



Parliament for Researchers – select committee evidence



UK Parliament and Government
Use of evidence by select committees
Role and work of specialist advisors
Contributing evidence as a researcher
Resources and support for you



UK Parliament
POST

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Parliament ≠ Government

UK Parliament



- Commons, Lords and Monarch
- Holds Government to account
- Makes laws
- Enables the Government to raise and spend money

UK Government



- Some MPs and some Peers, chosen by the Prime Minister
- Runs Government departments and public services
- Is accountable to Parliament

What is select committee evidence?

- Any submission to a select committee in response to a call for evidence
- Must be relevant to the committee inquiry to be considered
- Must be original
- Published online as part of the inquiry, unless you have specifically requested it is anonymous or confidential
- Covered by parliamentary privilege



Why do select committees invite evidence?

- To learn from a range of expertise and experiences
- To bring objectivity to conclusions
- To shape recommendations
- To allow stakeholders in the sector to present information and opinion which will be sent to Government
- To explore and challenge current thinking

Using a range of evidence

- Inquiries are open to everyone
- Non-party nature of committees means they consider all perspectives

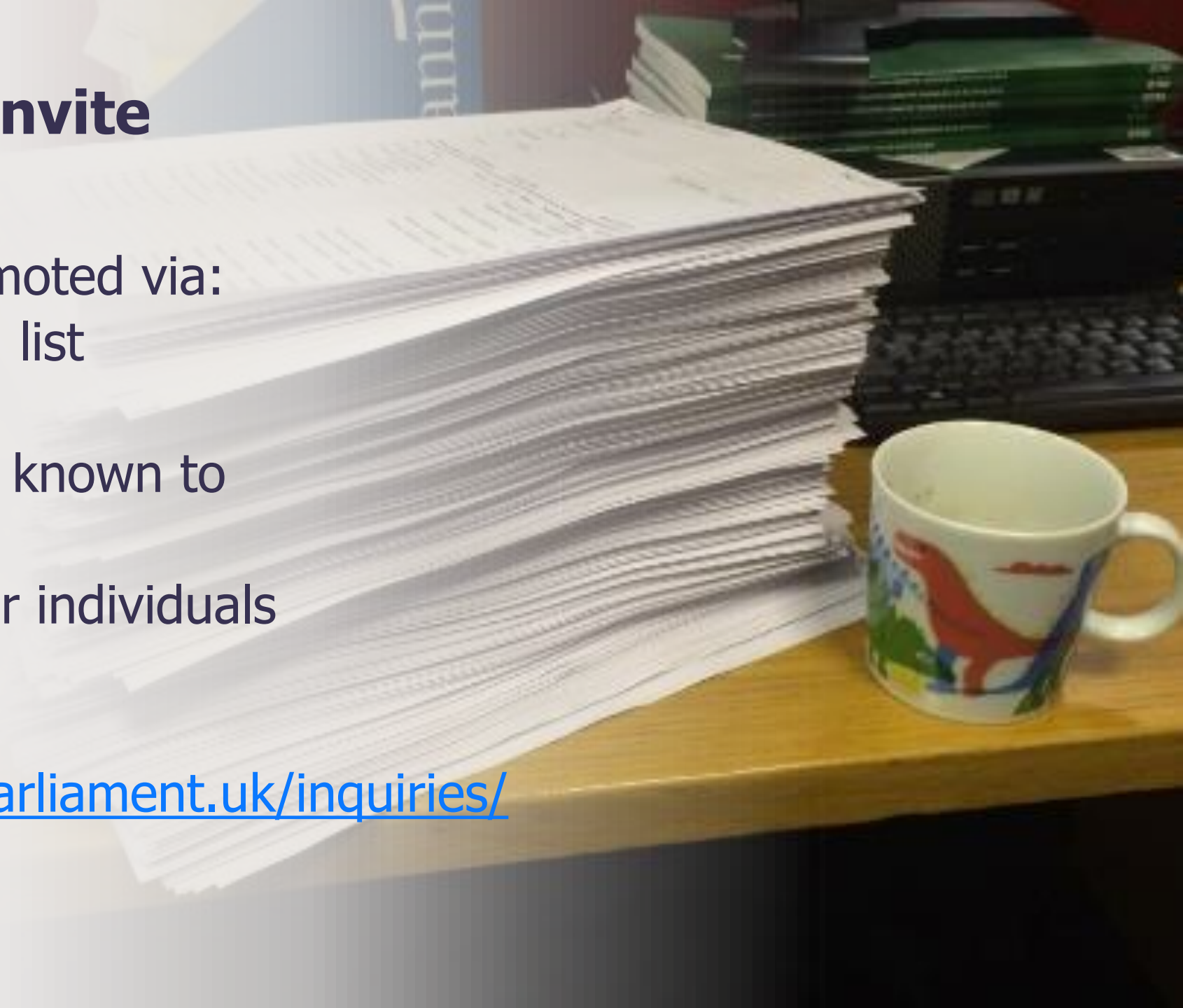
How do we make sure evidence is credible?

- Evidence is analysed by specialists
- Committees have discretion over whether to publish a particular piece of evidence (e.g. where granting it privilege may be a concern)



How committees invite written evidence

- Call for evidence promoted via:
 - Committee mailing list
 - Twitter
 - Relevant networks known to the committee
- Some organisations or individuals invited to contribute
- All open inquiries:
<https://committees.parliament.uk/inquiries/>



How committees find oral evidence witnesses

- Organisations/individuals who have submitted written evidence
- Suggestions from Members and colleagues
- Authors of relevant publications
- Internet searches for relevant blogs, websites etc.



Ensuring diversity of contributors

- Hearing a diverse range of viewpoints critical for the committee to fully understand a topic
- Might mean hearing from SMEs as well as large organisations; different groups in society who've been affected by an issue in different ways; experts with different opinions
- Know that witness diversity isn't as good as it could or should be
 - we're actively trying to improve
- What do you think we could do to broaden the pool of people we hear from?



Questions?

The role and work of special advisors

Janet Veitch

Specialist Adviser, Women and Equalities Select Committee, House of Commons





More questions?



Why contribute evidence as a researcher?

- To contribute to the scrutiny of Government
- To have an impact
- To raise your profile
- To publish under parliamentary privilege

What is good written evidence?

1. Be concise and relevant:

- Keep to the word limit (3,000 words or less) – even an A4 list of bullet points is fine! Committees will ask you for more information if needed.
- Include a summary
- Number your paragraphs
- Use the Terms of Reference and don't copy/paste other reports
- Don't feel that you have to respond to every single term of reference

2. Make policy recommendations

- Don't just diagnose the problem
- Be specific about what you think the Government should be doing about something
- Don't just call for more research!

3. Write for an interested non-expert, avoiding:

- Too many acronyms
- Jargon
- Politicised language

What is good oral evidence?

1. Be concise and relevant:

- Stick to the question you have been asked
- Don't feel you have to answer every question
- Have a briefing call with the inquiry manager beforehand to discuss likely questions

2. Be engaging:

- Use examples where possible – e.g. refer to a real person (anonymously) rather than a vague problem
- Highlight your calls for action
- Show respect for the Members and the Committee

3. Feel free to follow up in writing

- If you forget to raise something important
- If you don't have certain facts and figures to hand
- If you want to request a footnote on the transcript

Select committees: how to get involved

- Follow committees on Twitter, and/or sign up for email alerts via www.parliament.uk
- Submit written evidence to relevant inquiries (may lead to oral evidence)
- Apply for opportunities to be a specialist adviser
- Offer to host a visit for a select committee, or give a private briefing



Final questions?

More resources and support

Online resources and 'how to' guides:

www.parliament.uk/research-impact

@UKParl_Research

Dedicated Knowledge Exchange Unit (Sarah, Naomi and Laura):

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