

HOW TO RESPOND TO A CONSULTATION

WHAT IS A CONSULTATION?

When planning changes to legislation, or considering new legislation, government bodies often run public consultations. The idea is that they are giving the public, interested parties and organisations a chance to have their voice heard in the process.

These can be excellent opportunities to affirm what is good in new proposals and put on record any concerns about more troubling aspects.

WHO CAN RESPOND?

The criteria vary. Usually anyone can respond, but some consultations give more weight to the views of people who will be directly affected by the policy under discussion. Often there are slightly different processes for those responding as an individual versus those responding on behalf of an organisation.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE?

They vary considerably. Some have multiple choice responses with a space to elaborate if you wish, others only have open-ended questions. Usually you don't have to answer all the questions or address all the points, but can pick the ones that you consider most significant.

HOW FORMAL DO I HAVE TO BE? SHOULD I INCLUDE FOOTNOTES/REFERENCES?

The idea is that anyone can answer, not just intellectuals, so you're not expected to write a full academic paper. That said, we do want our responses to be robust and evidence-based. If you quote facts, figures or comments from others, including a link to the source, or a footnote or reference in brackets helps to strengthen your argument (and avoid accusations of plagiarism).

Write in plain, clear English. Use first-person experience and examples if you have them. Your experience is incontrovertible and compelling.

IS IT OK TO SAY I'M A CHRISTIAN?

In the vast majority of cases, yes. Sometimes you may not feel it is necessary, but other times it could be important to let the reader know where you're coming from.

It is not usually necessary or helpful to quote from the Bible; people who don't share our high view of it will not find it compelling. But it is fine to say things like, 'As a Christian I believe...'. Remember to represent Christ well – seeking to win hearts and minds by a loving, gracious, integrity-filled approach.

CAN I JUST REPLICATE CMF'S RESPONSE?

No. Any legislator seeing multiple carbon-copy responses will likely give them all less weight. It is always better to use your own words and say what you really think, not just copy chunks of other people's work. Also, because we are submitting a corporate response, we might not be following the same structure as the individual ones, and may be writing in more formal language than you would use.

That said, please do refer to ours for inspiration and ideas, and feel free to quote from the same studies and raise the same concerns. Just make it your own work. It is far more effective that way.

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT ETHICS@CMF.ORG.UK.
VIEW OUR PREVIOUS CONSULTATION RESPONSES [ON OUR WEBSITE](#).