



## BRIEFING PAPER

Number 04416, 17 December 2019

# Youngest Members of Parliament since 1979

Compiled by  
Sarah Priddy

## Background

This note lists the youngest Members of Parliament since 1979 and provides further information on selected youngest MPs.

The youngest member of the House of Commons is also known as the 'Baby of the House'. Unlike the Father of the House (the Member with the longest unbroken service) the title Baby of the House carries no duties or rights.

You can find out more about the title, role and history of the Father of the House in the Commons Library briefing paper, [Father of the House](#), which lists Fathers of the House since 1901.

Lists of Fathers and Babies of the House, together with lists of the oldest and youngest Members, have been compiled on an [external website](#) which provides details of the Father of the House dating back to 1701 and Baby of the House dating back to 1885.

## Notable youngest MPs

### William Pitt (Pitt the younger)



William Pitt was first elected to Parliament on 8 January 1781 at the age of 21 years and 8 Months<sup>1</sup>. He was known as Pitt the younger as his Father, also named William, was known as Pitt the elder. Both men were Prime Ministers.

It was reported upon the election of Mhairi Black in 2015 that she, along with Pitt were two of the youngest members of the House of Commons since the 1600s<sup>2</sup>. However, Pitt was not unique in his youth when he was elected in 1781. *The History of Parliament 1790-1820* (as mentioned by Lord Norton in his blog [The Norton Review](#)) notes that:

"There were at least 29, possibly 30, new Members who had not attained their legal majority (21 years) when elected to the House in this period..."<sup>3</sup>

*The History of Parliament* goes on to say that many of these Members did not speak in the House until they had reached 21 years old. *The History of Parliament* notes an

<sup>1</sup> Namier & Brooke, *The History of Parliament, The House of Commons 1754-1790 (III Members K-Y)*, 1964

<sup>2</sup> [BBC Newsbeat 'Meet the SNP's Mhairi Black, the youngest MP elected since 1667'](#)

<sup>3</sup> Thorne, *The History of Parliament, The House of Commons 1790- 1820 (I Survey)*, 1986

## 2 Youngest Members of Parliament since 1979

exception, [Viscount Milton](#), who on the 23 February 1807 at the age of 20 years 9 Months, expressed his opposition to slavery during a [debate regarding the Slave Trade Abolition Bill](#).

Despite not being 'the youngest' MP, Pitt the younger is notable as the youngest Prime Minister, having taken the office at the age of 24<sup>4</sup>. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* closes its entry on Pitt by noting that:

...he is in the pantheon of exceptionally renowned prime ministers, those few outstanding figures whose names have endured.<sup>5</sup>

### Charles Kennedy



Charles Kennedy was elected in 1983 at the age of 23 years and 7 months. He made his Maiden Speech three months later during a [debate regarding the younger generation](#) [HC Deb 15 Jul 1983 cc1103-50]. Mr Kennedy went on to become the Leader of the Liberal Democrats in 1999. He would serve as Leader of the Liberal Democrats until 2006 and as a Member of Parliament until he lost his seat at the 2015 General Election. He died on 1 July 2015. Shortly after his death Members [paid tribute to Mr Kennedy](#). The Prime Minister, David Cameron, said of Mr Kennedy:

Charles Kennedy was... a man of great principle and great intellect. At the heart of his political views was a deep commitment to social justice. He passionately believed in Europe as a way of bringing people together, but his most outspoken contribution in recent years was the principled stand that he took against the Iraq war. Looking back, it is easy to forget just what a stand that was. [HC Deb 6 Jun 2015 c592]

### Mhairi Black



Mhairi Black was elected in 2015 at the age of 20 years and 7 months defeating the incumbent shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander to take the seat of Paisley and Renfrewshire South for the Scottish National Party. She made her Maiden Speech on 14 July 2015 during a [Financial Statement and Budget Report Debate](#). A member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee, 215-17, she came sixth in the 2016 Private Members' Bills ballot and put forward the [Benefit Claimants Sanctions \(Required Assessment\) Bill](#) which would require assessment of the claimant's circumstances before the implementation of sanctions.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ellis & Treasure, *Britain's Prime Ministers*, 2005, p71

<sup>5</sup> [ONDB William Pitt](#)

## Youngest Members of the House of Commons since 1979

Name	Age	From	To	Reason for becoming youngest MP	Date of birth*	Constituency	Party
David Alton	28 years	09/03/1979	03/05/1979	^ Elected at by-election	15/03/1951	Liverpool, Edge Hill	Liberal
Stephen Dorrell	27 years 2 months	03/05/1979	09/04/1981	Elected at general election	25/03/1952	Loughborough	Conservative
Bobby Sands	[1] 27 years 1 month	09/04/1981	05/05/1981	Elected at by-election	09/03/1954	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Anti H-Block
Stephen Dorrell	[2] 29 years 2 months	05/05/1981	20/08/1981	Death of previous youngest MP	25/03/1952	Loughborough	Conservative
Owen Carron	[1] 28 years 3 months	20/08/1981	13/05/1983	^ Elected at by-election	01/03/1953	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Anti H-Block
Charles Kennedy	23 years 7 months	09/06/1983	12/03/1987	Elected at general election	25/11/1959	Ross, Cromarty and Skye	Social Democrat
Matthew Taylor	24 years 2 months	12/03/1987	08/04/1997	^ Elected at by-election	03/01/1963	Truro	Liberal
Christopher Leslie	24 years 11 months	01/05/1997	22/06/2000	Elected at general election	28/06/1972	Shipley	Labour
David Lammy	27 years 11 months	22/06/2000	18/09/2003	Elected at by-election	19/07/1972	Tottenham	Labour
Sarah Teather	29 years 3 months	18/09/2003	11/04/2005	^ Elected at by-election	01/06/1974	Brent East	Liberal Democrat
Jo Swinson	25 years 3 months	05/05/2005	24/07/2009	Elected at general election	05/02/1980	East Dunbartonshire	Liberal Democrat
Chloe Smith	27 years 2 months	24/07/2009	12/04/2010	^ Elected at by-election	17/05/1982	Norwich North	Conservative
Pamela Nash	25 years 11 months	06/05/2010	03/03/2015	Elected at general election	24/06/1984	Airdrie and Shotts	Labour
Mhairi Black	20 years 7 months	07/05/2015	06/11/2019	Elected at general election	12/09/1994	Paislet and Renfrewshire South	Scottish National Party
Nadia Whittome	23 years	12/12/2019	present	Elected at general election	N/A	[3] Nottingham East	Labour

### Notes

[1] Bobby Sands and Owen Carron were elected as Anti H-Block MPs and did not take their seats; For this reason Stephen Dorrell remained the youngest MP sitting in the House of Commons.

[2] Became the youngest MP for a second time, on the death of Bobby Sands on 05 May 1981.

[3] [BBC News, 16 Dec 2019](#)

^Date of the dissolution of Parliament (MPs cease to be MPs at dissolution)

\*Source: Members Names Information Service

## Parliament: facts and figures

- [Browse all briefings in the series](#)

This series of publications contains data on various subjects relating to Parliament and Government. Topics include legislation, MPs, select committees, debates, divisions and parliamentary procedure.

## Feedback

Please send any comments or corrections to: [Parliamentary and Constitution Centre](#).  
Suggestions for new lists welcomed

### About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk).

### Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).