

UK Covid-19 Inquiry

Arts, heritage, sports and leisure roundtable

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Liverpool and online

Participants

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Kirsty Cumming, Community Leisure UK

Paul Fleming, Equity

Peter Vermeulen, National Trust

Phil Clapp, UK Cinema Association

Alistair Brown, Museums Association

Victoria Ward, Welsh Sports Association

Naomi Pohl, Musicians' Union

Catherine Chan, UK Covid-19 Inquiry

Anisha Worbs: [00:02:58] Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you very much for joining, we do have a couple more people joining online.

My name is Anisha Worbs. I'm the Programme Director at the UK Covid-19 Inquiry team. As you'll know, this is an independent inquiry chaired by Baroness Hallett, who's a retired Court of Appeal judge. It's been set up to look at the UK's response to the pandemic. And we're really grateful to you for joining today; most of you are online, actually, but we're grateful to Paul for having made the journey with us.

We recognise that everyone here today will have a personal as well as a professional response to the pandemic, and it's possible that today's meeting could be difficult for some of you. So we have Martin here from Citizen Coaching and Counselling, who is available to anybody who needs support, either in the meeting or afterwards. And I'll let Martin just introduce himself.

Martin Hogg: [00:06:26] Thank you very much. I'm Martin Hogg, from Citizen Coaching and Counselling. In your invitation for today, you'll see the details of how to contact us. So if things become overwhelming at any point today, or in the next week or so, if you feel that you'd benefit from a bit of emotional support, or just to chat through anything, then me and my team are

available. And everything you say to us is confidential and doesn't get reported back to the Inquiry in any way.

Anisha Worbs: [00:06:59] Thanks, Martin. So over the past few weeks, we in the Inquiry team have been meeting with a number of bereaved families and organisations that have been affected by the pandemic. And these meetings are to consult on our draft Terms of Reference, which set out what the Inquiry will investigate. So just to be clear, these sessions are not about giving evidence to the Inquiry – that will come later on once the Terms of Reference are finalised and the Inquiry formally begins its work.

So the organisations we've been meeting with have been grouped according to themes or sectors of impacted groups. So we've had roundtable discussions on equalities, on business; we've got local government tomorrow. We're really looking forward to hearing from all of you today, representing a whole range of cultural organisations, to hear your perspective.

There's also the opportunity for anyone to give their views on the draft Terms of Reference via our consultation website. So it would be great if you could encourage the people you represent or your members to take part in that consultation as well. The meeting today is being recorded, and a transcript of the meeting will be made available on the Inquiry website at the end of the consultation period. We'll use that to inform the outcome of the consultation, of course, and the Chair's recommendations to the Prime Minister about the final version of the Terms of Reference.

I'll do my best to summarise the key points that I'm hearing as we go through, but do be rest assured that this transcript will be properly analysed to ensure that all of your views are fed into the Chair's thinking. And I think we set out in your invitation that we would be publishing that transcript at the end of the consultation process. So your contribution and your names will be included. If for any reason you would prefer not to be named, please do let us know and we'll pick that up separately.

So the bulk of today's discussion is going to be answering the four questions that we've set out in our consultation documents. And I will endeavour to keep us to time; there's quite a few of us in the discussion today, but I will try to make sure you get to have your say but that we also get through all four of the questions in the time that we have. Just to say also the chat function is open on the call but I won't be picking up any points you make in there sort of live in the discussion. But the team will pick it up and feed it through as part of the consultation. So if there's anything you want to pop into the chat, please do that.

And then I guess for those of you who are joining from UK-wide organisations, I know we've got specific regional organisations as well, but please do also reflect on any issues specific to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England when you make your contribution.

I'm nearly done with introductions, you'll be pleased to know, but just the practicalities. So for those of you online, please stay on mute unless you're speaking, if you want to come into the conversation, or you've got a question, please raise your hand using the raise hand button on Zoom and then come off mute when I call you in. For you, Paul, try and catch my eye and there's a button on the microphone that you will need to press so that the people online can hear you.

We're not expecting any fire drills today. So if you hear sirens going off here, we may need to leave the room briefly; we'll keep in touch with you and let you know if that does happen when we can resume.

The other thing I just always say is to explain for those of you online, there's quite a few things for me to keep an eye on here. So I've got you on a big screen in front of me, I've also got you in front of me on the laptop to try and see the raised hands. So if you see my eyes flicking about whilst you're speaking, I am concentrating on you. But I've got several versions of you in front of me. I think that is it by way of my introduction. If you've got any questions up front, please raise your hand now.

Otherwise, I think it would be nice even though there are quite a few of us to do a little round of introductions and if you could just very briefly say who you are and who you're here representing today. And then we'll get into the meat of the discussion. So I'll just call you in a slightly random order for now. But could I ask Bernard and then Huw to introduce yourselves?

Bernard Donoghue: [00:12:15] Yes, thanks very much. And thank you for the invitation to attend today. I'm the Chief Executive of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions of the UK, so UK-wide. They're all the biggest cultural organisations, museums, galleries, cathedrals, palaces. Our members include everyone from the National Trust through to Historic Environment Scotland, and I chair the London Tourism Recovery Board which was established by the private sector to recover London's visitor economy as a result of Covid.

Huw Edwards: [00:12:46] Good afternoon, I'm Huw Edwards, I'm Chief Executive of ukactive. ukactive is the membership organisation for the fitness, leisure and physical activity sector in the UK, where we have circa 4,500 members across the four nations representing both public and private operators, and members as well.

Anisha Worbs: [00:13:07] Thank you very much, and I hope you all don't mind me using first name terms with you; please tell me if you'd rather I refer to you in a different way. Can I ask Julian and then Kirsty to introduce yourselves?

Julian Bird: [00:13:21] Thank you very much. I'm Julian Bird. I'm the Chief Executive of both UK Theatre and the Society of London Theatre. So we look after everything in the live performance space in terms of theatre, dance, or everything else around it, both physical venues, and also the producers and general managers who actually put the shows on both, as it says, across the whole of the UK or four nations. And then, the Society of London Theatre predominantly in the heart of the West End, which obviously is famous around the world. And also in this context, I was the sort of Vice-Chair and convener of most of the main working groups for DCMS once Covid happened around how the broader live sector came back together.

Kirsty Cumming: [00:14:08] Afternoon everyone, I'm Kirsty Cumming. I'm the Chief Executive of Community Leisure UK, which is the membership association for charities and social enterprises that are delivering in public leisure and culture. And we've got members across England, Scotland and Wales, we've got 113 members across the three nations at the moment.

Anisha Worbs: [00:14:30] Thank you. Can I come to Mark online and then Paul in the room?

Do we have Mark online? Let's come to you then, Paul.

Paul Fleming: [00:14:48] Yes. My name is Paul Fleming. I'm the General Secretary of Equity, which is the trade union for performing artists – both actors but also directors, designers, choreographers, variety artists and so on. Our members work both in theatre and in live performance, so opera, dance, and so on. Variety, that's what we might call entertainment, children's entertainers, burlesque artists, fire breathers, contortionists, the works. And they also work obviously across TV and film. So the recorded sector as well.

Anisha Worbs: [00:15:27] Thank you. Peter and then Phil, please.

Peter Vermeulen: [00:15:33] Thank you, Anisha. And good afternoon, everyone. I'm Peter Vermeulen, Chief Financial Officer of the National Trust.

Phil Clapp: [00:15:40] Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Phil Kline, CEO of the UK Cinema Association. So we represent the interests of cinema operators ranging from the largest national chains, such as Odeon, Vue, and Cineworld, etc., to over 200 smaller, independent sites across the length and breadth of the UK.

Anisha Worbs: [00:16:04] Thank you. And then I think we've got Alistair and then Victoria online as well.

Alistair Brown: [00:16:11] Hi, everybody. My name is Alistair Brown. I'm the Policy Manager of the Museums Association. We are the main representative membership body for museums in the UK. So we represent over 10,000 individual members who work in and with museums, as well as the vast majority of museums as institutions themselves in the UK. So we're across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Victoria Ward: [00:16:40] Good afternoon, I'm Victoria Ward. And I'm the Chief Executive of the Welsh Sports Association. So we're a membership body that represents the sport and leisure sector in Wales, including all 6,000, voluntary, not-for-profit sports clubs.

Anisha Worbs: [00:16:57] Thank you. I think Naomi has joined us. So if you can introduce yourself as well. Thank you.

Naomi Pohl: [00:17:05] Hi, there. Apologies. I had another overrunning meeting. My name is Naomi Pohl. I'm General Secretary of the Musicians' Union as of last week, so I just started, but we represent 32,000 professional musicians in the UK.

Anisha Worbs: [00:17:21] Great, thank you very much. I don't see Mark online. So I think he might not be with us. But he might join us. Great. Thank you. And thanks for your patience while we did that, I think it's always helpful to know everyone who's on the call. So let's get going then. Let's get into the first question which I expect to spend a good chunk of time on, and that is: do the Inquiry's draft Terms of Reference cover all the areas that you think should be addressed by the Inquiry?

Obviously, I'm sure you'd have seen they are very broad. And one of the points that Lady Hallett has been making, when she's been speaking publicly about this, is that they are the bare bones of what the Inquiry will look at. And there will be a process once the Terms of Reference have been finalised, where she with her legal team works out exactly what the scope of the Inquiry is. So

there'll be a much more detailed set of work to build into the exact scope of the Inquiry. But we're very keen to hear from as wide a group as possible about the Terms of Reference themselves. And if there's anything that you think is missing that should be added at this stage. So I'll ask you to put hands up for those online if you'd like to come in on that question. Phil, go ahead.

Phil Clapp: [00:19:05] As you say, they are very broad. And so I think we can all put our own interpretation on what they mean. And in that respect, they cover the four things that I think from our side, we would want to say. One is around coherence and coordination across the four UK nations and the absence thereof. The second one was around any visible connection between evidence of risk and policy actions taken. The third one would be around the seeming disconnect between the willingness of Government to help big business and small business. We represent companies of varying sizes and some saw a great deal more support than others. And fourth one would be kind of coordination within Government. I mean, I think most of us on this call look to the culture department, our kind of home department, and they appeared to be at times kind of cut adrift from the general policy-making within Government. But you know, in topline, yes, this covers all the things I expected to cover. And in terms of our interest, but I think, as you've suggested, not in too many words, that the devil is in the detail.

Anisha Worbs: [00:20:25] Thank you. That's really helpful, Phil; I've got Julian and then Huw.

Julian Bird: [00:20:31] Let me just say I agree with everything Phil just said; can I just add a couple of other points, particularly when it talks about the economic interventions, it particularly talks about Government interventions. And although it may be implicit in here, I think it's worth saying that for many of us, it's not just national Government, it's also local government at all its different levels. And I would agree with Phil on that, as well, the danger is we talk about coordination, just within national Government. It's also the coordination between national Government, local Governments at all its levels. And I'm sure we've all experienced good and bad points about that over the last few years. But I think it may be implicit in what's in the Terms of Reference, but it isn't there in black and white.

And then the only other point I'd make, and I know it is in there, is there's one mention of communication. And I think for a lot of us, how things were communicated, once again, national Government, local government in every other way, because it's only mentioned once in there, it didn't to me jump out as being so important as some of the other things, whereas actually I think it was possibly for us one of the most important things and certainly, as we've come out of it, communication has been one of the biggest issues I think we've had, in terms of the general public. So I'd like to see that have a bit more emphasis.

Anisha Worbs: [00:21:54] Thank you. Huw, go ahead.

Huw Edwards: [00:21:56] Thank you. Yeah, just to reinforce what Phil and Julian have said, as well, I'm particularly interested in the decision-making process and obviously agree with the broad direction of the Terms of Reference. But I'm particularly interested in the decisions around lockdown reopening and financial support for the sport and physical activity sector across the four nations. And ultimately, who was making those decisions, how they were made, and on what

basis, I think are really important in terms of getting an understanding when decisions were made and how they were made. That would be building on what both Phil and Julian have said.

Anisha Worbs: [00:22:35] Thank you; Victoria, and then Naomi, please.

Victoria Ward: [00:22:39] Thank you. I know it is referred to in there, but just to ensure that when the report is put together, it is structured in the right way to take account of devolution. So, you know, there was such divergence in policy, particularly in the latter half of the pandemic, that it became utterly confusing and I know colleagues who just mentioned communication, how the four Home Nations communicated to try and come up with consistent messages, which kind of didn't happen. But I think it's really important that we ensure that we look at each individual country separately when we're looking at these things, as well as them bringing it all together at the end to come up with conclusions.

Anisha Worbs: [00:23:37] Thank you. Naomi.

Naomi Pohl: [00:23:40] Yes, thanks. So I think one of the issues that we had in the music industry was when the Government essentially gave kind of guidance to members of the public, but it wasn't legislation. It wasn't firm restrictions. It was – you know, the advice to stay at home or work from home caused a lot of problems for us. So I just wanted to make sure that that was reflected in there. It wasn't just the kind of firm restrictions that were put in place. It was actually some of the guidance that was issued.

Also, the guidance that was issued within the industry, I think there's some real positives around the way that roundtables were brought together quite quickly by the Government. But then some of the feedback we gave repeatedly during those roundtables, it didn't feel like the policy really changed as a result. So I think that, again, communication and consultation is really important for us.

Anisha Worbs [00:24:36] Thanks, Naomi. Paul.

Paul Fleming: [00:24:42] So I suppose the focus for this group will principally be on the third bullet point under section one. I'm not sure it should really be called the economic response to the pandemic and its impact alone. I think it should be referred to as the economic and social response to the pandemic, because actually, the analysis down there seems to purely focus on the economic consequences in terms of supporting business, for jobs and so on.

There are quite significant social impacts of those decisions, I don't see where that would fit under there. So the value of theatre, the value of live performance, the importance of entertainment for people in care homes, the importance of people being able to go out and see live performance through that summer. The economic importance of that to certain communities, to tourism and so on, I don't see where that's reflected under that bullet point. So when I feel economic and social response covers it better.

The emphasis on them does particularly appear to be on the microeconomics of it. So the job retention scheme, very specific elements, and not the macroeconomic points, which I think is really the point that Naomi's making as well, in the broad economic impact – you know, could we actually have lessened the pandemic in a different economic situation if we had been part of a

strategic response looking into the longer term? I don't see that covered there. It seems to be an evaluation of the things that did happen, rather than looking at the consequences of those things in a larger impact.

And then I suppose I've got a question too about point number two in general, which is it says that 'to inform the UK's preparations for future pandemics,' and later down that point, I think it's the second bullet point, 'the response to pandemic may be applicable to other civil emergencies.' I'm curious as to why it doesn't go broader than that. There are structures put into place during the pandemic that have broader lessons for society, whether there's a pandemic or a national emergency or not. And there might be things, whether it be, in our instance, the Government-backed insurance scheme for TV and film that has actively encouraged production that's now being taken away. It's actually in particular encouraged employment of older people, particularly older women who are otherwise uninsurable in that context.

There doesn't seem a place to feed back on some of the positive and negative things that have happened as a result of it, that actually should probably stay in place: social supports, and connections, and I think probably a broader impact of that, in terms of a community as well. And the thing that is that is lacking across it all is – I note in the public health section, there's a conversation about the decision-making and consultation between different arms of Government, central, devolved, and local. And there doesn't seem to be anywhere here where there's a conversation about, again, that thing that Naomi said, the conversations between different stakeholders, the decision-making process, the capacity for organisations like ourselves to input.

It does appear – or my concern would be – that with the Terms of Reference as they are, what we're going to do is have another meeting very much in the pattern of the consultative meetings we had, from the middle of the pandemic onwards, where we're not actually expected to provide anything that is – there to critique that which the Government has done, rather than actually the input on what the Government should do. And that is a serious failing of decision-making and the input of non-state actors, the input of non-bits of Government, if you like, to the work that we've done.

So there are, I think, my comments on where they're lacking. But there is plenty in there, which does cover lots of concerns and lots that we would pick up onto comments on.

Anisha Worbs: [00:28:06] Thank you. That's really helpful. I think I've got Alistair and then Kirsty.

Alistair Brown: [00:28:19] Hi. I mean, I'd concur with a lot of that. And the one thing that I just wanted to add is that there was an issue for us during the end of the first lockdown, when we were being consulted and brought in as sector bodies across the museum sector, about how to respond, how to get the sector back up and running and open again, in a safe and secure way. And there was a real question for me about how decisions were being taken about who was responsible for providing guidance, which bodies were seen as the appropriate bodies to provide guidance. And I think, what I observed as a real reticence by Government departments to be issuing guidance at that time, and relying a great deal on sector bodies. So I think it's really important that sector bodies and the role that they played throughout the whole pandemic is really understood and reflected throughout the Inquiry.

Anisha Worbs: [00:29:33] Thank you; Kirsty.

Kirsty Cumming: [00:29:37] Thank you. Again, I agree with a lot of what's already been said. So I won't repeat it. I guess my perspective, a couple of points, the point that was made earlier around the coordination between local and national Government, for our members particularly, is important. Again, picking up on the communications aspect and consultation. As Alistair's just mentioned, the role of sector bodies is a key one for us. But also the way in which information guidance was communicated out to sectors and the timelines for that. And I think it's important that that's covered as well.

Devolution. I think it was Victoria who mentioned that; again, I think it is important that we look at the differences and pull those together, but very much there have been very different impacts across nations. And I think it's important to capture that.

And then the final point is really just in terms of the reference to businesses, and within the Terms of Reference, making sure that that covers charities, social enterprises, both in terms of the support that they've had, but also in terms of the role that they've played throughout the pandemic, and recognising certainly a lot of our members remains open in the sense of supporting their response to the pandemic, perhaps not venues, but having a very different role to other private sector businesses. So I think charities, social enterprises, third sector, understanding differences, and the impact for that sector be brought in as well. Thank you.

Anisha Worbs: [00:31:06] Thank you. Peter.

Peter Vermeulen: [00:31:09] Thank you. I just wanted to contribute something around economic decision-making. So you already covered the intergovernmental decision-making and colleagues helpfully highlighted that we need to think broader than just national Governments as it were. But where those bodies took economic decisions, or financial support decisions, I wonder whether the Inquiry could also look at the effectiveness and the timeliness of the execution of those decisions. And that comment is slightly guided by the fact that my organisation was able to access business support as well as charity support. And I've had varying experience of the effectiveness and the timeliness of those decisions, filtering down to action on the ground as it were. So I definitely feel there's lessons to be learned in that space.

Anisha Worbs: [00:31:53] Thank you. That's an interesting point. Bernard,

Bernard Donoghue: [00:32:00] I echo the contributions of all of my colleagues, I think they're excellent points; I would just add these which haven't been raised yet.

Firstly, where it lists the kind of economic interventions, such as the Job Retention Scheme and Self-employment Income Support Scheme, I think it would be worth specifying the Cultural Recovery Fund, because that was the single largest sector-specific economic intervention by the Government. So I think it probably merits a focus in its own right. And secondly, in point one, where it lists all of the different parts of the economy, I think it's worth again being helpfully specific. Where it says the closure and reopening of the hospitality, retail, sports and leisure sectors and cultural institutions, actually, I think it would be worth talking about the visitor economy, in that broader sense. Because the cultural institutions, for example, won't cover things

like botanic gardens, or zoos, or safari parks, so I think it's worth being as broad an interpretation as possible.

And then just a couple of points down where it says travel and borders. Again, I think it'd be useful to specify here that we're talking about domestic travel within the UK – because that was severely affected, particularly under the tier system – and travel inbound and outbound from the UK, because our inbound tourism industry was decimated. And I think it's probably worth quantifying the economic impact of that.

And lastly, it may also be useful to reflect on the differences of the response around Northern Ireland, because there was a difference between the Covid response within the Republic of Ireland, and the Covid response within Northern Ireland, and actually, that border had a significant impact socially, as well as economically, on both sides of the border. I know the Terms of Reference are confined to the UK Government's response but I think there may be useful reflection about those countries with whom we share a border, and therefore some of the consequential actions as a result of that.

Anisha Worbs: [00:34:11] Thank you. I think that we have heard from everyone on that first question. Do shout if we've missed anyone. Just on that last point, because devolution and UK-wide is clearly a theme that runs throughout a lot of what you've said. So I guess, maybe just to clarify that it is a UK-wide inquiry, as you've said, but it is looking at reserved and devolved matters across the UK, but because the devolved administrations – well in the case of Scotland – have set up their own inquiry or may choose to do so in future there is something explicit in there about seeking to minimise duplication. So, we will be looking UK-wide and we will look at matters specific to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, England. But we will be mindful and actively trying to avoid duplication with those inquiries that have been or may be set up by the devolved administrations.

So that's been a really helpful and rich discussion. And as I said, the full transcript will be analysed. And I've also seen some stuff coming through in the chat. So that will be picked up as well. But for the purposes of today, just some of the themes that I hear coming through are clearly this point about the different levels of Government: national, local devolved, the coordination and the communication between them, but also, as you've described, some of the divergence in policy and the impact that that had.

Communication, obviously incredibly important, and something that I hear that, although it's mentioned in the Terms of Reference, perhaps you'd like to see it given more emphasis, given the impact that that has had. You know, there's clearly a massive chunk around decisions and that point about who made them how and on what basis, and who's accountable for them. But also, what a few of you have said and echoed is the capacity for, I think you call them non-state actors, the capacity for sectoral organisations to really input and influence the decisions before they're made, rather than perhaps be part of a consultation process after the event.

And then also, that point about how those decisions then filter down to action on the ground and whether there are lessons to be learned there. I think a couple of other specifics that struck me were – I think it was Naomi, the point about the impact of guidance when it's not legislation and

mandatory. Your point, I think, Paul, about the social impacts, and whether there are broader lessons to be learned for society, broader than, you know, perhaps responding to another pandemic should we have to in future and the social value of a lot of what you're here representing today, all of you.

And then, a couple more specifics around the scope of being clear that when we say businesses, we're actually talking about charities, big and small and the whole breadth of organisations that were impacted and needed support during that time. Yeah, so lots of stuff there for us to pick up and take forward and really grateful for your inputs.

I don't see any more hands up, so I think we can move on to the second question now, which is, you've got a sense of the scale of what the Inquiry is going to have to investigate and look into. So the second question is, which issues or topics do you think the Inquiry should look at first? So a question really about sequencing. And we'd be really interested to hear your views on that. So again, do put your hands up, when you're ready to come in, and I'll call you in.

And if you're stumped on that one, which I would forgive you for, because it's not an easy one, we could also take the third question as part of this, which is about timing, I guess, and whether you think the Inquiry should set a proposed end date for its public hearings, to help ensure timely findings and recommendations. So really, what we're trying to get at here is that in any public inquiry, there are choices to be made, about how much depth an inquiry will go into on any given issue and what that means for the overall timescale. Lady Hallett has been quite clear that producing timely recommendations is something that's important to her so that lessons can be learned quickly. But you also need to balance that with being able to go into these, you know, important issues to the depth.

I'll ask you to come in on both of those questions. So a sequencing question about the order in which the Inquiry might look at things, and that question about whether or not it should set an end date. So Paul, I'll come to you first.

Paul Fleming: [00:39:53] So I suppose it's a response to both two and three. It would be very helpful if the Inquiry could separate its investigations chronologically so as we can understand them in phases. And I think from our point of view, there are four very distinct phases. There were the initial weeks, probably the initial two months of the lockdown, the pandemic, the impacts where there was an awful lot of confusion, very quick decision-making being made. Not wanting to preempt anything, I think that was probably the point where we saw some of the best decisions being made and some of the best and most proactive engagement with us in our sector.

And actually, that bit can probably be done quite briskly and can be done quite short term and very limited – because quite a bit of time has passed. There's then a second period, if you like, as we move from that through the first lockdown, through the sort of middle phase of the pandemic, if you like, and those lessons, again, from an economic point of view, the impacts of that and a sectoral point of view. The impacts of that are known, have been felt, have been moved on from and the lessons from both of those two phases, have, I suppose, been learned.

There's then a question about the period departing that, so I suppose I'd take that from when the vaccination programme starts, through – right up to the present day, where it is much, much

harder, I think, for the Inquiry to look at the impacts. We don't really know whether we are going to see another phase of the pandemic, whether we'll have departed the pandemic entirely. It's very difficult to draw lessons from that, it's very difficult to see the economic and social impacts of that. And I will suggest that that portion actually is perhaps left for some time down the line and the need for quick answers.

And indeed, you know the entire possibility we have another public health emergency is no more or less likely than it was two years ago. We can learn lessons from those first two phases for our sector, and I'm sure, for the country at large now. And it would be good to see that set out and perhaps a later date or a different approach taken to departing the pandemic. That's to say from the beginning of the vaccination programme and beginning of the last England-wide national lockdown onwards.

Anisha Worbs: [00:42:12] Thank you. Victoria.

Victoria Ward: [00:42:19] Just really in response to the third question. In terms of the end date, I would like to suggest that perhaps there's an interim report with initial findings produced with relative speed, in case we do end up with any further restrictions next winter. So that doesn't catch us out, and that we can actually learn some lessons that we can put into action, should there be, you know, a recurrence of any restrictions again for next winter? And then obviously, the longer term then, a full comprehensive inquiry.

Anisha Worbs: [00:43:00] Thank you. Julian.

Julian Bird: [00:43:04] I actually had a very similar point to Victoria, I think, you know, there is a very live active debate now, isn't there, about interventions, what different types of interventions make a difference, lockdowns and of course, for a sector that got closed down for a very long period of time, it's that that's created a vast part of both social and economic issues. And not just next winter but if a new variant was to come along very quickly, that has very different characteristics, I don't feel that there's been any public debate through an inquiry like this or any other way about what has been most effective around all of that.

So it strikes me that in terms of priority, that's probably the thing that comes up first. And to your third question, that actually needs to be looked at and some conclusions reached on rather quickly, rather than waiting on elements like that until everything else has been looked at. So that's my two and three sort of combined I think.

Anisha Worbs [00:43:59] Lovely. It's worth me saying probably that, again, Lady Hallett has said that she is inclined to publish interim reports and not wait until the end, so it's kind of one big bang. And I think that she very much has in mind the need to be learning lessons now and to be acting on that. But I suspect she would probably also want me to say that in terms of how quick is quick or how interim is interim, there is a kind of legal statutory process that we need to go through as an inquiry. And the first stage of that will be evidence gathering, once the scope of the Inquiry has been defined.

And then there will be a process of hearings where she will, with her legal team, test what they have drawn out from the evidence and follow lines of inquiry that way. So I think she's definitely mindful of speed. And I think she definitely does intend to publish interim reports. And I think your

point about, you know, the time that has passed since the beginning makes it easier to draw the lessons out from that is definitely relevant. But I just wanted to manage expectations about the winter that's coming up. I think it would be very unlikely for her to have been able to review evidence and test those conclusions in time for that. I think she has been talking about the sort of public hearings, after the initial gathering of evidence, starting in early 2023. Alistair?

Alistair Brown: [00:45:50] Just to build on Julian's comments there, I mean, I think that it would be really useful to have fairly early reflections on the usefulness of the tier system which had such an impact across the members in a different way, different bits of the UK. And equally, the way that – something that really impacted on our sector, towards the end of 2020, the different groupings, that the cultural sector was subjected to.

So one thing that my members very exercised about was around the grouping of museums and indoor entertainment venues, which lumped them in with nightclubs and things. And thinking about the impact and maybe reflecting on that would be useful as well, in terms of providing, perhaps, practical advice for any future restrictions. Fingers crossed we don't have to face them.

The other thing I was going to say comes down to that third question on timing. I would hope that there'll be a substantial report, maybe a final report, within the lifetime of this Parliament, which would take us through to May 2024. That seems reasonable to me.

Anisha Worbs: [00:47:23] Thank you. Naomi.

Naomi Pohl: [00:47:27] Thanks. I think I would support the point about trying to look at it chronologically to a certain extent, you know: what happened? What data did the Government have? What did they do? What was the impact of that? How did they engage with stakeholders?

One of the issues that we had, and apologies if I'm going back to question one here, but one of the issues I think we had is that we were engaged with, in a way we've never had so much engagement with Government officials. And that was a real positive. But we – you know, when we talk in the Terms of Reference about the data and evidence that was available to the Government, is that sort of medical data and evidence or would that include all the evidence and information that was provided by the industry, throughout the pandemic, about impact and things like the gaps in the Self Employed Support Scheme? There was so much evidence supplied, and we felt like none of that was really taken into account.

So it would be really helpful if all the information that was provided in letters and through the roundtables could sort of be looked at as part of the data and evidence gathering process as well, to see how effectively the Government responded. But yes, I think going through it chronologically. And again, I just support what's been said about needing some fairly quick recommendations, just in case we do, unfortunately, have another variant and need to close down again, for whatever reason.

Anisha Worbs: [00:48:50] Thank you. I think there's a really good point about data and evidence, I think it is meant in its broadest sense. And I think that the legal team will want to gather the broadest range of evidence that they can. The Inquiry has already written out to officials across Government to make clear that we will be needing access to all the information that was available

at the time and to be very clear with them that they have a duty to safeguard that information and make it available to us.

But we won't just be compiling that evidence from governance. It will be a very broad process. I don't see any more hands up at the moment. So I'm interested maybe in exploring this idea about whether you do this chronologically or not. I think, so, in a sense, the first job of any inquiry is to set out the objective factual account of what happened. And different inquiries have taken different approaches to this in the past.

So some have taken a chronological approach and set out in lots of detail exactly what happened, one after another. Other inquiries have taken a more, I guess, a phased or more modular approach, where they've taken certain themes, and then looked within that in great detail, but they've kind of picked it off in different ways. So I wonder if anyone wants to come back in and comment on whether there's a best of both worlds where you can kind of take themes, or phases, and then look into that particular bit chronologically, but you're not necessarily kind of starting from day one and going all the way all the way to now. Paul?

Paul Fleming: [00:51:06] Yeah, so I mean, I do have an opinion, which is perhaps right, from the perspective of this sector and all my members, because I can see a very clear chronological approach from Government to the sector and how we were spoken to and what was the level of engagement and the level of responsiveness. In my mind, it is very chronological and to take a theme, my concern would be, is that the theme would be the impact on the cultural sector. And then what ends up happening is we don't get the analysis of the process by which the Government has come to its conclusion, we don't get the detail of why, at the very beginning of the pandemic, they were highly engaged, really, really talking to us. It certainly was not perfect or taking on board everything that was said, but certainly very actively engaged, and then periods of time where they weren't.

The risk, I think, with themes from our point of view, without knowing what the themes would be, is that they would look at everything lumped together. And the Government would be permitted to have behaved very poorly in some particular areas, very well in some particular areas, which is undeniably the case, and then end up with a sort of very neutral, and not particularly helpful way of learning lessons.

Whereas actually, particularly if the Terms of Reference remains as it is, which is very much about considering the impact – the Government responses in moments of national crisis – that is fundamentally a chronological question. And I think it could be done phased and I think working out what the phases are is very different. Perhaps that does lead into the idea that, you know, you look at our sector in a very particular way. But then my worry with that is reflecting on point three, if there's a consideration as to when hearings finish, when interim reports will be on, what they will be about, you end up back with a chronological route anyway. So I'm very keen on a chronological impact on our sector broken down into clear areas that we can look at, almost as that's probably a more helpful way for the Inquiry to view everything in a joined up way, as well.

Anisha Worbs: [00:53:11] Thank you. I don't see any more hands up. So I think there's clearly a question for us to take away about that chronological approach. And as you say, it'll be interesting

for us to put together what we're hearing from other sectors as well to see whether that's a theme that runs throughout or whether it's something that you've felt, particularly in your sector. Phil, I saw your hand go up I think, and come back down but do come in.

Phil Clapp: [00:53:43] I feared I'd lost my moment. I just want to agree with what Paul said, I think it may be a slightly cynical view. But what we need to avoid is certain things being lumped in together in a themed thing. So that it all evens itself out, because I think most of us feel we may have slightly different views on what the phases were. But I think most of us feel that it all followed a fairly similar rhythm, across the pandemic, in terms of levels of engagement, and levels of responsiveness.

So I would certainly support a phased approach as it were, not least because clearly, we need to learn lessons from the early days of the pandemic, because there's a very real distance – very real, very real risk, that we may be in the early days of another pandemic sooner than we would like.

Anisha Worbs: [00:54:31] Thank you. We'll take that one away. I've heard that clearly. Your arguments for that. I guess other things coming out of this part of the discussion, you know, very clear support for early findings and recommendations as you'd expect, as you say, to be able to learn lessons in case we are in this situation, quite quickly, but also to the point about broader lessons to be learned for society, whether there are things that we can build on and actually keep in place on an ongoing basis.

Okay. So I think that means we can move on to actually the final question in our consultation, which is a little bit about form and a little bit about engagement, I suppose, which you've all touched on. So I'm expecting you to have strong views here.

And the question is, how should the Inquiry be designed and run to ensure that bereaved families and those who have suffered harm as a result of the pandemic have their voices heard? And I think it's probably important to draw out that, obviously, bereaved people who have lost loved ones are central to the Inquiry. And we're very clear that they need to have their voices heard. But it isn't only about that, it is about those who have suffered harm, in its broadest sense.

So I guess in this question, we're asking you for views about how do you and your sector and the people you represent want to be engaged during the lifetime of the Inquiry, as well as, of course, anything from a personal point of view that you might want to give us views on? So again, I'll ask you to put your hands up online when you're ready to come in. And you're going to have to be quick, because Paul's got his hand up here. So I have to go to him again otherwise. So why don't we do that, and we'll give them a chance to think online.

Paul Fleming: [00:56:41] So I suppose I have a slight concern about the premise of the question, because it is in and of itself loaded and part of the Inquiry as to who has suffered harm beyond the bereaved. So the example that's very clear, in my mind, I mean, 40% of our 47,000 members didn't receive a single penny from furlough or the SEISS scheme. At one point in the pandemic, 90% of our Black women members were thinking about leaving the sector entirely. And these are people who may have been actors, dancers, you know, they've given their entire lives to the pursuit of this creative profession, and they were considering leaving.

Now that is a direct consequence. It's very hard to argue it's not a direct consequence of the Government's approach to the Self Employed Income Support Scheme. And one of the objectives of the Inquiry is to examine the effectiveness of that, and indeed, whether harm was caused by the Government's own actions. So I'm a little concerned, I suppose. At one point, obviously the bereaved are a really, really important group. And quite easy to – I'm sure there are complexities within it – to define. The broader social harm, I'm worried. And I think that although it's perhaps not in with the Terms of Reference themselves, it is a very early question for the Inquiry as to who those people are and how they're engaged with.

And I think very explicitly, from the point of view of our members, I think that obviously there is the sort of role for the [inaudible] like me to come and provide the evidence and the very technical information, I suppose, that we've collected to the pandemic, it is heartening to see that you want to have the voices and that you provide counsellors and so on, a human experience, and human and anecdotal experience, which is really valuable.

To do that, in the respect of our members, seeing them in their workplaces, I think, will be a really important thing to do. Facilitating members of the Inquiry to come to theatres, to film sets, to variety clubs, to meetings of children's entertainers, those sorts of people who go and provide entertainment in care homes, perhaps specifically around dementia, those groups which have been lonely and have lacked actually a lot of human contact, which our members trained to do and provide them with.

And I think actually seeing people outside of these rooms, outside of these spaces, in their workplaces, and perhaps in a more casual and incidental way, in the way that you might see somebody go and visit the site of an incident rather than something that's more like a Governmental inquiry where it is row after row of pursuit of people who give that evidence, which is right for that format. But this is very much a human impact inquiry, and I think meeting people in their spaces is quite important.

Anisha Worbs: [00:59:15] Thank you. And I think that is definitely something we're conscious of. And to be clear, we're using that word 'harm' in as broad a sense as you can possibly interpret it. And one of our jobs, I think, as you say, is to try to identify the full range of people and groups that we need to engage with. Huw.

Huw Edwards: [00:59:41] Yeah, just to reinforce some of what Paul just said, I think from our perspective on the concept of partners, obviously the economic harm that was done to our members, we lost hundreds of organisations during the period where facilities permanently closed as a result of Covid. There is the impact of those individual business people who lost their livelihoods and lost their businesses. And there's an interesting conversation about customers - people who use facilities for their physical, mental, and social wellbeing who were then restricted from that, during the process and the implications on their physical, mental and social wellbeing during that period of time. And how is this being assessed, how is this being captured, how is this being identified in terms of the size and scale of that impact on people's physical and mental wellbeing.

Anisha Worbs: [01:00:45] Thank you. Victoria.

Victoria Ward: [01:00:52] Thank you, I'll just pick up where Huw left off, in terms of facilities for a start. Many of them are not back to pre-pandemic levels, you're talking about 10, 15 years to build up a really strong base of members. And they're at about 50% or 60% of that now with little or no financial assistance going into the new financial year. So that is going to put facilities at risk, and therefore the communities that they serve, potentially, could lose those facilities.

Women were particularly hard impacted on with the closure of facilities. So traditionally, more of the women's sports and activities were taking place indoors. So group exercise classes, for instance, netball was severely impacted on; there's been none really for the last couple of years. So that was a big issue.

And finally, the way that this has put a spotlight on inequalities, and I know that's done that throughout every part of society, but when we look right back to the very start of the pandemic, when one of the only reasons you were allowed to leave your home was to exercise, that put it right in the heart of Government strategy. But in the same way it was very difficult to stay indoors, if you didn't have a roof over your head with the homeless problem, it was exactly the same problem. If you didn't have a pair of trainers to go out for a run or, you know, the advice was, go out for a cycle, and you don't own a bike.

So, you know, we've seen a real sort of shift for putting the spotlight on hardship that families faced and are continuing to face in light of that. In Wales, we are looking at some solutions to that around the development of technology to help to bring people back in and to be able to cover costs. And I'd be very happy to speak to the Inquiry about potentially how that could be an opportunity across the UK.

Anisha Worbs: [01:03:05] Thanks, Victoria. There's a few things coming through from what you've said about groups that were particularly affected. And you mentioned women there and Paul, I think you mentioned some of your members from ethnic minorities. So it would be really interesting, I think, to hear, those of you who are going to speak, to hear a bit more about that and what your experience, or your members' experience has been. Bernard.

Bernard Donoghue: [01:03:38] Thanks very much, just a small point. And really following on from some of the contributions that colleagues have made already, I think, I really appreciate your clarification, that the definition of harm is going to be as broad as possible, because there is one particular group with whom my members worked across the cultural sector. And that's those who were experiencing deep poverty or inequality. And in particular, for school and educational purposes, who either didn't have laptops or didn't have access to WiFi, all those kinds of things.

And actually, it wasn't just them being deprived of educational opportunities, but actually the active engagement in the process of recovery of both the economy, but also the cultural economy as well. And so many of our members did very, very specific work around those who were digitally deprived. And therefore, I think that would be useful to focus on as part of that. It is a broader definition of harm. But I think it just goes to the heart of who was able to contribute, where people were able to get their information from, where they were able to be active participants in society, at a time when they were not physically able to be present.

Anisha Worbs: [01:04:58] Yeah, that's really helpful. Thank you. Naomi.

Naomi Pohl: [01:05:03] I was just going to say that I think it'd be good to offer a range of ways for individuals to engage with the Inquiry, because during the pandemic we ran surveys, but with diminishing returns in terms of response rates. And I think some of our members found it quite a difficult process even to respond to a survey. So some might prefer to be in focus groups online, some might prefer to have in person meetings. Some might prefer to put a case study in writing. So I think it'd be good to open up as many ways as possible for them to input.

One of our members, interestingly said that she didn't want to even anonymously share information about how much she'd been earning because she was so ashamed of how little money she'd managed to earn over the last few years as a freelancer; she was really worried about being identified from her survey responses, and that somehow having an impact on the way people saw her as a professional musician, so it's quite nuanced. And obviously, particularly when you're talking about people who are bereaved, it's very personal. So I think just a range of ways to engage and possibly for people to submit anonymously if they want to.

Anisha Worbs: [01:06:16] Thank you. Kirsty.

Kirsty Cumming: [01:06:20] Thank you, and again, I'm coming back with the points that have already been made. But I think that sense of shame and kind of stigma is an interesting one, it's one that's coming through for our members in terms of public returning and people that are maybe in a different financial position to what they were pre-pandemic, and don't have the same disposable income, but don't want to be seen to be accessing concessions or support because there is a sense of shame around their position.

So there's definitely a group within the population that might not be so willing to admit around this idea of what is harm. And when we look at poverty, digital poverty. So I think the idea of some anonymous way, as Naomi suggested, or having different ways for people to engage and for their voices to be heard is important.

I think, also picking up on the point around what we mean by harm, and really pulling that out and making it clear, I think it's important, because the one other example that popped into my head when people have been talking is around those that have actually remained insecure employment, but actually the pressure that they're under, again, if we look at our members, you know, people have worked right through the pandemic, but under incredibly high pressure situations that they've never faced before.

And again, if we look at charities and the role of boards within that, there's a lot of people that maybe have joined the board of a charity, but not expecting to have to deal with the prospect of insolvency or perhaps having the experience. And suddenly having that kind of pressure throughout the pandemic is really, really challenging for a lot of people out there. So I guess you know, harm, what do we mean by harm, and obviously, in the broader sense, really making that explicit I think is important.

And I guess the final point I would make is just around purpose. If we want people to engage, and feel that their voices are heard, when there's an inquiry, it is being really, really clear about what the purpose is. And you know, what's going to come out of this. I think there's probably a sense out there that a lot of people are disengaged with Governments on the back with the pandemic,

for whatever reason that is going on in people's personal lives, but having a way that actually they feel that they're engaged, that their voice is valued, and there will be a purpose to that, I think it's really important that's communicated really clearly.

Anisha Worbs: [01:08:47] Thank you. Great. So I'm going to sort of sum up what I've heard so far, but encourage you to have a think if there's anything else you want to say, and I think I'm probably going to ask you one more question at the end of this, but definitely a very clear sense of harm and needing to have a very broad definition and some work for us to do in terms of identifying all the different people and groups who have been harmed through the pandemic.

I think there's a few things here about how we could and should engage. And I'm really thankful to have your suggestions about the range of ways to engage, and where and how you do that as well. Because we're actively thinking about that, though, there will be, as I said, a sort of a legal process that involves hearings in that quite formal setting, but we're very, very keen to make sure that we provide people a way of engaging with the Inquiry outside of that formal setting as well. As you said, Naomi and Kirsty, to think about a range of ways to do that, including anonymous routes if people don't feel comfortable being identified.

And then I think some really good points about inequalities here, whether that's about particular impacts on women or ethnic minorities, or whether it's about the extent to which people were able to access or afford equipment, whether that's laptops, or trainers and bikes. So that's definitely some of the things that we'll take away from that part of the discussion.

I think one thing I just wanted to pick up specifically is we've talked about engagement and what we might make available to people broadly, but is there anything that you want to say to us today about how you want to be engaged or your organisations want to be engaged – I'm really thinking about some of the comments you made about the variable engagement that you had from Government in different phases. And how we, as an Inquiry, can give you the confidence that you're being listened to?

I'm going to go to Phil first.

Phil Clapp: [01:15:37] I think it's really welcome that you recognised this as an issue, in terms of keeping in touch. It would be good, you know, just to have a sense after each of these sessions of what you feel you are then conveying to the centre. So we all feel that the various points have been taken on board and reflected. It'd be good whether it's yourself or someone else to take on the role of giving us some sense of progress, kind of moving parts, as it were. And if there are kind of key conclusions, which speak to some of the points that have been made, or if they're emergent rather than emerging conclusions that speak to some of the points that we made, just for those to be communicated to us.

I mean, this is inevitably a more manageable group than speaking to 25, 26 different sectors, each having representatives of different sub-sectors. But I think, you know, without sounding really glib, it's about communication and dialogue.

Anisha Worbs: [01:16:35] Great. Thank you. That's really helpful. Bernard.

Bernard Donoghue: [01:16:48] Thanks very much. Just three quick points. We at ALVA will be making a written submission on behalf of our members as a collective expression. Second is that, whilst I appreciate this is an inquiry into the Government's handling and response of the crisis, I think it would be useful and valuable within the report and within the Inquiry, to highlight best practice and the achievements of community groups, organisations and sectors who are able to pivot their own work in a moment of crisis, and to respond to their own audiences and communities in very innovative, extraordinary and creative ways.

And the third thing, I think, is that one of the things that we've done as an organisation is draw up sort of ten lessons that we as our sector have learned from the last two years, and we'd be happy to share that. And we've also done an economic analysis into the economic impact on our particular sector too if that would be useful to submit. I'm very conscious that this is an inquiry that needs to balance grief and loss and death alongside monetary impacts. So we will be submitting that in a sensitively judged way.

Anisha Worbs [01:18:12] Thank you. Paul.

Paul Fleming: [01:18:16] I suppose it's just to reiterate what I said before. I would be really keen to see the Inquiry come to see our members at work, or in a setting that's quite comfortable for them. Not least because it provides context and actually, I think, is a safer space for people to contribute when they've suffered harm or believe they've suffered harm. But also, it would allow the Inquiry to collect more incidental contributions from people: the worry about having anything where you have to proactively volunteer to submit information, it means that you get a selective subsample of people. Of course, that's partly our role as organisations to contribute because people will participate through us, but I think that some of that human impact will be absolutely invaluable and I think would be a boon for people's trust and confidence in the Inquiry and how well it's doing, seeing them in their workplaces, the places where they feel comfortable, their communities.

Anisha Worbs: [01:19:14] Thank you. I don't see any more hands up so I'm going to do a last call if anyone has anything that they want to say about the Terms of Reference or about how you would like to see us engage and operate as an Inquiry going forward.

And if not, I will start wrapping up. So I don't see any more hands, so it means I may give you a few minutes back in your day. Just a huge thanks from me and the team for being part of this today, and sharing your insight and input with us. We'll take all of this forward, as I've said, into consideration for the Terms of Reference and our advice to Lady Hallett. And, also beyond that, in terms of how we progress with the Inquiry.

I should probably say that not everything that we've heard from you today may end up in the Terms of Reference. But as I said, at the beginning, those are high level or the bare bones. But beneath each bullet in those Terms of Reference, there'll be a large number of issues that the Inquiry will investigate. So I think some of what we've heard today may well inform those issues and the focus of the legal teams, and the focus that we bring in, in executing the Terms of Reference.

And just a reminder that a transcript of today's discussion will be available on our website, at the end of the consultation period; unless you tell us otherwise, you will be named. So please do get in touch separately if you're not comfortable with that.

And a final reminder from me that Martin is available if any of you would like to speak to him about confidential support and advice. But yes, thank you so much for your time. It's been a really fruitful and interesting discussion for me. So we're really grateful. And we look forward to continuing to talk to you as the Inquiry progresses. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]