

Witness Name: Katharine Hammond

Statement No. 3

Exhibits: 6

Dated: 2 June 2023

## UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

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### SUPPLEMENTARY WITNESS STATEMENT OF KATHARINE HAMMOND

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I, Katharine Hammond, will say as follows: -

- 1.1 I make this supplementary statement to further address matters of relevance to the Cabinet Office's role in pandemic planning, preparedness and resilience in the years running up to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the course of preparation for oral evidence, and following disclosure of other Module 1 witness statements, my Cabinet Office legal team has asked me to provide some small clarifications in relation to some of the points I made in my Module 1 statement.
- 1.2 In paragraph 2.22 I wrote: "*CCS produced, every two years, the National Security Risk Assessment (named the National Risk Assessment before 2019), ('the NSRA'), to inform planning and capability development locally and nationally.*"
- To clarify, the NSRA and National Risk Assessment ("NRA") were two different products before 2019 but they were closely inter-related. The NSRAs before 2019 did refer to pandemic risk within the tiers and this was just a reflection of the analysis within the NRA. The substantive coverage of pandemic risk was in the 2016 NRA and then the 2019 NSRA.
  - On a similar note, in paragraph 3.24, I refer to the "*2016 and 2019 iterations of the NSRA*". To clarify, I was referring to the 2016 NRA and the 2019 NSRA.

- 1.3 In paragraph 3.2 I wrote: “[...] Accordingly, the most senior relevant ministerial structure that meets regularly - the National Security Council - tended to focus on threats over hazards. In 2016 it had a sub-committee titled the NSC(THRC) which mainly operated on paper (for example to oversee the release of National Risk Assessments) but which had not met for more than three years.”
- This statement remains entirely correct, but in addition it may assist the Inquiry to understand that there were officials’ sub-committees for THRC which did meet more regularly. THRC(O) meetings were chaired by the DNSA and had a more focused remit, dealing with the protection of Critical National Infrastructure. THRC(R)(O) was chaired by me and dealt with a broad range of hazard risks.
- 1.4 In paragraph 3.18 I did not mention the 2017 NSRA ‘refresh’ (referred to in paragraphs 3.38 to 3.42 of the Supplementary Corporate Witness Statement of Roger Hargreaves dated 28 April 2023) because to the best of my recollection it did not result in any material change to the pandemic risk. As stated above, before 2019 it was the NRA which comprehensively dealt with pandemics.
- 1.5 In paragraph 3.19, I wrote: “[...] Most significantly, prior to 2019, CCS had produced two separate products: one, the NRA, focussed on domestic emergencies over a 5-year timescale; the other, the NSRA, focussed on broader national security risks over a 20-year timescale.”
- To clarify, the NSRA also covered risks over a 5-year timescale, although the point remains that the NSRA focussed on broader risks over a 20-year timescale, and it was the NRA which comprehensively dealt with pandemics.
- 1.6 In paragraph 3.24, I refer to four workstreams in a submission to the Cabinet Secretary (**KH/7 - INQ000145718**). In paragraph 1 of the submission, I attached the detailed findings of each of the four workstreams of the National Resilience project of the National Security Capability Review. To assist the Inquiry, these four papers are now produced and marked with the following exhibit numbers:
- National Security Capability Review – National Resilience. Project: **Workstream 1: Victim's support (KH/21 - INQ000191106)**
  - National Security Capability Review – National Resilience. Project: **Workstream 2: An enhanced approach to the assurance and improvement of local resilience capabilities (KH/22 - INQ000191103)**

- National Security Capability Review – National Resilience. Project: **Workstream 3: Understanding local capability (KH/23 - INQ000191104)**
- National Security Capability Review – National Resilience. Project: **Workstream 4: Supporting local responders in major civil crises. (KH/24 - INQ000191105)**

1.7 In paragraphs 3.28 to 3.42 of my statement, I refer to NSC(THRC). As Roger Hargreaves sets out in his Supplementary Corporate Witness Statement dated 28 April 2023, its last meeting was in December 2018 and although it was involved in the sign off of the 2019 NSRA in July 2019 out of committee, it was not convened again prior to the pandemic as the work it had been overseeing on No Deal Brexit preparations was wrapped into the new Cabinet Committee created for that purpose – EUExit (Operations), known as X(O). I have identified the following advice I provided on the requirement for a committee like THRC:

- On 25-28 November 2019, the then-Deputy Cabinet Secretary asked me to contribute to a proposal on possible committee structures for any new government following the election (on 12 December 2019). I recommended that there be a sub-committee of the Cabinet charged with resilience, not necessarily in the same configuration as THRC, but able to decide, for example, on the future shape of the PFRP and to generate cross-Whitehall work and create momentum at Ministerial level to prepare the government for hazards, as well as threats. **(KH/25 - INQ000196535 and KH/26 - INQ000196536)**

1.8 In paragraphs 12-13 of his witness statement, the Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin MP states that a “*small team of officials with a specific remit to scan the horizon for viruses that might be heading our way*” was established in CCS and subsequently “*absorbed back into the general body*” of CCS.

- I think that this refers to the CCS international response team, part of whose function was to horizon-scan for emerging infectious diseases across the world, working with groups like SPI-M in DHSC.
- After I joined CCS in 2016, we made some structural changes to reflect the balance of work and to ensure we could deliver the actions that had emerged from an internal review of crisis facilities. As part of that, the domestic and international response teams were brought under joint leadership. The

horizon scanning function for emerging viruses nonetheless continued, alongside regular scanning activity for other imminent risks.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Personal Data

Signed.....

Name ...Katharine Hammond.....

Dated.....2/6/23.....