

DIRECCIÓN DE SERVICIOS DE INFORMACIÓN Y ANÁLISIS ESPECIALIZADOS  
SUBDIRECCIÓN DE REFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA

# ALERTA HEMEROGRÁFICA

No. 365  
JULIO 2023



**Título:** *Access to justice and the role of parliamentarians: what happens to those who fall through the justice gap?*

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**Revista:** Legal Studies (2023), pp. 1-21.

**Editorial:** Cambridge University Press Online.

**ISSNe:** 1748-121X

**Versión electrónica:** <https://bit.ly/44Duw7w>

**Nota:** Disponible para consulta en los servicios las Bases de Datos Institucionales para la Cámara de Diputados.

Si usted desea adquirir la publicación, favor de dirigirse a: Cambridge University Press  
University Printing House, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom.

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### ABSTRACT:

This is the first academic paper to consider the role that parliamentarians play in access to justice. Under austerity, England and Wales has seen cuts to legal aid and local authority budgets that have impacted the ability of people to get help for legal problems in social welfare law from the advice sector. Members of the UK Parliament and Members of the Senedd Cymru are increasingly being called upon by their constituents to fill the resultant gap in advice. This paper draws on interviews with parliamentarians that draw out the nature of the role they are now playing in access to justice across three key areas of civil justice: welfare benefits; housing; and immigration. The growth of parliamentarians as figures in access to justice has thus far been largely neglected but is crucial to grasp, as the implications for the future of access to justice are massive. The paper calls for more research to better understand the phenomenon but urges caution that elected representatives should not be considered as an adequate substitute for a properly functioning, adequately funded advice sector.

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