

How to Create a Select Committee Evidence Submission

A short guide to what a select committee is, why you might want to submit evidence to an inquiry, and how to shape your submission



What is a select committee?

Select committees are groups of MPs (in the House of Commons) or peers (in the House of Lords), coming from across different parties. Their job is to scrutinise the work of the government.

Most select committees shadow a particular department – for example the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) or the [Culture, Media and Sport Committee](#) – while a few, such as the Public Accounts Committee, look across the whole of government.

Select committees run inquiries into specific issues, gather written and oral evidence from professionals and the public, and publish reports setting out findings and recommendations. The government must respond in writing, usually within two months.

Committees cannot make law, but their reports carry weight across parties, attract media attention and feed into wider debate. That makes them one of the most realistic routes for getting creative health onto the policy record, and for being read by people who advise ministers.

Finding the right inquiry

Open calls for evidence are listed on the UK Parliament Committees homepage, under '[Find an Inquiry](#)'. You can also keep up to date on new inquiry opportunities by signing up to the [Knowledge Exchange Unit](#)'s fortnightly newsletter.

Each inquiry sets out its terms of reference, the specific questions it is asking, and a deadline. When an inquiry opens, a good way to determine whether you should create a submission is to consider:

1. **Standing** – do you or your organisation hold relevant evidence or experience?
2. **Fit** – can you speak to the actual questions, not just the broad topic?
3. **Capacity** – can you do it well before the deadline?

All of these considerations come with some caveats, so we've explored them in more detail below.

Standing

Often, people can be dissuaded from getting involved in a select committee submission based on their perception of whether they count as a 'specialist'. In the case of inquiry submissions, select committees encourage engagement from a range of different stakeholders.

- **Practitioners and arms-length bodies** provide valuable knowledge on the practicalities of delivery,
- **Members of the public** offer lived experience case studies and demonstrate the buy-in of the constituents that MPs serve,
- **Researchers and What Works Networks** offer credible and independent evidence to inform different options for action
- **Specialist charities, think tanks, trade unions and networks** offer a broad sector view, with power and authority derived from the number of people they serve.

Submissions from different stakeholders can vary in length, style and tone, adapting around the ¹type of evidence that each contributor can share. From short submissions from individuals stating a stance for- or against- a particular detail, to detailed evidence summaries from academics of up to 3,000 words in length.

Fit

Judging fit can be equally as ambiguous. For some inquiries, the name is a good indicator of fit for submissions from creative health and/or health humanities stakeholders. In these cases, look for words like ‘health,’ ‘social care,’ ‘culture,’ or ‘creative industries’. However, ‘fit’ can materialise in unexpected places. Below we demonstrate, using two NCCH examples.

- **Children and Young People’s Mental Health:** In early 2026, the ‘Education’ and ‘Health and Social Care’ Committees joined together to launch the inquiry [Children and Young People’s Mental Health](#) – a topic which is a key priority of our charity. The link to creative health was so clear that we not only [submitted ourselves](#), but also encouraged people across our network to do so too. We were very pleased to see creative health feature across a range of submissions, marking a key moment of progress for the field in the select committee space.
- **The UK’s Article 3 obligations and the Defence Readiness Bill:** From July – October, 2026, the Defence committee hosted an open call in relation to the [UK’s resilience and preparedness for conflict](#). This builds upon other 2025/26 inquiries on [societal resilience](#), [national resilience](#), and [The National Security Strategy](#), demonstrating the importance of this topic to the Government at present. Following advice from our trustee, Nancy Hey, we pursued a submission to this unlikely topic, and were surprised to discover a wealth of links between the findings of the [Mobilising Community Assets to Tackle Health Inequalities](#) programme and the call’s interest in civil preparedness. Our submission featured evidence on community leaders, localised trust networks, best practice in co-production and creative health communication, and tackling the health inequalities that impact resilience.

Other examples from NCCH, which sat somewhere in between, in terms of fit, have included our response to the inquiry *Healthy Ageing: physical activity in an ageing society*, where we interpreted ‘physical activity’ through the lens of [dance and movement](#), and the inquiry *Early Years: Improving Support for Children and Families*, which primarily focused on nursery care, but with questions worded in a manner that enabled us to discuss [creative support](#).

¹ If you are interested in familiarising yourself with how oral evidence is shared to a select committee, we recommend you watch Nancy’s [oral evidence to the Resilience Committee](#) in June 2026

Capacity

Capacity is a very real consideration when determining whether to submit to a select committee, and it can be the determining factor when the fit is ambiguous. For practitioners and lived experience contributors who are submitting in an unpaid capacity, it is especially important to consider personal wellbeing and your motivating factors. Similarly, for busy researchers, evidence submissions need to be balanced alongside considerations of time management and retaining quality in their research.

Capacity is one of the key reasons why an organisation like the National Centre for Creative Health is important for the creative health eco-system. We are able to submit on behalf of the field, to ensure the voice of creative health is adequately represented in policy. Nevertheless, our message is strengthened by numbers. No matter how small your contribution may be, it works in the favour of the field to have submissions from multiple stakeholders.

What happens to your evidence?

Most submissions are published in the committee's online evidence database, where they become a permanent, citable record read by the committee staff who draft the report. A smaller number are quoted directly in the final report, or shape one of its recommendations. A few authors are invited to give oral evidence in person.

Beyond any single inquiry, submitting builds your standing with a committee team, creates material you can reuse, and helps establish creative health as an expected contributor to debates where it currently is not.

We recommend that you treat the published record and the relationship as your baseline return, and a citation or an oral invitation as a bonus.

What to include in your submission

Your submission should be a word document (PDFs are generally not accepted). There is usually a word limit of 3,000 words, and submissions that go over this are expected to include an executive summary. You do not need to answer every question posed by the committee - only those you think you can meaningfully answer. However, the team which reviews your file will be looking for clear headings, so that they can organise your responses under the different questions. You are also expected to number your paragraphs (you can use the numbered bullet point function in word; it works best if you edit the indentation). These numbers are how parts of your evidence will be referred to, if the committee chooses to use it in their report (i.e., submission X, paragraph X).

Your evidence will be reviewed by members of the [civil service](#). Generally speaking, they will be people who are generalists, rather than specialists in a topic, so it's important to explain any technical terms, jargon or abbreviations. We recommend defining 'creative health' and/or 'health humanities' at the top of your submission. It's also good practice to start your submission with a very brief summary of your key points and recommendations, along with a concise explanation of who you are and why you are well placed to comment. Staff read many submissions, so the summary is a good place to hook their interest and help them orientate to your point of view.

The main body of your submission should respond directly to the questions you have selected to respond to. Information which falls outside the scope of these questions will not be considered. You can choose to either use links within the text to signpost to evidence or to

provide references using a recognised format. The format you use is often determined by your background. For example, members of the public are more likely to provide links, where academics are more likely to provide a reference list. At NCCH, we typically use links within our submissions, as this makes them more accessible to public and practitioner audiences.

Top tips and important information

- We recommend that your submissions use a confident but measured tone. Submissions that frequently use language like ‘it *could* be the case that...’ are less likely to be considered for inclusion in a report.
- Be specific. One concrete recommendation, with a well-reasoned logic behind it, is worth more than a general plea for support.
- Do not submit research in its existing form. Select committees will not consider journal articles and published reports as submissions. You must respond directly to their questions, making sense of any evidence you reference and summarising its importance to their inquiry.
- Do not publish your submission after sending it to the inquiry. Committees cannot accept evidence already published or intended for publication elsewhere. You will be able to link to it once it gets published on the parliamentary website.
- Once a submission is formally accepted, it becomes protected by parliamentary privilege. It remains a permanent public record that is easily searchable and citable for future academic, policy, or legal research. Only include material you would be content to see published.
- Last but not least, we recommend that you keep a copy. What you submit becomes a fantastic, reusable evidence base for briefings, funding bids and future inquiries.

Further Resources

- Guidance on giving written evidence to select committees
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/written-evidence-guidance.htm>
- Guidance for giving written or oral evidence to a House of Commons select committee
<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/get-involved2/select-committees/guidance-for-giving-evidence-to-a-house-of-commons-select-committee.pdf>
- Information for witnesses appearing before House of Lords Committees
<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-committees/witnessinfo.pdf>
- Promoting national strategy: How select committee scrutiny can improve strategic thinking in Whitehall (2024)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45149/documents/223586/default/>
- The effectiveness and influence of the select committee system (2019)
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmliaisn/1860/1860.pdf>
- Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers (2012)
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmliaisn/697/697.pdf>

Examples of select committee evidence submissions

- Examples of evidence submissions and policy briefings from NCCH are available at: <https://ncch.org.uk/resources/briefings>

The following evidence submissions are all drawn from the aforementioned Children and Young People's Mental Health inquiry, 2026. By comparing submissions from the same inquiry, we hope we can show how different stakeholders respond to the same prompts. All of the following submissions were selected for publication by the committee and feature creative health in some way:

- BeeWell, University of Manchester (CYM0179)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/164492/pdf/>
- Dr Maria Grazia Turri (CYM0043)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/163862/pdf/>
- Birmingham City Council (CYM0126)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/164399/pdf/>
- Curve (Leicester Theatre Trust) (CYM0182)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/164495/pdf/>
- Professor Bertha Ochieng & Christopher Owens (CYM0166)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/164466/pdf/>
- Research Centre for Arts and Wellbeing, Edge Hill University (CYM0142)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/164430/pdf/>
- The British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth) (CYM0153)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/164451/pdf/>
- Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK (ADMP UK) (CYM0228)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/9627/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/publications/written-evidence/?SearchTerm=Dance+Movement+Psychotherapy+UK&DateFrom=&DateTo=&SessionId=>
- Professor Siobhan Hugh-Jones, Professor Kam Bhui, Professor Nicola Shaughnessy, (CYM0231)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/9627/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/publications/written-evidence/?SearchTerm=CYM0231&DateFrom=&DateTo=&SessionId=>
- Dr Tracy Laverick at Leeds Trinity University (CYM0235)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/81/health-and-social-care-committee/publications/written-evidence/?SearchTerm=Tracy+Laverick&DateFrom=&DateTo=&SessionId=>
- The Reading Agency (CYM0190)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/9627/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/publications/written-evidence/?SearchTerm=CYM0190&DateFrom=&DateTo=&SessionId=>

- Rebecca Clark, Dr Robyn Dowlen, Ken Fletcher, Professor Vicky Karkou, Dr Shaun Liverpool, & Dr Anna Smirnova (CYM0170)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/9627/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/publications/written-evidence/?SearchTerm=CYM0170&DateFrom=&DateTo=&SessionId=>

The following submission, from the same inquiry, offers an example of a lived experience-informed submission:

- Naomi Williams at Sensory learning & Play C.I.C. (CYM030)
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/163446/pdf/>

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Published: October 2026.

