



Consultations Policy

The BPS responds to consultations from government departments, public bodies and other organisations that are relevant to the work of psychologists. Consultation responses give us the opportunity to share the latest psychological evidence with policy makers, shape their responses and support the development of well-informed policies.

We also run internal consultations on documents (for example reports, position papers) that have been produced by BPS members through various working groups.

The consultations that the BPS asks members to get involved with generally fall into the following categories:

External Consultations	
Policy	Consultations run by government departments or public bodies in all four nations of the UK that concern general principles and a change in approach of government policy. They are likely to contain policy proposals about new government initiatives to tackle a certain social issue. Examples include: The Department for Health and Department for Education's Green Paper, Transforming children and young people's mental health provision .
Calls for Evidence	A call for evidence is an information gathering process. It is an opportunity to showcase research or innovation both to the consulting body itself and to a wider audience when the body's reports. Practical examples, case studies, and insights in how best to implement approaches are welcomed.
Technical	Consultations that require a high-level of subject specific technical expertise. For example, specific NICE Clinical Guidance developed by a Guideline Development group that is coming out for line-by-line consideration. Or an enquiry into a specific area of specialist health service of which only a few members may have relevant experience.
Internal Consultations	
Practice Guidelines	Guidance and advice for Practitioner Psychologists to help them develop and improve their skills and knowledge and deliver best practice. These are normally devised by a working group reporting to the Professional Practice Board.

Policy Reports	Evidence and recommendations aimed at policy-makers to help shape government policy or draw attention to a social issue where psychology can bring about policy change.
Public Information	Accessible information for clients and service users that have been developed by member networks or working groups in response to an identified need amongst a client group.

Consultations Inbox

The BPS has a dedicated email account for consultations. This account is monitored by the Policy Team and is used both for receiving input from members on consultations and as a single point of contact for external bodies that run consultations.

consult@bps.org.uk

Planning to respond

The Policy Team maintains a log of all consultations we have been alerted to and the team then decides how best to respond. The process behind this is shown in the flowchart in the appendix. Due to the large numbers of consultations that government departments and other relevant bodies run (normally [upwards of 100 at any one time](#)) and the breadth of interest of our members, it is not possible to respond to every consultation.

Before responding to a consultation, the Policy Team will consider the following:

- If a response from the Society is necessary and how it would add value
- Whether the response is relevant to the Society's current priorities
- Who will lead or coordinate the response from the Policy Team
- Which member networks will be informed and consulted as a minimum standard
- Whether there is a good level of interest from relevant members
- Whether a communications plan is required to alert all of the Society's members
- Timelines and capacity to respond

All active consultations are listed on our website:

bps.org.uk/consultations

Coordinating a consultation response

The most effective response to a consultation will bring together the latest psychological evidence, expertise and experience to make a compelling argument related to the desired policy change. This may be using evidence to add weight to an intervention or argument put forward by the consulting body, or to shape or challenge the approach that has been outlined.

Once a consultation has been identified as relevant to the BPS, the member of the policy team who will lead or coordinate the response will consider the type of response required and who needs to be involved. They will contact the relevant member networks and use the Society's various communications channels to alert interested members.

The response and amount of communication with members will be influenced by the length of time given by the consulting body, which can vary from weeks to months.

Once details of the consultation are received it will be uploaded to the website. Please note that the office deadline will be up to two weeks earlier than the consulting body deadline to allow time for turnaround and sign off from the relevant board chair or Director.

In order to ensure a co-ordinated response and that the consulting body receives an agreed and coherent policy position from the BPS, only one response will be submitted to any consultation. Member Networks who have evidence to contribute to the response should contact the Policy Advisor or Co-ordinator to ensure that their comments can be incorporated into the Society response.

If the BPS decides not to respond to a consultation and the consultation is open to the public, members are free to submit a response as an individual or on behalf of their employer. In this instance members are asked not to state any affiliation to the BPS or any Member Network. This is to ensure that the consulting body has clarity over the source of information and any policy positions.

External consultations

Policy consultations will normally be led by a Policy Advisor. Policy Advisors will be in touch with key people in relevant Member Networks on a regular basis to ensure that they are aware of any upcoming consultations and to discuss likely areas of policy that may need to be developed.

For technical consultations it is likely that a member with expertise in that area will be approached directly by the Policy Team and asked to lead the response. If more than one lead author is identified or interested, the Policy Team will co-ordinate a joint response or designate a lead. Other members wishing to contribute will be able to share their contributions with the member lead via the consultations email address.

In both cases, the Policy Team is responsible for:

- Ensuring the response is in line with existing BPS policy and does not create new policy. The Director of Policy can advise on this as required.
- Ensuring the consultation is submitted before the deadline
- Ensuring the document is formatted and edited in BPS house style
- Uploading consultation responses to the website.
- Liaising with the consulting organisation over queries, further information or the submission of follow up oral evidence
- Working with different member networks to ensure that, where there is a difference in opinion or a difference in priorities, a position that reflects the consensus of opinion across the BPS can be reflected.

The Policy Team reserves the right to decide that a response is not appropriate and therefore not submit it if it does not meet the required quality or presents positions or recommendations that do not represent the policies or views of the BPS.

Internal Consultations

The Society's policy work draws on the expertise of members through working groups. Once a working group has developed the relevant evidence-based policy and recommendations, a draft document will be circulated amongst the members. The length of the consultation period for internal documents depends on the length, and nature of the document and the existence of any external deadlines, but will be no longer than 30 days.

Members of the working group, working with a Policy Advisor, will be responsible for ensuring that feedback from members is addressed and incorporated where possible. A log of how feedback was incorporated will be kept.

Devolved Nations

The Policy Team is responsible for responding to consultations but will coordinate responses to UK-wide consultations with input from the policy groups in the Devolved Nations.

Consultations that are relevant only to a Devolved Nations are identified and logged in the same way. The Policy Team will then work with the Regional Branch and the Devolved Nation Policy Consultants to identify the best way to respond.

Sign Off

If a policy document or a consultation response makes new recommendations, suggests taking a position that is contrary to existing BPS policy, or is creating new policy in an area where the Society has not previously expressed a view, this should be discussed with the Director of Policy and the Chair of the relevant Board.

Consultation responses and final versions of internal documents will go first to the Director of Policy for approval and then to the relevant Board Chair (or Branch Chair in the case of Devolved Nations), as required. Any consultation response that is published using the Society logo must be signed off in this way.

Submission

Both policy and technical consultation responses will be submitted to the consulting body by a member of the Policy Team. The consulting body should only receive one submission under the BPS name and logo.

Publication

Policy consultation responses will be published on the Consultations page of the Society's website on the day of submission. Technical consultation responses will not be published on the website but can be obtained by contacting consult@bps.org.uk. This is because technical responses are not standalone documents and must be read in conjunction with the documentation published by the consulting body.

Guidelines for contributors: What makes a good consultation response?

All claims should provide a psychological evidence base

The BPS responds to consultations in order to provide a psychological evidence-base to the consulting body. Please provide full references in the appropriate sections. Comments based on anecdotal evidence or professional opinion can be useful to identify trends in frontline services, but those that are backed up with published evidence will have more impact.

Strong arguments presented clearly

Use an assertive tone and have conviction in your positions. If you don't agree with what is being proposed, it's good to suggest alternative solutions. Policy makers are looking for effective solutions that they can put forward and appreciate examples of where initiatives have demonstrated impact.

Know your audience

Avoid too much jargon and remember that those reading your submission almost certainly won't have the level of psychological expertise that you do. Policy makers often move around departments and may be getting to know a new area so consultation responses that are accessible are appreciated. The first time any acronym is used it should be written in full, e.g. Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT).

Short responses that just cover key issues are welcome

Members contributing to responses should not be daunted by the task in hand. If you want to send a brief piece of evidence focussing on one key area or question, this is perfectly acceptable and can be extremely useful to the committee clerk or consulting body. The BPS will identify which areas of a consultation are relevant to psychology and focus on these areas when responding.

Instructions and Terms of Reference

Different consulting bodies and consultations will have different criteria for what they are looking for in a response. It is important, where possible, to follow this format as closely as possible to allow the consulting body to assess responses more easily. Links to further information or consultation Terms of Reference will be provided in consultation emails. If responding to a Parliamentary inquiry, the [Guidance on giving evidence to a Select Committee of the House of Commons can help](#).

Maximise your impact

Be as specific as possible about what aspect of the document that you are commenting on and state exactly which part of the text you are referring to. Provide a rationale for your comments, try to use evidence if available and try not to let your emotions lead to defensive or aggressive language.

Contact

If you have any queries about consultations please contact Joe Liardet by email, Consult@bps.org.uk or phone, 0116 252 9936.

Consultation Process Flow Chart

