

COMARE Procedures:

Attendance at open meetings & Submissions to the committee

If you would like to attend a COMARE meeting as an observer, please contact the Secretariat for further information or complete an application form – available on the [COMARE GOV.UK webpage](https://www.gov.uk/comare).

Completed application forms should be sent by email to the Secretariat (comare@ukhsa.gov.uk).

Introduction to open session meetings

Committee meetings are held in open session to increase the transparency of the Committee's work and to enable interested parties to hear the Committee's discussions.

The meetings are not intended to provide a forum for independent observers or interest groups to present their views on a subject to the Committee. Observers should not attempt to participate in the Committee's discussion. Observers attending the meeting are asked to adhere to the [COMARE Code of Conduct for Observers](#).

Information concerning the dates of forthcoming COMARE meetings is available at the relevant section of the [COMARE webpage on GOV.UK](#). Most COMARE meetings are held in London, usually in buildings where access to the meeting is controlled. The Secretariat will arrange permissions and escorts for observers. It is therefore essential that all observers are identified in advance.

Applications to attend a meeting as an observer

Those wishing to observe can apply to attend either a whole meeting or just part of a meeting addressing a specific subject. If you are interested in a specific subject, please inform the Secretariat who will be able to tell you when we expect it to be discussed.

The application form asks whether you represent any group (e.g. manufacturers, trade associations, or groups with specific interests regarding public health or the environment). This information will be provided to Committee members and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

We will accept enquiries by email. Responses to applications will be issued by post to ensure that a valid home or work postal address is obtained for proof of identity. Completed application forms should be submitted at the latest five working days before the relevant meeting.

Numbers that may attend

The meeting rooms used by the Committee have space for a limited number of observers. The likely maximum is six for any one meeting depending on the room and location. Priority will be

given to those observers who have an interest in a specific subject on the meeting agenda and on the basis of dates of receipt of applications.

After the closing date for applications, the Secretariat will write to you with an invitation or an explanation if attendance at the meeting is not possible. The invitation will include all necessary information on Committee procedures and admission to the building.

Media enquiries

Representatives of the media should contact the Press Office for the Department of Health and Social Care.

Reserved business and unpublished material

Some information may not be in the public domain at the time of discussion. Part or all of such agenda items may need to be discussed in closed session as reserved business. These discussions will generally be at the end of the meeting and observers will be requested to leave the meeting.

Publication of agenda and minutes

The agenda will be published on the Committee webpage approximately 15 working days before the meeting and any items of reserved business to be handled in closed session will be identified.

When an observer has spoken to the Committee, a record of key points made will be included in the minutes and the observer will be invited to comment on the draft of that section. The final decision on the wording of minutes will be made by the Committee. The minutes of the meeting will be published on the COMARE page on GOV.UK, following approval by the Committee.

Submissions to the Committee

If you wish to submit information that is pertinent to a topic the Committee is considering, you should send a brief (no more than two pages of A4) written submission to the secretariat at least 10 working days before the meeting. Submitted information should be relevant to the Committee's remit and work programme.

It should be noted that the Committee gives particular weight to peer-reviewed scientific studies. Material which contains commentary, personal opinions, and unsupported critiques of other committees and professional bodies is unlikely to be helpful to the Committee. Submitted information labelled as confidential cannot be considered because information presented to the Committee may be required to be released to third parties. The Chair will decide whether, when and how any submitted information will be considered by the Committee. The Chair's decision is final. If you have also applied to attend the meeting, the Chair may choose to invite you to provide more information and respond to questions during the meeting.

For further information, please refer to the [Code of Conduct for Observers](#).

COMARE Code of Conduct for Observers

This Code of Conduct is based on the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees 2021¹.

Role of Observers

Observers are subject to the same level of confidentiality on meeting matters as members and assessors. This includes refraining from commenting on Committee business on social media.

When invited to attend meetings, observers and/or their organisations are asked to respect the workings of the Committee. Observers and/or their organisations should not interfere in the business of the committee or the work of the secretariat in any way which, in the view of the Chair, might hinder the work of the Committee before, during and after the meeting. Electronic recording equipment is prohibited.

Observers should not attempt to participate in the Committee's discussion. However, observers may contribute verbally to the meeting at the invitation of the Chair. Such contributions should be brief, and the Chair will allocate an appropriate time.

Observers will be asked to leave a meeting when the Committee discusses items in closed session (the consideration of material that isn't in the public domain), generally towards the end of the agenda.

Failure to observe the Code of Conduct may lead to exclusion of observers and/or their organisations from the meeting and from future meetings of the Committee.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scientific-advisory-committees-code-of-practice>