**Analyse the influence of the Executive (Cabinet and PM) on a political system within the UK.**

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| Influence | Limited influence |
| Cabinet is the major decision making body in Central Government. Cabinet meet every Tuesday for about an hour to review and evaluate the work of government. It drives policy and Cabinet decides how much time to allocate to individual pieces of legislation in Parliament.  Cabinet Ministers are responsible for policy making within their department; E.g. Department for Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith is currently implementing his ‘universal credit’ policy is an umbrella payment; which combines both in-work and out of work benefits, as well as ‘pre-paid benefits cards’, currently being piloted across some councils to prevent benefits claimants spending welfare payments on alcohol, drugs or gambling. | Recent move away from traditional Cabinet style of government and towards a more Presidential style, where the PM makes decisions based on informal consultation with a small number of special advisers rather than Cabinet, so Cabinet style govt being undermined.  E.g. 2004 Butler Report into workings of Blair Govt criticised its ‘sofa’ style of government and informality which ‘reduced the scope for informed collective political judgement’. |
| Cabinet can use collective influence on PM. The Cabinet know they owe their promoted position to the PM, but first and foremost they are constituency MPs and they know they owe their jobs to the constituents who elect them. If the mood of the country is collectively opposed to the wishes of the PM and Cabinet Ministers fear losing re-election if they stick by unpopular policies, the Cabinet will most likely unite to force the PM’s hand.  E.g former PM Margaret Thatcher had forced through unpopular policies such as the poll tax in Scotland against the wishes of some of her Cabinet Ministers, so they effectively forced her to resign in 1990, showing that without the support of the Cabinet, the PM can be powerless, and that arguably the Cabinet is where real power lies. | ‘Collective responsibility’ provides the PM with authority over the Cabinet. Once a collective decision is reached in Cabinet, all ministers must publicly support it! If a minister feels that he/she cannot publicly support a decision then they are expected to resign. E.g. under Blair, Leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook resigned from Cabinet over the decision to got to war with Iraq in 2003.  Cabinet Ministers owe their promoted position to the PM, who chooses them. They are ultimately accountable to the PM for the performance of their department. E.g. Cameron’s 2014 Cabinet reshuffle made Jeremy Hammond the new Foreign Secretary, replacing William Hague. This was considered a demotion for Hague and a promotion for Hammond, so arguably it is evidence that it is the PM who wields real power over the Cabinet, who are usually loyal and compliant in pursuit of promotion, lessening their ability to influence the PM. |
| Cabinet have more power over PM if PM is unpopular. E.g. suggestions that it is some members of the coalition Cabinet that have forced David Cameron to pledge the Conservatives will hold an in or out referendum on Britain’s involvement in the EU if they win the 2015 general election, showing the influence of Cabinet. | Opportunities for Parliament to hold Cabinet Ministers to account at Question Time (1 hour Mon-Thu) and in Select Committees. E.g. in April 2013 Chancellor George Osborne was questioned on his budget by Opposition MPs. *Committees are arguably more effective than the Commons at holding Government to account as they are cross-party and have more time to question, meaning Cabinet Ministers may struggle to get away with the evasive sound bite which they may use in the Commons.* |