



## How to give information to a House of Commons select committee



EasyRead version

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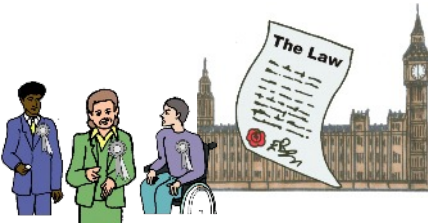
Hard words are in **bold**. These words are explained in a list at the end of this document.

# To start



## About select committees

We vote for people to represent us in **Parliament**. We call these people Members of **Parliament**. We also call them MPs.



**Parliament** is a group of people who make laws and check what the Government is doing.



**House of Commons select committees** are small groups of MPs from different political parties. They check the work of the Government. The MPs choose one MP to be in charge of the committee. We call this person the **Chair of the committee**.



Select committees are helpful and can make the Government change its approach.



You can see a list of select committees at [this link](#).

## What select committees do

Select committees look at:



- the work of Government departments



- how new laws will work



- how the Government spends money.



For example a select committee can look at a big issue like climate change. Climate change means changes in the Earth's weather conditions over many years.



When the select committee looks closely at a topic it is called an **inquiry**.

In an **inquiry**, the select committee invites people from the Government to answer questions.



The committee also invites people outside of **Parliament** for information.



Committees want to hear from people with experiences that can help them understand something.

The information is called **evidence**.



You can send **evidence** to a committee in writing using the committee's website.



Sometimes committees ask people to speak to them in person. This is called giving **oral evidence**.

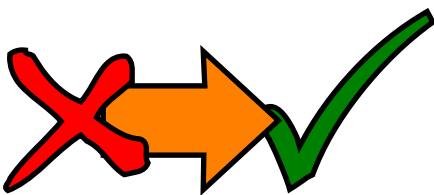


After the select committee has received its **evidence** it normally writes a report and sends it to the Government.



The report says:

- what they found out



- what they think needs to change.



The Government looks at the report and has to write back to the select committee.

## Part 1. How a select committee works



Select committees look for information about the subject they are looking at. This is called an **inquiry**.



When a select committee starts a new **inquiry** it **calls for evidence**.

A **call for evidence** invites people who know about the topic to help with questions about the subject.



**Evidence** is information that helps the select committee carry out its **inquiry**.



**Evidence** can be written down or spoken.



The committee asks people from the Government to answer questions.

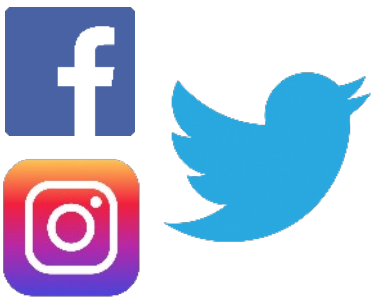


They ask people outside of **Parliament** for information and ideas too.



You can read about the **call for evidence**:

- on **Parliament's** website



- in social media.



A person who gives **oral evidence** to a select committee is called a **witness**.





A witness can be:

- an academic from a university



- a person from a group or association



- a Government minister

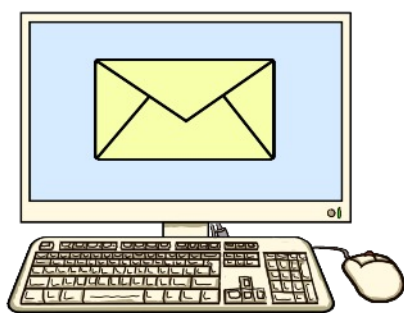


- a person with personal experience of the subject matter.

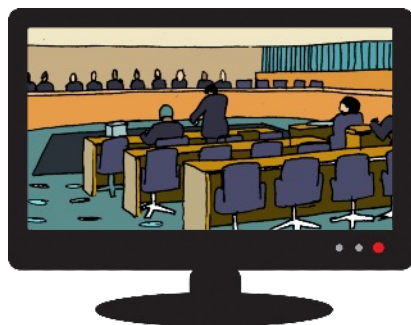
## Part 2. Giving oral evidence



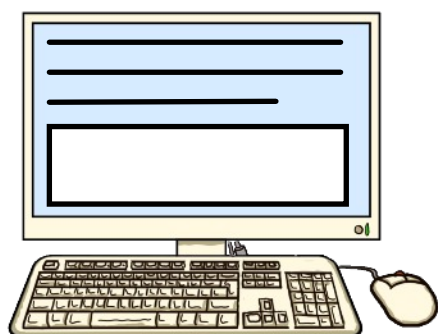
**Oral evidence** is when witnesses answer questions asked by the committee. Sometimes there are a few witnesses and sometimes there is just one. We sometimes call these sessions “hearings”.



You can get an email asking you to help the committee by giving **oral evidence**.

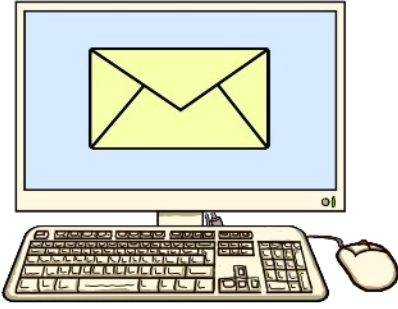


People can watch online on [www.Parliamentlive.tv](http://www.Parliamentlive.tv)



People can read the questions and answers on the committee’s website. This is called a **transcript**.

## How the committee staff can help you



Committee staff will send you an email to invite you to give **evidence**.



You can go to Westminster to say your **evidence** or stay at home and answer questions through a video link.



The Committee staff will explain the sorts of questions the committee will ask you.

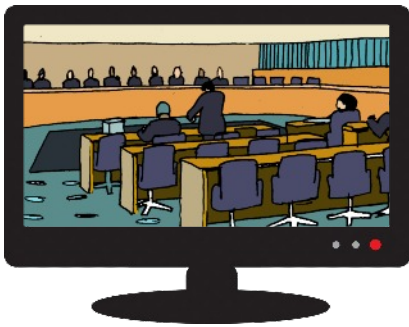


The staff will answer any questions you have.



## If you go to Westminster to give evidence

Committee staff will tell you which room to go to. There is a drawing of how the room looks at the end of this document.



Some meetings are on TV. You can watch here: [www.Parliamentlive.tv/Committees](http://www.Parliamentlive.tv/Committees)



Here is a 10-minute video about how to get into Westminster: [Accessibility at UK Parliament](#)

## Video linking



If the committee agrees for you to talk to them using a video link, committee staff will talk to you beforehand to help you set up your computer or device.



## If there are other witnesses giving evidence before you

You can arrive earlier to hear their **evidence**. This is so that you can talk about the previous witnesses' **evidence**.



## If you want to claim back your costs

You can talk to the committee staff about help to pay for travel to Westminster. Sometimes the committee staff can help with booking and paying for a ticket to travel.

## If you need help

We want to look after you. Committee staff can make **reasonable adjustments**.



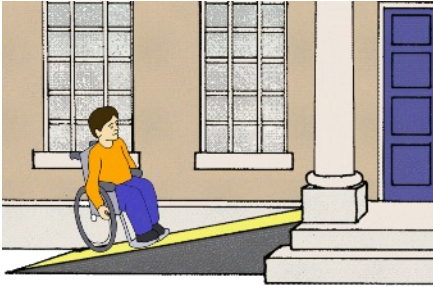
**Reasonable adjustments** are ways to help you take part in giving **evidence** to a select committee **inquiry**. This includes:



- taking part using a video link
- British Sign Language interpretation

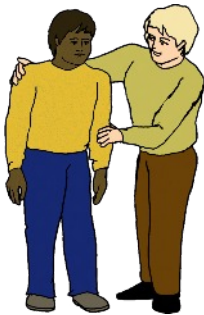


- having a person help you with mobility or communication needs



- taking you through a quieter entrance than our main visitor entrance

- ramps or step-free routes



- support if giving **evidence** upsets you

- keeping you safe.



## How you can help committee staff

Please tell committee staff these things:

- your name
- if you are representing an organisation, your job title
- if you need help with travel or moving around





- any costs you are going to ask for help paying
- if you know that what you are going to talk about is also being heard in a court
- if you need to say your **evidence** in private, not in front of the public or not recorded.

## Before the session

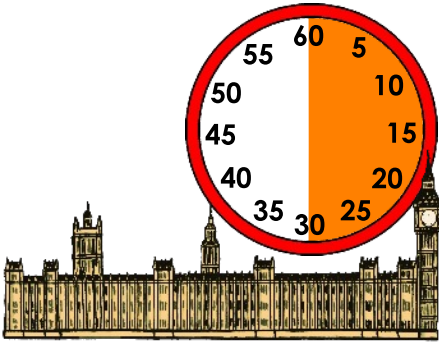


Committee staff will send you a survey asking questions about you such as your gender. Your answers are **anonymous** and will help the committee to know if it hears from a range of people.

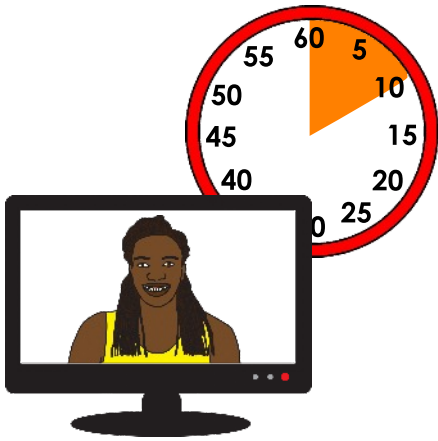


## Timing

Allow 2 hours to give your **oral evidence**.



Arrive at Westminster 30 minutes before the hearing. There is a map at the end of this document.



or

If you are doing a video link, try to join 10 minutes early to check the sound and pictures are working OK.



## Arriving at Westminster

You will go through a security checkpoint to enter the House of Commons.

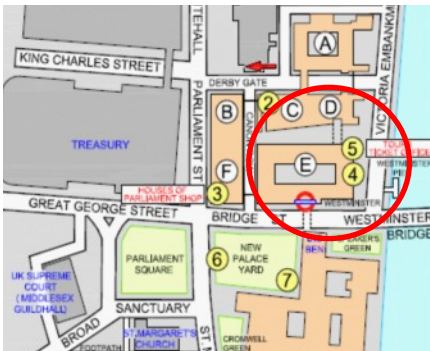


If we ask you to come to the Palace of Westminster, please come to the Cromwell Green entrance, opposite Westminster Abbey.

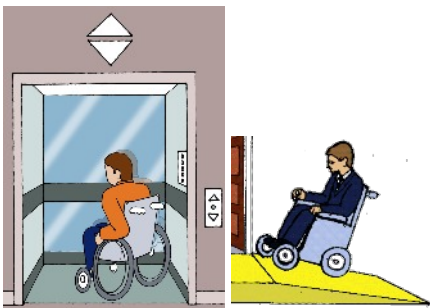




Look for a Visitor Assistant who will help you. Visitor Assistants wear a navy blue uniform with a blue/green necktie.



If we ask you to come to Portcullis House, please come to the Victoria Embankment entrance.



If you need step-free access there are ramps and a lift.



Let the staff know if you need an accessible parking space.



We will have water for you. Please do not consume other drinks or food during the session.



The session is filmed and the recording will be on the internet forever.



## **Covid-19**

Staff will tell you if you need to take a test or wear a mask when you are in the building.



Let committee staff know if you have symptoms of Covid-19 or test positive before the session.



## During the session

The **Chair** is the Member of **Parliament** who is in charge of the session.

The Chair opens the session and invites the witnesses to say who they are.



The MPs on the committee ask the witnesses questions.



It is important for you to be honest and open.

You can say if you do not have anything to add to what the other witnesses have said.



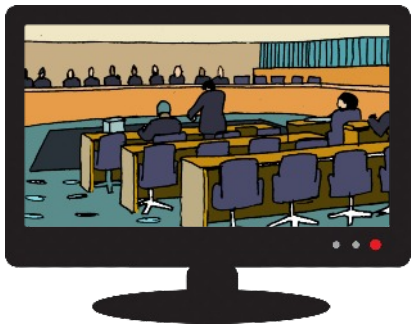
If you think a question is unfair or you do not know the answer you can tell the Chair.



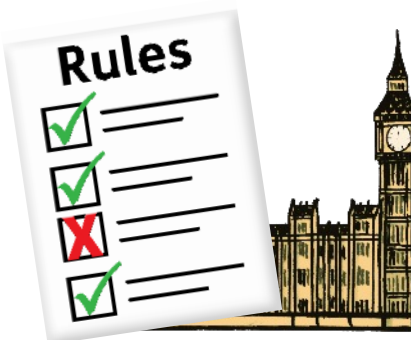
You can ask for more time to think about an answer or get advice.



You can offer to write to the committee if you get more information after the hearing. Send any other information you promised as soon as possible.



You can watch a recording of a previous session on [www.Parliamentlive.tv/Committees](http://www.Parliamentlive.tv/Committees) to see how they work.



There are rules about how to behave in **Parliament** called a code: **Parliament's Behaviour Code.**



The code says people must be respectful and polite.



You have a right to complain about any bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct before or after the hearing. You can make a complaint using this webpage: [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme \(ICGS\)](#).

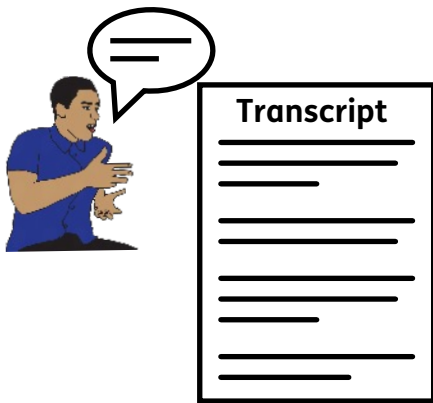


### After the session

Committee staff will send you another survey about giving **evidence** to the select committee.



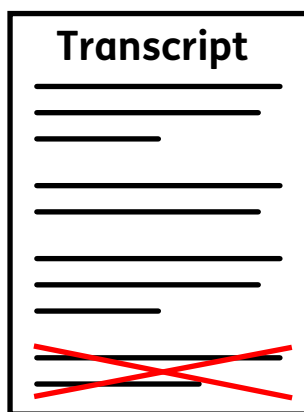
Your answers are **anonymous** and help the committee to do things better in future hearings.



## Transcripts of evidence

A **transcript** is a document that records what people said in **oral evidence**.

It is published on the committee's website a few days after the hearing.



If you see any mistakes in the **transcript** send a separate note to committee staff. The note will be added to the **evidence** either as a footnote or as a separate document.



## What happens next

The committee carefully looks at everybody's **evidence** to help them make decisions.



The committee writes a report.

If the report mentions your **evidence** it will be listed in a footnote.



The committee puts a complete list of witnesses and written submissions at the back of its report.



The committee sends its report to the House of Commons and the Government and you may get a copy.



You must not share this with anybody until the report is published.

## Part 3. Giving evidence in writing

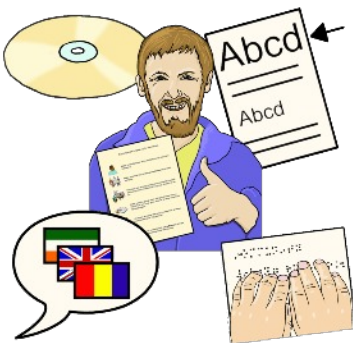


Select committees invite **calls for evidence** on their website.



You can send in **written evidence** on the committee's website.

**Written evidence:** is when a witness writes down answers to the questions the committee asks on their website.



You can ask to have the questions or give your answers in a different format. This is called making **reasonable adjustments**.



The questions and everyone's answers are written down so people can read them on the committee's website.





You can ask to have your name hidden.



## Who can send in written evidence?

Anyone can send in **written evidence** to an **inquiry**.



The committee wants to hear everyone's opinions.



You might know about the topic because of your work or study, or you may have personal experience of it, like using health services.



You don't have to answer all of the questions in the **call for evidence**.



You can look at an example of published **written evidence** here: [Digital, Media, Culture and Sport Committee's published written evidence for its inquiry, Economics of music streaming.](#)

## How to take part



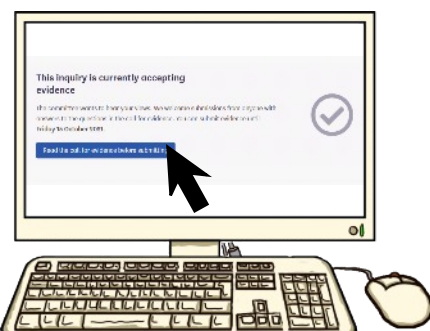
When the committee wants your help, they put this on their website:

### This inquiry is currently accepting evidence

The committee wants to hear your views. We welcome submissions from anyone with answers to the questions in the call for evidence. You can submit evidence until Friday 15 October 2021.



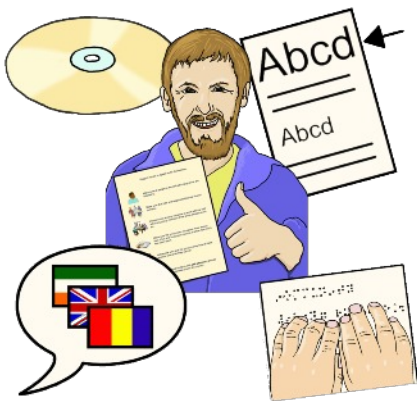
[Read the call for evidence before submitting](#)



Click on the dark blue box and follow the steps on the website.



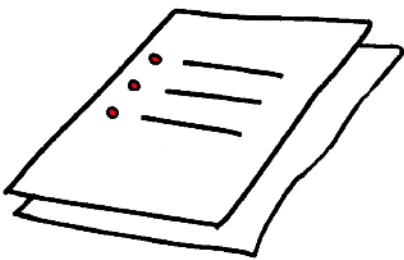
Contact the committee staff if you need help to send your **evidence**.



We can help you to send it in a different format or give you more time to prepare your **evidence**.

We want to help you.

## Tips about how to write useful evidence

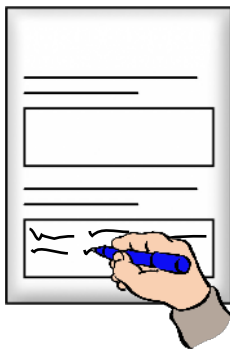
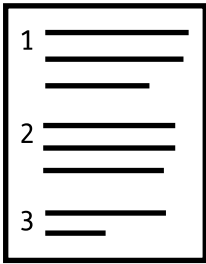


- keep your **evidence** short and to the point



- try to answer the questions the Committee has asked
- make sure your **evidence** is all your words

This is what

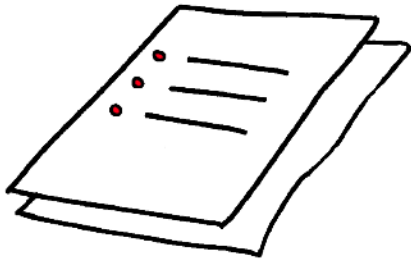


- write in plain English
- number your paragraphs
- you do not have to write about every point the committee has asked about
- write facts about what you know or what has happened to you
- tell us what you want to happen and say why
- tell us if there are important questions for the committee to ask the Government.

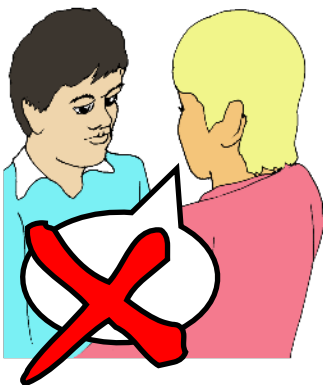


## How to send your evidence

- write your document in Microsoft Word



- keep it short
- keep it simple



## Some important things

If you know something is going through a court you must not speak or write about it.

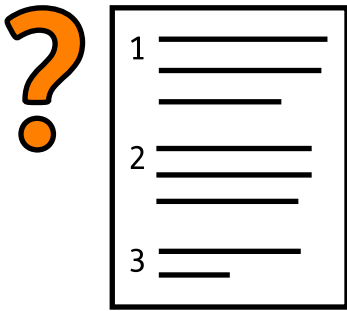


If you need help with a problem that is just about you contact your local MP.

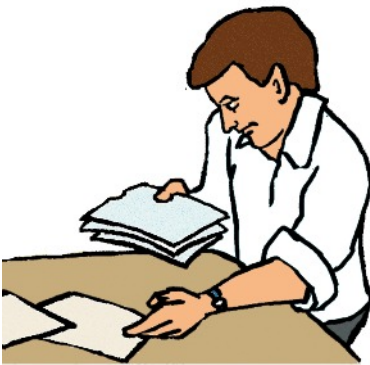


Be honest in the **evidence** you send to a committee. If you think you made a mistake, tell the committee staff as soon as possible.

## Part 4. What happens next



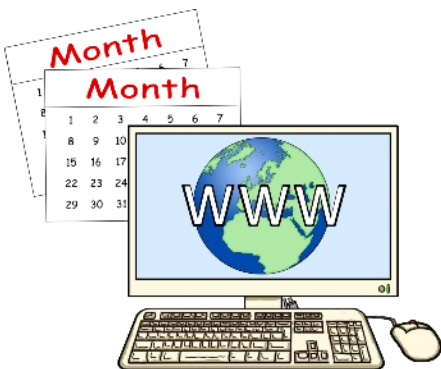
This is what we do with the **written evidence**.



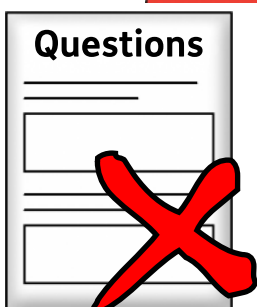
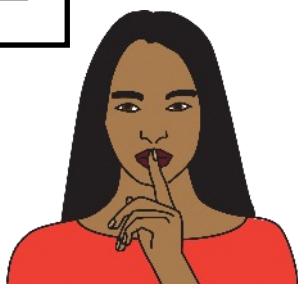
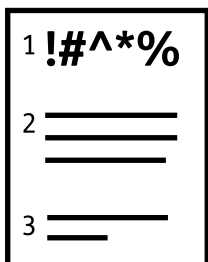
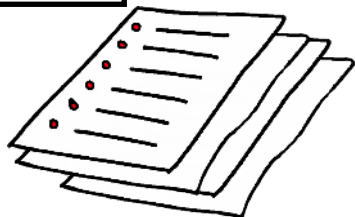
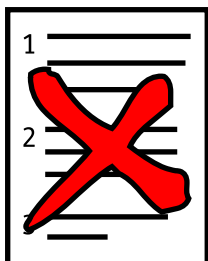
The committee looks at all the written submissions and uses the information to write its report for the Government.



The committee puts most of the **evidence** on its website. People can search for it or google it.



It can take time before the **evidence** is put on the website. It stays there forever.



## Here is some more information about written evidence

1. There are times when the committee will not use what you send them. They will not use it if:

- it is very long
- it has rude or offensive information
- it is about an individual issue
- the information is private
- it does not answer any of the questions in the **call for evidence**



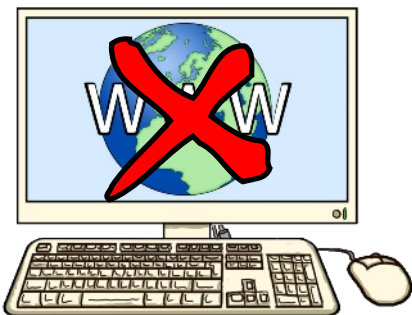
2. You must not share your **evidence** with anybody until the committee has published it on its website.



3. The committee puts a full list of written submissions in its report.



4. You may ask for your **evidence** to be **anonymous** — meaning we'll publish your **evidence**, but not your name or details that could identify you.



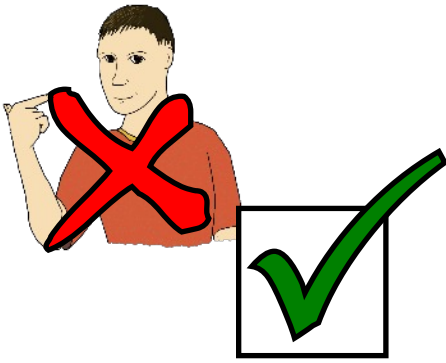
5. You may ask for your **evidence** to be **confidential** or private — meaning we will read your **evidence** but we won't publish it.



6. The committee can decide whether **evidence** is kept **anonymous** or **confidential**.

The committee is careful about personal or sensitive information.





7. If you want us to keep your name or your **evidence** private, tick the box on the website to say so when you are sending it to us. Please explain why you are asking for this.



8. The law says we must look after your personal information. This is called **data protection**.



### The committee makes a report

After hearing **evidence**, the committee makes a report.



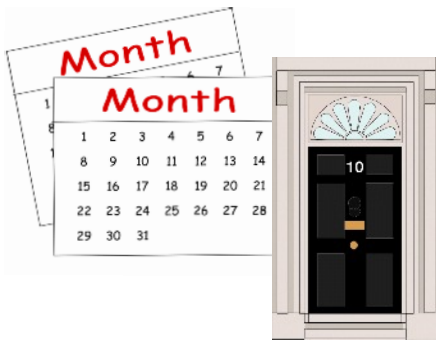
The report says what the committee thinks the Government should do.



The report will be on the committee's website.



The committee asks the Government to read its report.



The Government should reply to the report within two months. Then the reply will go on the committee's website.

## Committees and Parliamentary privilege



Your written and **oral evidence** is protected by Parliamentary privilege.

This means you can give **evidence** safely.



Remember that giving **evidence** in public will be on the record. People will be able to see or read it on **Parliament's** website forever.



Talk to committee staff if you are worried about giving your **evidence**. See the section, **How to contact us** on page 35.

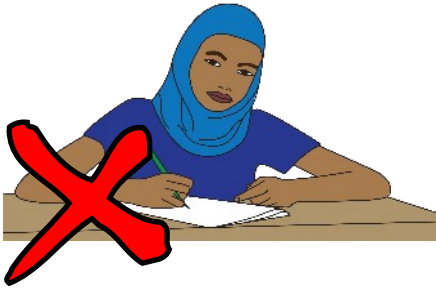


## Thank you

We know that it can take a lot of time to prepare **evidence** for select committee inquiries.



Select committees play an important part in helping **Parliament** hold the Government to its word.

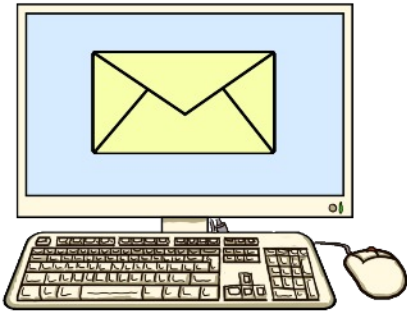


Without your efforts, this would not be possible.



So we wish to thank you for helping us.

## How to contact us



To email or call a select committee directly, look at the committee's webpage. You can find a list of all select committees on **Parliament's website**. Or you can google the committee to find the webpage.

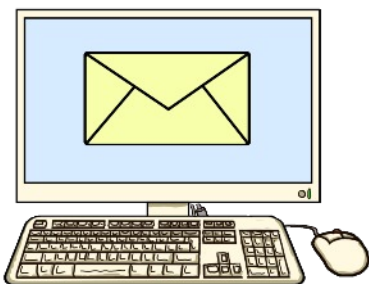
If you have general questions about select committees call:



### House of Commons Enquiry Service

Freephone: **0800 112 4272**

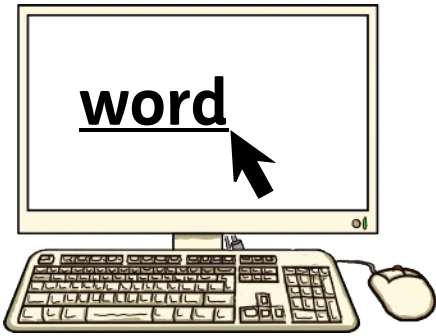
Telephone: **0207 219 4272**



Email: **[hcenquiries@Parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@Parliament.uk)**



Text phone: dial **18001 219 4272**



## Other information and videos about select committees

Click on the underlined words to go to the link.

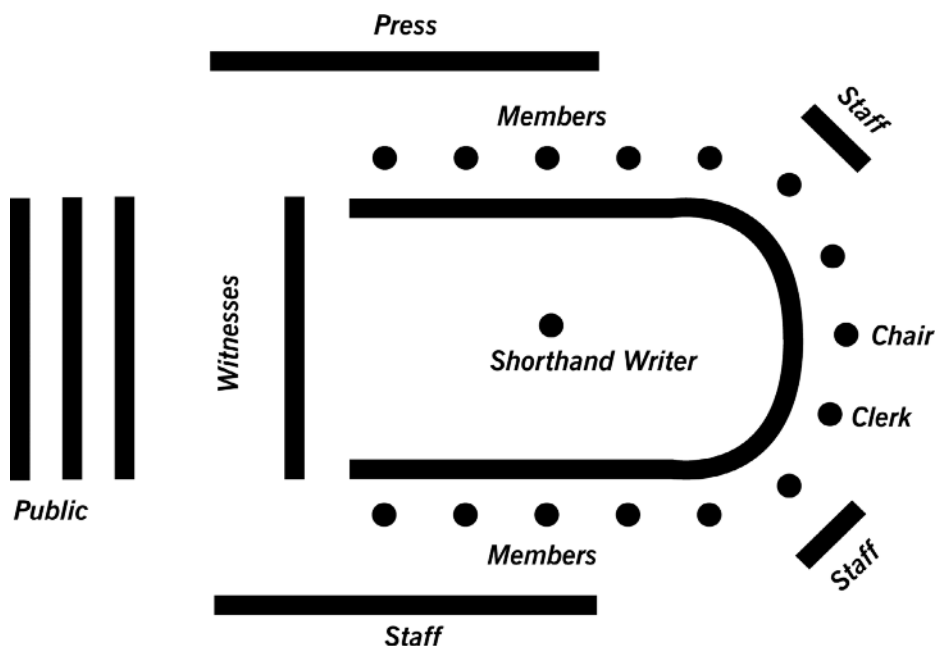


Find out more about select committees in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords

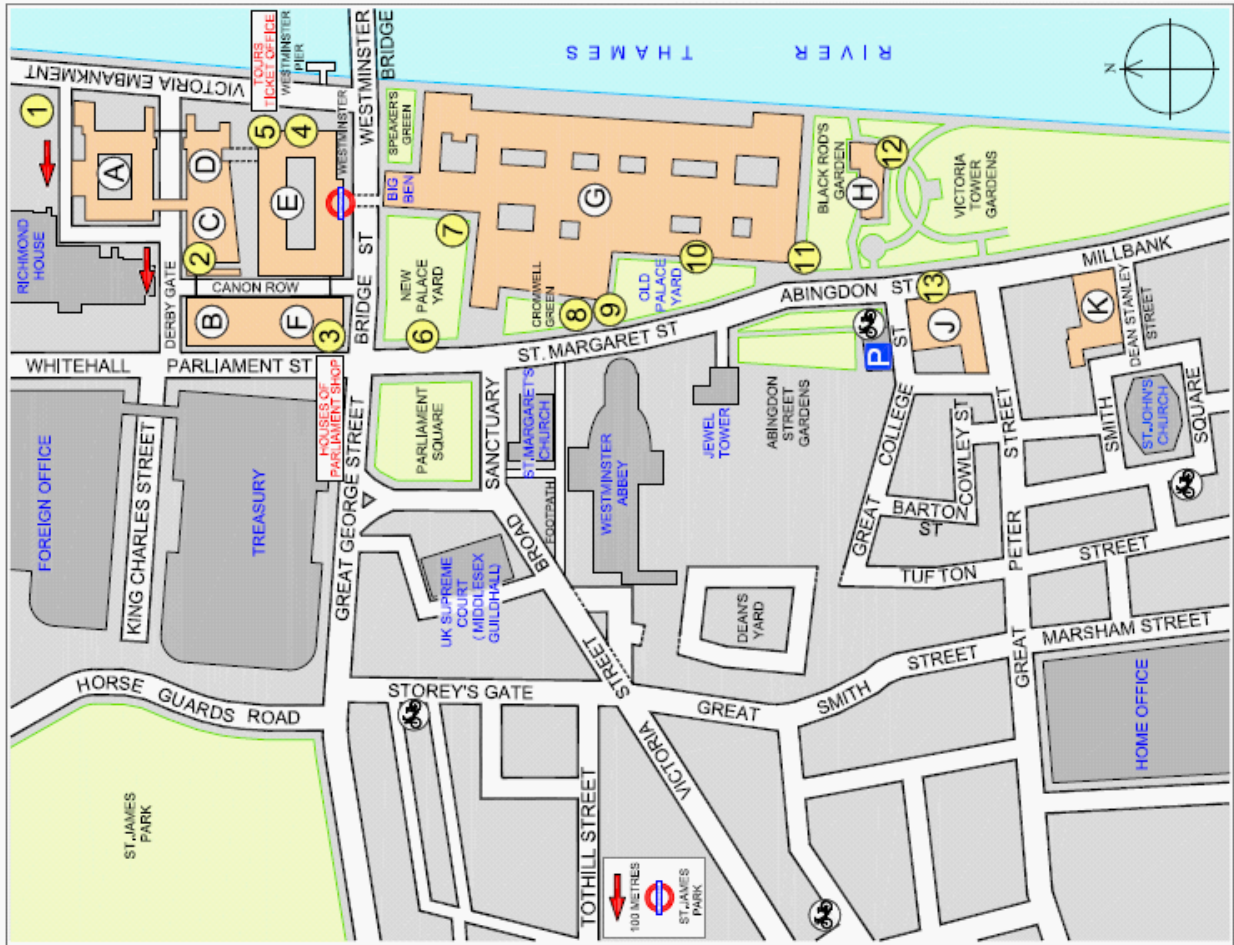


Watch a video about what select committees do

What the select committee room looks like



# Map of the Parliamentary Estate



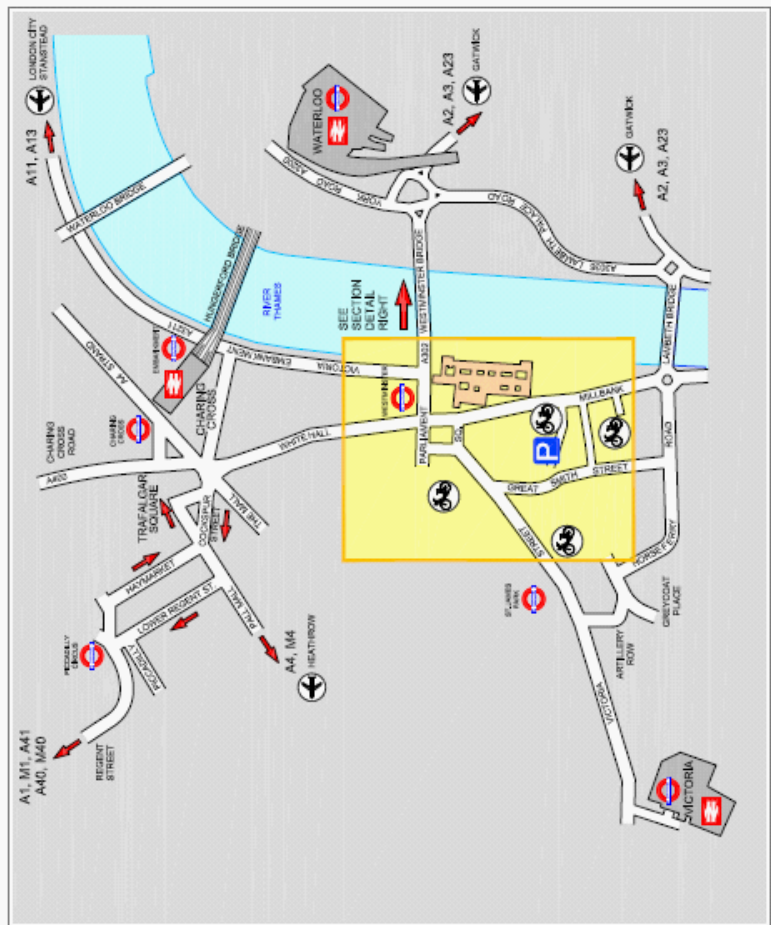
Revision J - 15.07.15

KEY	
(A) NORMAN SHAW NORTH	1 NORTH ENTRANCE (VEHICLES ONLY)
(B) 1 DERBY GATE	2 CANON ROW
(C) 1 CANON ROW	3 HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT SHOP
(D) NORMAN SHAW SOUTH	4 PORTICULUS HOUSE MAIN ENTRANCE
(E) PORTICULUS HOUSE	5 TOURS TICKET OFFICE
(F) 1 PARLIAMENT STREET	6 CARRIAGE GATES
(G) PALACE OF WESTMINSTER	7 MEMBERS' ENTRANCE
(H) PARLIAMENTARY EDUCATION CENTRE	8 CROMWELL GREEN
(I) MILLBANK HOUSE	9 ST. STEPHENS ENTRANCE
(J) 7 MILLBANK	10 PEERS' ENTRANCE
(K) 7 MILLBANK	11 BLACK RODS GARDEN
	12 PASS OFFICE
	13 EDUCATION CENTRE MAIN ENTRANCE

## THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER AND THE PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE

### Directions by Public Transport

- By Rail**  
Nearest stations are Charing Cross, Victoria and Waterloo (20-30 minutes walk).
- Underground**  
Westminster (Circle, District and Jubilee Lines).
- By Bus**  
Buses 3, 11, 12, 24, 53, 87, 88, 148, 159, 211, 453, N2, N3, N11, N87, N136, N155, N159 & N381 all stop nearby.
- Use of public transport is advised as the Abingdon Green car park is often full and meter parking is expensive and scarce.**
- Santander Cycle Hire Docking Station**



HOURS OF PARLIAMENT Parliamentary Estates Directorate

## What the words mean

**Anonymous** - you can ask for your evidence to be **anonymous** meaning we'll publish your evidence, but not your name or details that could identify you.

The **Chair of the committee** is the Member of Parliament who is in charge of the session.

**Confidential** - you can ask for your evidence to be **confidential** or private meaning we will read your evidence but we won't publish it.

**Data protection** - the law says we must look after your personal information. This is called **data protection**.

When a select committee starts a new inquiry it calls for evidence. A **call for evidence** invites people who know about the topic to help with questions about the subject.

**Evidence** is information that helps the select committee carry out its inquiry. Evidence can be written down or spoken.

**Oral evidence** - when witnesses answer questions asked by the committee.

**Written evidence** - when someone writes down answers to the questions the committee asks on the Parliament website and sends it to the committee.

**Inquiry - select committee inquiry** - when the select committee looks closely at a topic.



**Parliament** - a group of elected people who make laws and check what the Government is doing.

**Reasonable adjustments** - ways to help you take part in giving evidence to a select committee inquiry.

**Transcript** - the questions and answers are written down so people can read them on the committee's website.

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