

Lords Special Inquiry Committees

Introduction

[House of Lords select committees](#) help the chamber investigate government policy, laws and activity. They are usually composed of a small number of peers, typically 12, and are selected to scrutinise specific policy areas in greater depth. Among these, special inquiry committees ([formerly known as ad hoc committees](#) until 2019-2020) consider a specific issue within a single Parliamentary session, typically lasting around 10 months, and are normally dissolved once they have published their findings in a report. Some of these committees are tasked with conducting post-legislative scrutiny of particular aspects of legislation.

From 1993, it has become the norm to form at least one special inquiry committee each session on a subject of general interest. Following a [review of select committee activities in the Lords](#) conducted in 2013, [four special inquiry committees have been appointed each session](#), with at least one dedicated to post-legislative scrutiny, analysing the efficacy of an existing Act of Parliament.

Criteria for deciding special inquiry committees

Every year, the Lords Liaison Committee invites peers to submit proposals for new special inquiry committees for the following year. The committee then considers the proposals in accordance with [specific criteria for selection](#), which are:

- Making the best use of the knowledge and experience of Members of the House;
- Complementing the work of existing select committees, including Commons departmental select committees;
- Addressing areas of policy that cross departmental boundaries; and
- Ensuring that the activity can be completed within 10 months.

The committee also takes into account broader factors, such as the balance of topics across special inquiry committees, inquiries by other committees in both Houses and within government, and anticipated legislation in various policy areas.

2025 special inquiry committees

After [reviewing 45 different proposals](#), the Liaison Committee approved the following [four special inquiry committees for the current year](#). Each committee will be required to complete its work by the end of November 2025:

- A special inquiry committee on the [Autism Act 2009](#)
- A special inquiry committee on [Home-based Working](#)
- A special inquiry committee on [Social Mobility Policy](#)
- A special inquiry committee on [UK Engagement with Space](#)

Previous special inquiry committees

In recent years, several special inquiry committees have conducted in-depth investigations into pressing policy areas, producing influential and widely discussed reports:

- The [Food, Diet and Obesity Committee](#) was appointed in 2024 to “consider the role of foods, such as ‘ultra-processed foods’, and foods high in fat, salt and sugar, in a healthy diet and tackling obesity”. At the end of the year, it published the report [Recipe for health: a plan to fix our broken food system](#), calling on the government to develop a comprehensive, long-term strategy to reform the food system, and providing detailed recommendations for doing so.
- Also in 2024, the [Modern Slavery Act 2015 Committee](#) was tasked with scrutinising the effectiveness of the respective Act. Its [final report](#) found that the legislation had failed to keep pace with national and international developments, lacking adequate safeguards for victims of modern slavery in the UK and prompting the urgent need for legislative reform.
- In 2022, the [Adult Social Care committee](#) examined the planning and delivery of adult social care services in England. Its [final recommendations](#) emphasised the sector’s persistent invisibility in public discourse, calling for adequate funding, greater control for individuals over their care, and more support and alternatives for unpaid carers.
- A [special inquiry committee on Covid-19](#) was exceptionally appointed in 2021 to consider the long-term implications of the pandemic on economic and broader societal wellbeing. Unusually, the committee continued its work over three consecutive years, reporting on three different inquiries: [Living online: the long-term impact on wellbeing](#), [the long-term impact of the pandemic on towns and cities](#), and [life beyond COVID](#).

Filippo Negri | Monitoring Executive

For further information, please email team@randallsmonitoring.co.uk

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