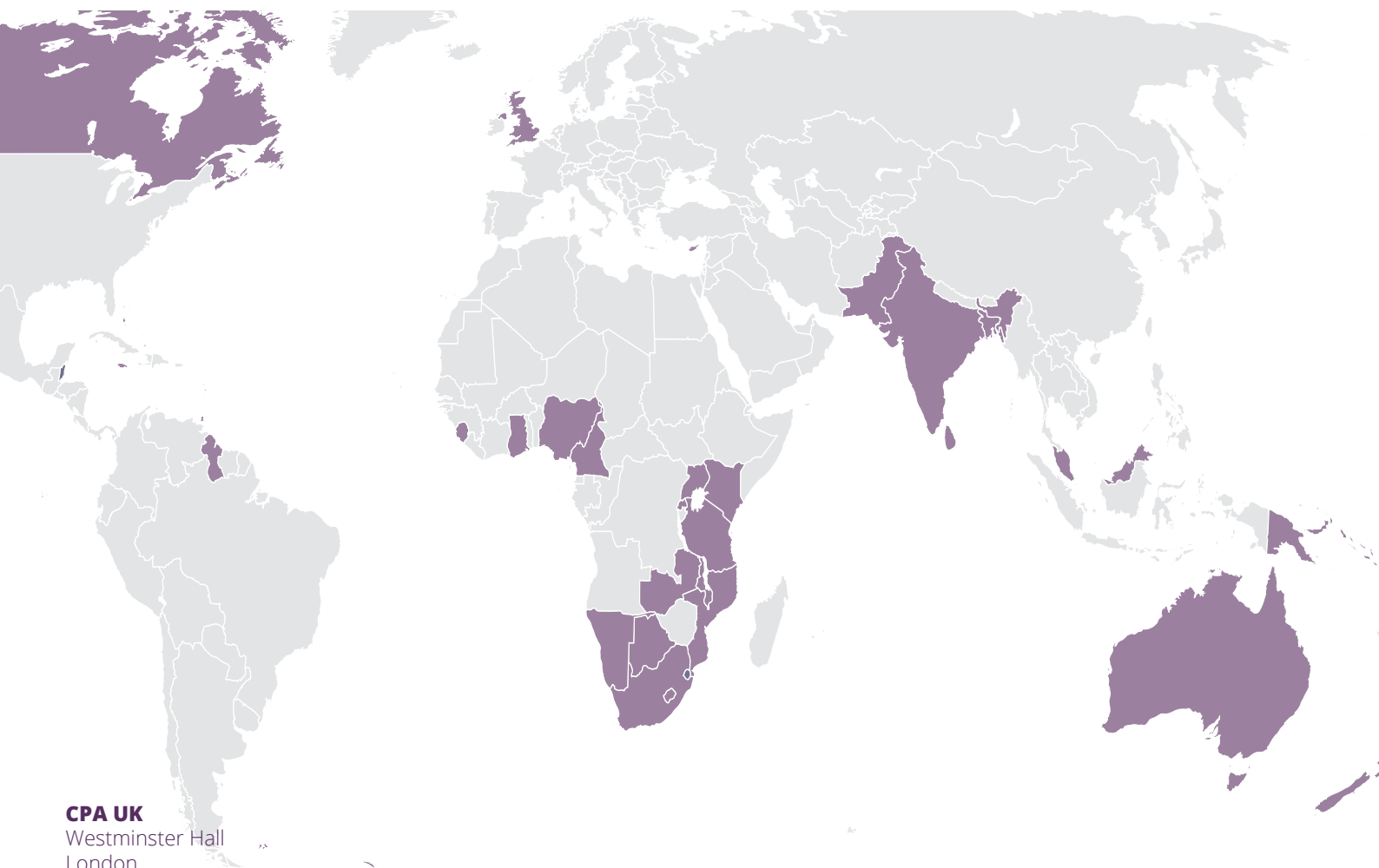


Fleur ten Hacken, Americas, Caribbean and Europe Programme Manager

As Programme Manager for the Americas, Caribbean and Europe, Fleur is responsible for designing and delivering bilateral programmes with parliaments in the region. She is also the CPA UK lead on Election Observation Missions in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

Fleur was previously a Programme Officer for CPA UK, where she worked across all regions of the Commonwealth. Prior to joining CPA UK in early 2017, Fleur worked at various organisations including a political monitoring company, a non-profit diplomatic advisory group, and the Dutch Embassy in London. She holds a BA (Hons) in Politics from the University of Nottingham, and an MA in International Peace and Security from King's College London.





CPA UK

Westminster Hall
London
SW1A 0AA
T: +44 (0)20 7219 5373
F: +44 (0)20 7233 1202
E: cpauk@parliament.uk
W: www.uk-cpa.org

Registered Charity No. 1095118
Registered Company No. 4606846