

## **UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

### **Online roundtable - opening remarks and breakout discussion**

6 April 2022  
Online

The Inquiry held a roundtable with a mix of organisations. This transcript covers opening remarks, one of two breakout discussions, and closing remarks.

#### *Participants*

Anisha Worbs, UK Covid-19 Inquiry

Samantha Edwards, UK Covid-19 Inquiry

Martin Hogg, Citizen Coaching and Counselling

Marc Baker, HM Inspectorate of Probation

Leon Elliott, NACCOM, The No Accommodation Network

Kath Abrahams, Tommy's

Dr Mohammed Shahzad Amin, Muslim Council of Britain

Alastair Harper, Shelter

Kate Warburton, National Housing Federation

Sara Ogilvie, Child Poverty Action Group

Mark Jackson, Marie Curie

Nana Gyamfi, UK Covid-19 Inquiry

Luke Tiratsoon, UK Covid-19 Inquiry

Max William, UK Covid-19 Inquiry

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:00:23] Good morning. I think we may have a couple more people joining us. But why don't I get going as we're two minutes after. Thank you very much for joining us this morning. My name is Anisha Worbs and I'm the Programme Director at the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. I'm delighted to be with you this morning.

As I'm sure you'll know, this is an independent inquiry that's being Chaired by Baroness Hallett, a retired Court of Appeal Judge, and it's being set up to look at the UK's response to the pandemic. So we're delighted to have you here with us today, just if I briefly introduce the other members of the team that I've got on the call with me.

So I have Samantha Edwards, who is our Director of Communications, and who will be chairing one of the other breakout groups when we get to that point in the agenda. We have Nana and Luke who are going to be taking notes in the two breakout groups and Max is also online to help with any kind of tech issues that anyone may experience and very pleased to have our colleagues

from RTS who are also here to kind of make the tech magic happen. So hopefully, we'll have a smooth run today. But you never know.

So just to give you a bit of background to these meetings. Over the past few weeks, we've been meeting with a number of bereaved families and organisations that have been affected by the pandemic and these meetings like this one today are to consult on our draft Terms of Reference, which set out what the Inquiry will investigate. So it's worth just stressing that these meetings are not about giving evidence to the Inquiry. That will come later once the Terms of Reference are finalised and the Inquiry formally begins its work and it's also probably worth saying upfront something that I've heard Lady Hallett say when she's been speaking to bereaved families, that the Terms of Reference, which are set by the Prime Minister, are, if you like the skeleton of what the Inquiry will look at and once those are set, there will then be a much more detailed set of issues underneath that put together by the Chair and by the legal team, which look in a lot more forensic detail about what the Inquiry will cover.

So the other meetings that we've had have tended to be grouped according to themes or sectors of impacted groups. So we've had sessions on equalities, on business, on the cultural sector. Today is a little bit different in that we've tried to bring together representatives from a variety of groups, and perhaps those that we felt we hadn't heard enough from in the meeting so far. So really looking forward to perhaps a slightly different perspective in today's discussion.

As well as these sessions, we also have a consultation open on our website where anyone can submit their views. We're up into the several thousands of responses so far, so that's really encouraging and we would ask that you encourage the people that you're representing, or your members to take part in that consultation as well as the session today.

The meeting today, as you probably just heard, is being recorded and the transcript of the meeting will be made available on our website at the end of the consultation period and that will be used to inform the outcome of the consultation and any recommendations that the Chair makes to the Prime Minister about the final version of the Terms of Reference. So as I said, we do have people taking notes here today, but do rest assured that the transcript will be properly analysed to ensure that all of your views are fed into the Chair's thinking.

In terms of publishing the transcript at the end of the consultation process, I think we would have said this in your invitation, but your contribution and your name will be included. So if there's any reason why you would prefer not to be named, please do let the team know and we will pick that up.

Because we do have quite a big group today, how we're going to run the meeting is, just in a few minutes, once I finish these introductions, we're going to split into two groups. So, Samantha will be transferred along with a number of you into a breakout room where you will have a parallel discussion to the one that I will chair in this session, covering exactly the same questions, but just to ensure that everyone gets sufficient time to contribute and the questions that we will be asking you are the four questions contained in our consultation document. Samantha and I will manage the time to make sure that we can get through all of those questions and hopefully also make sure that you all have your chance to contribute and, as I've said there is also the online consultation

on the website. Also, you can use the chat function on this call if there's additional comments that you want to make. Samantha and I won't interact with that live as the discussion's going. There's only so many streams of information you can cope with. But please do add additional comments in there and that will be picked up as part of the analysis of the transcript after this meeting and also just worth saying for those of you who are joining from UK-wide organisations, we'd really welcome your reflections on issues specific to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and England when you are contributing and probably last bit of housekeeping for me, I'm sure you're all familiar with this, but just as we are all online, please do stay muted unless you're speaking. If you want to make a point or ask a question, please use the 'raise hand' button on Zoom and then I or Samantha in her group will call you in and then you can come off mute at that point. I think that that is all that I needed to cover by way of intro. Does anyone have any questions up front? And if not, we will ask our RTS colleagues to get ready to transfer us into the breakout rooms.

In terms of timing we are going to run till around 11.30 in the breakout rooms so that we get a good amount of time to cover all the questions and then we'll rejoin into the full plenary and Samantha and I will just try to summarise the themes coming out of the discussions. So I don't see any hands raised for questions.

[Some participants are transferred to a breakout room]

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:10:35] I think the others have gone off to their group. Great. Well, welcome again, everybody. I think as we are in a smaller group, and we have got a decent amount of time, we can probably afford to do a quick round of introductions so everybody knows who they're on the call with. So, as I said, I'm Anisha, I'm the Programme Director from the Inquiry team. I'll just go around in a sort of slightly random order, if that's okay. So could I ask Marc and then Leon to introduce themselves to say who you're representing today?

**Marc Baker:** [00:11:21] Marc Baker, Chief Operating Officer at HM Inspectorate of Probation.

**Leon Elliott:** [00:11:29] Leon Elliott, Policy Research Coordinator at NACCOM, the No Accommodation Network. We're a network of 140 charities and organisations working to end homelessness amongst migrants, [inaudible] asylum seekers and refugees.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:11:43] Okay, thank you both. You're very welcome and then Kath and Sara.

**Kath Abrahams:** [00:11:48] Hi everyone, I'm Kath Abrahams, I'm Chief Executive at Tommy's baby loss charity and I'm also here today, if it's okay, to represent other colleagues on the Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network, we're part of a much larger network of pregnancy and baby charities. I've only been in post for six weeks so it's also been really helpful to talk to people who have been experienced, who have kind of gone through the pandemic leading those charities. Thank you.

**Sara Ogilvie:** [00:12:17] I'm Sara Ogilvie. I'm Director of Policy Rights and Advocacy at Child Poverty Action Group. We're a charity that works to reduce and end child poverty here in the UK. We obviously do policy campaigning, but also we work directly with families and children in a

number of projects, and in particular we had a focus on education and then the welfare system during the pandemic as you would expect.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:12:44] Thank you, both. Now, you're coming up as Dr Akhtar - so let me know if that's how you prefer to be referred to or if you'd rather go with first name. Then after Dr Akhtar, Alastair, please.

**Mohammed Shahzad Amin:** [00:13:01] Hi, my name is Mohammed. I'm a GP but I'm also the Assistant Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain and we represent over 500 Muslim organisations, both local, regional and national across the country, and I chaired the Covid response group for the Muslim communities over the last two years.

**Alastair Harper:** [00:13:26] I'm Alastair Harper, I'm Head of Public Affairs at Shelter, the housing and homeless charity. We wrote to the Inquiry Chair and the Prime Minister in December alongside a range of housing and domestic abuse organisations in December but I should be clear that I'm speaking just for Shelter today.

**Anisha Wharves:** [00:14:00] Great, thank you and I think we also have Kate.

**Kate Warburton:** [00:14:07] Yes, thank you. Sorry, my camera's off; my internet has decided to be dodgy this morning. Kate Warburton, External Affairs Manager at the National Housing Federation. We're the trade body for housing associations, and we are a joint signatory on Alastair's letter calling for housing and homelessness to be included in the scope of the Inquiry. We also have a large number of members who run care homes and sheltered and supported housing facilities so that's another angle of our interest.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:14:39] Great, thank you and no worries about the camera. We've all suffered from dodgy WiFi haven't we? And just to say I think I mentioned earlier but Nana who's also with us is taking notes of our discussion today and we've also got someone from RTS in case of any problems but also for when we need to get back to the main room.

So let's get into the discussion then; really, really looking forward to hearing from your different perspectives. The first question, which we'll probably spend a fair bit of time on, is, do the Inquiry's draft Terms of Reference cover all the areas that you think should be addressed by the Inquiry? And as I said, Lady Hallett has made a point of explaining when she's been talking to bereaved families, that they are the skeleton, if you like, for what the Inquiry will cover and then beneath that, the legal team will put together a more detailed account of what the scope of the Inquiry will be.

But that said, we have been hearing some really valuable and interesting points on things that people feel should be covered, and mentioned in the Terms of Reference. So please do feel free to make suggestions. If I can ask you to put your hands up using the button when you're ready to come in, and then I will call you in.

While you're thinking about it, what we're looking for here is, is there anything that you think is missing? Is there anything you think that could be articulated differently? Are all the issues that have been experienced in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, covered sufficiently? Let's come to Kath first and then Sara.

**Kath Abrahams:** [00:16:52] I didn't want to go first. But I thought we can't all not go first. So I guess Tommy's and the wider pregnancy and baby charities network are really concerned that the Terms of Reference don't include the need to address the impact on new and expectant parents and their babies during the pandemic. I totally get that health is a very broad category and, you know, we fall under that health umbrella. But we know that since March 2020, pregnant women, their families, and critically, their babies received significantly worse care during the pandemic, and due to restrictions imposed on them and the services they used and we believe that led to deaths directly and we also know that it led to kind of poor outcomes for certain groups of people in particular, so people who have suffered a previous baby loss either a miscarriage or stillbirth and there's emerging data that black and minority ethnic mothers have received poorer outcomes in 2020. Alongside that, there was a huge confusion around the vaccine, particularly for pregnant people where initially the advice was, you mustn't have the vaccination and subsequently, people were being asked to. That led to confusion, lack of understanding, and some really challenging vaccine hesitancy, which still persists today. So that would be my summary. Very happy to add more but want to give other people some space to speak also.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:18:23] Thanks. Yeah, that's really clear and we can come back to it or do feel free to put stuff in the chat if there's more that you'd like us to pick up. Sara.

**Sara Ogilvie:** [00:18:33] Thank you, and nice to come after Kath. I had my first baby in March 2020 so that's something that resonates with me personally. But from a professional perspective, I suppose it was just a few things in the Terms of Reference that I wanted to pick up on and draw out and, as you would expect, they kind of all relate to how we make sure that we capture the full impact on children, and in particular, the ones in poverty.

So welcome that kind of under the health response, or the public health response, there is a section on children – on attendance at educational establishments, and which is obviously really welcome and really important. But I suppose I just want to flag and the importance of making sure that that goes, really, beyond the attendance approach, and captures both the wider impact on education. You know, for us, it was things like the digital divide, it was things like what happens to children when they're at home, and the additional costs and the pressures that that put on families. So it's not just about the lack of attendance on their education, but about that much bigger piece and I suppose as well, that just also identifies that while there was so much that did relate to education, the impact on children went beyond that, too, and I'm not sure that anywhere in the Terms of Reference, it manages to capture the impact on children outside the educational settings and the changes that happened to them and obviously, you know, we've seen reports, even this week, I think about the wider impact on children, and their development and mental health.

So I suppose those two points just kind of tie together to make you wonder whether there's a way to make a much clearer child-focused bit of the Inquiry to make sure that nothing gets dropped between the gaps and nothing gets lost in that.

I suppose my second point relates to the bullet point in Terms of Reference about how you're going to assess disparities, and which, again, we really welcome and I think the Equality Act is a very valuable starting point for that. But I would say that if you, within that, we would really hope

that you're going to pick up on things like disproportionate impact on disabled people as a result of some of the Government's decisions about how things would be funded, disproportionate impact on pregnant women, as previously mentioned. But I think there was a real risk, that if you only look at the Equality Act, protected characteristics, and you don't capture socio-economic status, then you're going to miss out on some of the really big disparities that did emerge during the pandemic and quite frankly, you know, a lot of the time it was the poorer people who suffered. So whilst recognising the policy as a starting point, I really encourage you to explicitly consider socio-economic status in the Inquiry.

My third point relates to the heading under looking at the economic response, which, again, really, really important to look at, from our perspective, decisions that Government made about the benefits system, and funding of social services, you know, so the £20 increase, I think I would probably say the debacle around free school meals and some of the other services. But I would really want to make sure that that doesn't just look at things like how much money was given and who was it given to, because there were a lot of much wider procedural decisions that also led to a disproportionate impact I think on children and their families.

So things like decisions and some of that relates to existing policies, I suppose it's important to say, so things like the benefit cap grace period, means that children in poorer families weren't able to benefit from things like the £20 increase. So just making sure that the view that is taken there is expansive and doesn't shy away from catching the impact of existing policy that wasn't changed or wasn't changed properly and then there's lots of other things to say under that, but I'll save those for the details of the Inquiry. But then I suppose my final point is on the question of voice and I'll be honest with you, I kind of don't envy you this one. Because I think it's a real challenge for an inquiry of this nature and I think that previous inquiries, and Lady Hallett will know better than me, is how you can capture the voices of very specific victims and their families, and obviously, capturing the voice of bereaved families is going to be crucially important for this.

But I also think we do need to work out how you get the voices of people whose voices normally aren't captured or recognised in this kind of conversation or debate. So how do you get the voices of families from lower income and really capture that impact? How do you get the voices of children involved in this? I don't think that is easy, but I guess I would just want to flag, but it's a really important thing to do and it's probably not the ideal approach but there are lots of networks and organisations out there that worked directly with families and children during the pandemic. I'm thinking of a project we work on called Covid Realities, for example, thinking of the work that we've done directly with schools through our Cost of the School Day project and I suppose, a) would ask you to really think about making sure voices are captured and b) if you're struggling to work out how to do that, then probably not to shy away from some of the existing networks that can help you to do that. Those are my big ones in the Terms of Reference, really.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:24:31] Thanks Sara; that's really helpful and I think on that last point, we'll probably come back to that in the final question. So I can say a little bit more about what Lady Hallett has been thinking about when we get there. So I think I've got Leon and then Marc.

**Leon Elliott:** [00:24:50] Thank you. So I guess representing the No Accommodation Network, we sit at quite an interesting place between the asylum or refugee sector and in the homelessness

sector. So I guess we can commend the Government on two parts of the Inquiry that will consider the impacts of Covid and the Covid response on immigration, asylum and housing and homelessness. I think it's also quite important that the legacy of immigration policy and law and how it influences public health, access to public services, makes significant parts of the investigation.

I guess quite an impractical recommendation from our side would be to make sure that the Inquiry considers experiences of people with all forms of immigration status. People who have leave but no recourse to public funds, for example, or appeal rights exhausted, asylum seekers, and even those with undocumented or irregular status. I think really assessing the barriers to the public safety that may occur as a result of it, and for example, the impacts of measures such as no recourse to public funds, how that removes a support net. These people might have difficulty accessing homelessness assistance, be more likely to end up in the street and exposed to the virus.

Also concerns around NHS data sharing, how that might influence obstacles to vaccine uptake among certain demographics. The issues around right to rent and work checks, particularly for appeals right exhausted asylum seekers, which are often pushed into quite crowded accommodation as a result, often, as we saw during the pandemic, kind of higher risk of the virus and then also I'll just touch on the [inaudible] illegal work and again, with that lack of safety net, people pushed into irregular work, more likely to continue working throughout the pandemic, even if there was a risk. Finally, I suppose touch on the Everyone In scheme, and through that we saw, thankfully, a lot more people becoming eligible for homeless assistance and we commend that and I guess the question is, why did it take a global pandemic for that to occur? And what other kind of structural inequality is going on in the background? But yeah, like I say, Covid, for us to see those changes and see more people becoming accommodated by the public services and public safety net. So yeah, thank you.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:26:58] Thank you. Marc.

**Marc Baker:** [00:27:01] I am going to take it in a slightly different direction. Very intrigued with the decision-making processes that parts of Government went through in order to establish what the impacts were going to be on the services they provided. I mean, we looked specifically at probation services, it'd be very interesting to consider the level of response that they put in place, whether that was appropriate, or whether that was an overreaction or an under reaction and then the second part of this as well, is the consequential impacts of all of this, I mean, the recovery out of Covid. Our view is that probation services will take about two, two and a half years to get back into anything like normality in terms of backlogs and things like this. That doesn't seem to be a part of the Inquiry at all. But I think certainly the consequences of decisions that were made have resulted in huge impacts and backlogs and things like accommodation for ex-offenders and those sorts of things, and accredited and programmes of delivery for offenders as well, I'd like to see that considered.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:28:14] That's a really interesting point, Marc, because we have heard from people in the health sector, wanting to be clear that it's not just Covid impacts, it's the impact on non-Covid treatment. So, I think that you're broadening it out further and saying, 'Well, actually,

there are these impacts on all these other parts of the system, as well.' So that's really interesting. So I'm going to come to Alastair, and then Mohammed, please.

**Alastair Harper:** [00:28:46] Thank you. I think that we very much welcome that housing and homelessness has been included in the Terms of Reference. I think that's a really good sign of what you're going to get to understand about the health impacts of the pandemic. and within that, we'd hope that you'd look specifically at four aspects of that. One is the impact of the Everyone In initiative, we actually think that it certainly saved lives and think there are important lessons to be learned, and actually lessons that can be learned by countries around the world from the Everyone In initiative.

Secondly, we think it'd be good to specifically look at the impact on people who are renting because while there's some positive aspects there with the suspension of evictions, making sure that people can stay safe, there's also a lot of specific vulnerabilities from people sharing a home there, the mental health impact of people building up arrears, and those need to be considered as a specific bloc.

Thirdly, people who are living in temporary accommodation because they're often unsuitable and put them in vulnerable health situations. They're often in poor and overcrowded conditions, often living in shared accommodation with people going through different experiences and different levels of vulnerability. So I think that's worth looking at and finally, I think it's important to look at the health impacts of those who were forced to isolate with their abusers during the pandemic, because it wasn't possible to move on, and the mental and physical health impacts that that had on those very vulnerable people. That said, that's the four main things from us.

**Mohammed Shahzad Amin:** [00:30:53] Thank you very much. It's a little bit of overlap with what a lot of people have already said. But again, there were three main areas that we were hoping would fall under the broad Terms of Reference that have already been mentioned. One of the things we learned during the pandemic was that the more we generalise communities, the less we're able to get useful data and, therefore, although it's very important to look at ethnic minorities and the impact of the pandemic on them, and the way that they reacted in terms of two different messaging on Covid vaccines, we're hoping that the Muslim community could be looked at specifically.

It would make up about a third of the ethnic minority community, but the way the Muslim community reacted, and the uptake of Covid, and the impact that they had on them economically and health-wise, was disproportionate even within the ethnic minority community.

The second issue that we were hoping to look at was how much existing inequalities may have had a part to play, for example, existing health inequalities. In the Muslim community, we already know that we're far behind when it comes to cancer screening, when it comes to representation in the media. So there was a strong feeling within the Muslim community that there were quite a few articles and headlines singling out the community for letting the side down specifically, which we felt were not representative of the community and the recent report from the Woolf Institute showed that actually that the Muslim community along with the Jewish communities, were the most likely to isolate and the most likely to wear masks.



Lastly, this is probably going to be a tricky area for yourself, because of where the Terms of Reference are being set from. But as a Muslim Council we're the largest umbrella body in the country, and we were not engaged with by any major player at any point. To be honest, we're not sure how we got invited today, because we usually get missed out of every list. So we're very grateful to be here and hope that this might be the beginning of working out, despite political differences – which can always exist, we understand that – but during an emergency, like a pandemic, can we come up with a mechanism where we can work together for the greater good of the country? So we're wondering if that can be looked at as well. Thank you.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:33:52] Thanks Mohammed. So I have two slightly different points on that last thing. So one is about looking at who was engaged through the Government's decision-making process, which is certainly a theme that's come up from other groups and sectors as well. But then there's a second question for us as an independent inquiry, so independent to Government, about how we engage with people during the lifetime of this Inquiry and that's something that I'd like to come back to under the final questions. So I'm definitely delighted that you're here and keen to hear more about how we can keep that up.

Kate, I think we're coming to you.

**Kate Warburton:** [00:34:39] Thank you. Firstly, just a couple of things to welcome; obviously, as others have said, really welcome the inclusion of housing and homelessness. I think something to focus on as others have said already is around the homelessness is the Everyone In scheme. Also really welcomed the inclusion of the bullet points around care homes and other care settings. That's obviously a really important aspect of inquiry for us. Welcome also, the inclusion of listening to the experiences of health and care workers; I think that's really, really important.

A couple of asks, if we can try and encourage residents and tenants to contribute, both from rented accommodation, but particularly residents of care homes, supported housing settings, sheltered schemes, I think listening to their experiences and their families' experiences will be really, really important and, trying to encourage them to come forward, I think will be quite an interesting piece of work. The other thing that we think might be good to look at is the whole mandatory vaccination issue and obviously, the care sector went first with that and before the decision was revoked, we'd actually gone through the process of having to terminate contracts of employment. So I think just looking at the decision process around that, and its subsequent reversal, I think would be something we would welcome soon. Thank you.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:36:03] Great, thank you, Kate. Before I try to sum up what I'm hearing on this question, Kath, I'll just come back to you. Because I know you said, you might have some more points to make. You have got a couple of minutes if you would like to.

**Kath Abrahams:** [00:36:21] That would be brilliant. Thank you, I guess, and there's more detail that we can put into consultations and things which we will do. But I think one of the points I'd like to make is that you know, maternal health is generally an area that gets overlooked and we've seen that through things like Ockenden last week, and our concern is that if it's not explicitly in the Terms of Reference, that it ends up being sort of side-lined and it's not just about people's experience that is hugely important and we heard of countless bereaved families who

just were not able to grieve in the way or get the care that they should have had, and that they would have had pre-pandemic. I think it's the maternity safety aspect that also needs to be really carefully considered here. Because there are some examples of unintended consequences, some new ways of working that have been sort of fallen into, for example, online appointments, where we think it's absolutely essential that there's a proper evaluation of those in order to understand are they the right way forward post-pandemic, because we can see some things kind of continuing and that evaluation piece feels hugely important. Without it, our fear is that we'll see continued increases in maternal and baby mortality. So I think that's that kind of maternity safety, and evaluating new practices feels like an incredibly important thing to include in there. Thank you.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:37:55] Thank you. Yeah, really important points made by everyone and as I said, we will pick up all the details when we go through and analyse the transcript. But just to summarise some of the themes that I'm hearing in terms of potential additions, or where we might want to be more specific in the Terms of Reference. Obviously, as we've just heard, the impact on new and expectant mothers, clearly a lot about the impact on children and that's something that we've seen a lot of other people commenting on publicly as well and that impact being beyond the educational setting, and looking at sort of broader impacts there.

Quite a bit around what do we mean by inequalities and looking broader than just protected characteristics. So both looking at socio-economic factors, but also this point about the Muslim community specifically rather than just looking at ethnic minority background.

Also, I think something about structural inequalities that the pandemic required us to look at, like homelessness, why did it take that for us to act on things like that and then also, Marc's point about impacts beyond health and the backlogs that we're seeing in the probation service as well and some specific points about different groups as well when we're thinking about impact. So different immigration status, residents, tenants, obviously, the homeless and what that meant in terms of their access to support as well and then, I guess a slightly double-sided point about lessons to be learned and new ways of working. So I think a few of you mentioned, Everyone In, as something where positive lessons can be learned. But then that last point from Kath about actually evaluating things like online appointments to really understand the impact of that, before we sort of just slip into continuing down that path. So that was really lots for us to take away there. Which is really, really helpful.

I'll move us on now to the second question, which is, just from the richness of that discussion, and you'd have seen from the Terms of Reference as a whole how broad they are. So the second question is, which issues or topics do you think the Inquiry should look at first? So really a question here about sequencing, acknowledging that it won't be possible for us to look at everything all at the same time.

So again, if you could put your hands up, when you're ready to come in. I'll give you a minute to think about it. Maybe I can give you some ideas as well, in terms of what we've heard from others. So some people have advocated a kind of chronological approach, looking at different phases of the pandemic, some people a more thematic approach, wanting to look at decision-making, for example, first, or particularly vulnerable groups first, so there are different ways that you could, I

suppose, look to structure and, I'm just very interested in what you think should be the early set of things that we look at.

So I thought I saw Mohammed's hand go up, I think you put it back down again. So let me go to Sara, first, and then Kath.

**Sara Ogilvie:** [00:42:08] Again, this is one, I don't really envy you the challenge and I think there are lots of very, very legitimate ways you can do it. But I suppose one thing just to flag, I suppose it might be worth thinking about what you can throw out quite quickly and so in terms of we don't know if there is going to be another strain that kind of forces us into things like lockdowns, and the educational impact again, and similarly, all the talk I've read of how we are susceptible to future pandemics quite quickly again. So I just wonder about any quick lessons and really practical things so that if there is a continuation of this, we've got somewhere we can turn to in terms of what should we do about children. What haven't we learned from the educational setting that all the scientific evidence tells us was there and how we could do this properly again.

So that perhaps sits outside the bigger question of whether you do it chronologically or via different perspectives, or from different angles or particular groups, which obviously again, would encourage your childrens one of that. But just quick, quick lessons for what we can do around children would be welcome.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:43:23] Thank you, just on that, because that is something that we have heard before as well and I think that's definitely something for us to consider. But I probably need to manage expectations on what 'quick' means. Because as some of you may know, from seeing other public inquiries, there is a kind of legal process that the Chair needs to go through in terms of hearing evidence, assessing that evidence and then going through hearings to test it and what she's said in terms of timescales is that the sorts of evidential hearings wouldn't start until 2023. But that she would like this year to start having the preliminary hearings, which are once the evidence has been submitted, and the lawyers have started to go through that to test what the scope of things are.

So I know there is still a valid point about what are the earliest lessons you draw in order to help the UK be better prepared for the future, but some people had previously been talking about lessons for this winter and I just want to put that out there that that is not how this Inquiry's process is going to work. Kath.

**Kath Abrahams:** [00:44:52] It's incredibly helpful to be aware of the timeframe, actually, Anisha, thank you. Really useful and I suppose, similarly to Sara, just that sense of what do we need to learn first, which may be more challenging, if we're not able to report for another couple of years, I guess by the time it gets to the end of the Inquiry. Be helpful to get a sense from you later, maybe when we think that reporting might come?

I guess I would suggest we would want to look at – health feels like an absolutely critical area and I think the difficulty with this is, you're going to have to manage expectations in lots of ways, because you can only do one thing absolutely first, but you might be able to do some things in parallel first. I would suggest that health is an area where we'd want to focus and also where there's kind of continued impact for people. So, I guess, where it comes to the point, is there

anything we can learn quickly, because if there are areas of safety within health – so as I've described within maternal safety, and practices that are continuing and perpetuating in a way that could potentially be very unhelpful post-pandemic, I think those are areas where we'd want to look where there's a degree of urgency, that we would do something differently, as well as wanting to make sure that we're prepared well for, let's hope not, another one. But you know, where we need to make some significant change, because of the ways we're doing things as a result of the pandemic.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:46:30] Thank you. That's a really helpful way of framing it actually, what do we need to learn first and I'll come back to you on that point about reporting. So what Lady Hallett has said very much with this kind of urgency of needing to learn lessons in mind is that she wants to do a series of interim reports. So not wait till the Inquiry has concluded all its work with one sort of Big Bang report at the end. So probably, what we will do is divide the scope of the Inquiry into different modules and as you say, have a few of them running in parallel, and then at the conclusion of this sort of legal process for each module, there would be a report on that. But that's something that will need to wait for the Terms of Reference to be finalised and then Lady Hallett and her legal team will look to sort of firm that up in more detail.

**Kath Abrahams:** [00:47:30] Can I just say something? Sorry, Anisha, just I think that's incredibly helpful and I think on that basis, I think that supports the idea of looking at some of the most urgent things first, where potentially, you know, lives are continuing to be lost as a result of things that have been happening. So I would say health should be at the top of that list and maternal health as part of that. Thanks, Anisha.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:47:53] Thank you, and so Mohammed and then Alastair, please.

**Mohammed Shahzad Amin:** [00:47:57] To be honest, Kath said everything I was going to say on health. Especially that which impacts lives, because we don't know what might happen with another wave. So this could potentially have an impact on saving lives in the here and now, especially for the groups that were disproportionately affected in terms of deaths and hospitalisation, the elderly, care home residents, ethnic minorities, as well. Thank you.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:48:30] Great, thank you, Alastair.

**Alastair Harper:** [00:48:35] Yeah, I think we'd agree with that, what quite a few people have been saying that the thematic response around groups rather than chronological. Totally understand the prioritisation of what it meant for healthcare provision. But think then after that, it would be sensible to look at some of the most vulnerable groups and what specifically they were exposed to.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:49:02] Thank you, Mark.

**Mark Jackson:** [00:49:06] Hi, thank you and apologies. I missed the first little bit. I should say it's Mark Jackson from Marie Curie here. I think I would agree with the notion of trying to get some early thoughts and findings on health because I think some - especially in palliative care where those are issues that are ongoing, so you think about, for example, some of the ongoing backlog in cancer referral and treatment for example, that's clearly having an impact on palliative care because it's leading to more people having a terminal diagnosis who perhaps would not have had

one without the backlog. So some of those impacts are ongoing and we expect them to be ongoing for some time.

So I think there's lessons that can be learned from that and lessons that can be learned for the healthcare system, especially for people at the end of life more broadly, are pretty urgent. So I think one of the things we're quite clear about with Covid is that it's not – in a way, it's not simply a kind of one-off event and there are lessons to be learned about how we manage future pandemic type events, although the circumstances are unprecedented, they're not going to be one-off. By 2040, though, the level of mortality that we've seen over the last few years is going to be very much the new normal. So I think the quicker we start learning some of the lessons about capacity and planning and the like in the healthcare system, the better.

I think the other thing I would say is, and it may not mean necessarily something you do first, but it's something we hear a lot from the families that we work with, I think the sooner you're able to hear from people who've been bereaved, and who've been impacted, members of the public, the better, I think simply because a lot of those people have been living with the loss and grievance and the impact on them for two plus years now. Obviously, I appreciate it will take time before you're in a position to do that. But I think the sooner you can do that, the better. Because, you know, a lot of those families and those people who have been calling for a public inquiry for some time. So I think the less amount of further delay before they're able to be in a position to share their experiences, in whatever form that is, it may not be public hearings straight off the bat, but in some form, I think would be good. I think it would be inappropriate to leave them twisting in the wind too much longer.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:51:54] Yeah, thank you, Mark and welcome. I'm sorry that you missed the initial bit but just to say the first question where we didn't get to hear from you was about whether the draft Terms of Reference cover all the areas that you want. If you wanted to, there's going to be a transcript today, but we're also picking up the chat. So if there's any points that you had wanted to make –

**Mark Jackson:** [00:52:15] I'll throw them in the chat. Yeah, that's fine. No problem.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:52:18] Let's come back to that point about bereaved families in our last question, and I can say a bit more about what Lady Hallett has in mind. So Marc Baker, this time.

**Marc Baker:** [00:52:33] Hello, just a quickie from me. I think impacts on domestic abuse, one of the issues we've been picking up on our probation inspections is because not a lot of work was done with people on probation, there was an increase in domestic abuse that occurred as a result of people being locked in houses for quite a considerable time. So I think it'd be useful to have some sort of understanding of that reasonably quickly in the Inquiry.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:53:07] Thank you; Leon, and then Sara please.

**Leon Elliott:** [00:53:12] I think just to add on to what everybody said, there's been some really great contributions and it's something you've touched on as well about, I suppose our network would like to see the idea that these structural inequalities exist, that have left a large number of people exposed in the pandemic and we'd like that to underpin I suppose the Inquiry as a whole as a common thread, irrespective of the order that things are addressed.

I think the priorities you outlined today around health are probably what we would reflect as well. I suppose around how socio-economic status, race, immigration status, play a large role in influencing the access that people had to public health care, such as the vaccine, measures introduced, such as the Covid safety net or the furlough scheme, and forms of housing; you've probably seen deemed as safe for the pandemic and I suppose it's about repeating what a couple of people have said here today, not treating Covid as a unique event, and rather indicative of a wider context, and then learning how that might help us to be more prepared going forward, I suppose, for future events. So thank you.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:54:12] Thanks. Sara.

**Sara Ogilvie:** [00:54:14] I was probably going to say something similar, I suppose. On the one hand, it's quite hard to argue against and you want to look at the health issues first, but also really conscious that children, by and large, were the ones who suffered the most and particularly in those early phases from that perspective. So I suppose it's just a question of if you do start there, how do you make sure that the longer term and bigger picture questions around children aren't kind of ignored or somehow relegated as a secondary issue?

And kind of making sure, I suppose, that if you are looking at different issues that didn't particularly affect children as severely, I think that probably just doubles down on the need to make sure that the inequalities lens is really involved when you're looking at that and then just like trying to draw out the bigger picture, so kind of, recognising that if your starting point is going to be one that isn't so closely associated with children, making sure that you're getting the breakdown done really clearly, and then kind of as opposed to making sure that those longer-term issues aren't kind of relegated to a secondary importance I suppose.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:55:33] Did anyone else want to come in on this point about what do you look at first? Otherwise, I think there are quite strong themes coming through from what all of you said, which was the overarching question. What do we need to learn first, in order to do better in the future? Then, some sort of clear consensus around health and safety. So the focus on where lives can be saved quickly.

But alongside that, looking at both the most vulnerable and there are various different kinds of groups and factors that play into that. As you said, Sara, the sort of broader long-term impacts on children, but also the points that others have made about kind of broader societal impacts as well.

So that definitely gives us something – quite a lot to go away and think about. So let's move on to the third question, which we touched on a little bit. But this question is, do you think the Inquiry should set a proposed end date for its public hearings to help ensure timely findings and recommendations?

So I've said already that there is a legal process that the Chair and her legal team have to go through in terms of gathering evidence, reviewing it, testing that through hearings, and then coming up with their recommendations. Lady Hallett is very conscious of doing this as promptly as she can, in terms of making recommendations; she has said that she will look to publish interim reports and that very likely means that the scope of inquiry will be broken up into themes or modules that are going to be some sequentially, but some in parallel.

But even having said all that, there are still choices for the Inquiry to make about how much depth it goes into on any given issue and what that means for the overall timescale. So that overall question is, do you think we should set a proposed end date for public hearings, but within that, really trying to get to your views on the trade-offs between depth and timeliness? So again, I'll ask you to put your hand up when you're ready to come in.

Kath, thank you.

**Kath Abrahams:** [00:58:27] I think it's really difficult Anisha, because I think there is as you say a trade-off. I think it's absolutely essential that there's an end date, because I think otherwise, there is a danger that it kind of drags on and to Mark's point earlier, people have been waiting in some cases, particularly bereaved families have been waiting for answers and some sense that they've been heard. So getting some outcomes from once they're heard, it'll be important to report back as soon as possible, I think.

But I wonder whether there's a way of making sure that we do enough to get – really good enough to report early, but also then an opportunity to revisit a year down the line if there is important new evidence emerges. I don't know how feasible that is, but some sort of commitment to going back round to sweep up anything that we completely failed to pick up first time around. So that allows us to report as quickly as we could in the context of it being a major inquiry, but with an opportunity to revisit.

**Anisha Worbs:** [00:59:38] Thank you. Does anyone else want to come in on this question? Should we have an end date? I guess whether you think that'll be important to the groups that you represent. I suppose you've all come forward with quite specific issues that you would like to see covered. And I've been a bit wary of certain things being side-lined or not looked into in sufficient detail. So anything you'd want to say there? Alastair.

**Alastair Harper:** [01:00:32] I think that's exactly the point we'd make Anisha is that while we obviously want the Inquiry to conclude, and to have its recommendations out in the world, that shouldn't be at the cost of what we feel we've said it needs to cover. So the priority should be, in a timely way, making sure that the important issues that people have raised and what for us, we think that for Shelter, at least the Terms of Reference have addressed, making sure that they are actually thought through and dealt with and have a response and that not being lost, for the sake of pace.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:01:21] Hi, sorry, I think my signal is a bit shaky. So I'm going to try and get on to a different network. But while I do that, Mark Jackson.

**Mark Jackson:** [01:01:33] Yeah, I would agree with both Kath and Alastair there. I think there's a really important balance to be struck between moving at pace and getting something concluded in a kind of reasonable timeframe. But also making sure that the process is thorough, and that things are being lost or not considered, or not considered in the depth that they need to be to hit a timescale.

I think it's a challenge, because I think I instinctively I would err on the side of being thorough, but then I think a lot of the people that we talk too, a lot of the families that we talked too, who've lost people, I think there's already a sense among some of them that the process has been sort of,

you know, [inaudible] directly kind of kicked into the long grass. So you don't want to make it completely open ended and potentially run on for years and years and years to the point where by the time something finally is published, it's almost pretty valedictory.

I think an end date would be positive. But yeah, perhaps one that the rest of the team feel is going to be sufficiently far in the future for you to be thorough without being so far forward, that it's all kind of in the rear-view mirror, if you see what I mean.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:03:17] Definitely and I think that's the challenge, isn't it? I think, generally, we are hearing a sense that an end date would be helpful to give people some clarity about what we're aiming for. But perhaps that should not be too rigid, because I think there's some concern that if you've run out of time, if you like, certain issues don't get looked at. But it's a tricky one, I think, for us to try and get right. Sara.

**Sara Ogilvie:** [01:03:47] I was just going to make the suggestion that it might be possible once you have worked out what your detailed work programme was going to look like, it might then be useful to consult with people again. We might be able to give you not a steer exactly, but some insight as to whether we think that is going to give you adequate time to get into some of the issues and whether in particular the question of engagement with bereaved and others, whether we think that you've factored in enough time to those bits of work based on different groups' experiences, we might be able to give you a different perspective, further down the line on that and again I suppose that would just endorse knowing when things were going to finish will probably be useful. But yeah, encourage the degree of flexibility around that, if that's required, and we would support that, I'm sure.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:04:39] Great, yeah, thank you. That's a helpful suggestion. Did anyone – Kath, your hand's up? Did you want to come back in?

**Kath Abrahams:** [01:04:47] Yeah, just really briefly, I just wonder whether, to try and balance thoroughness versus people needing to know. Whether there's a way, you talked really helpfully about the idea of having some kind of early findings and if you look at what they did with Ockenden, for example, there's a final report very recently. But much earlier, there was a report with some key findings that was also given.

It just might help setting almost a milestone date by which there'd be some initial reporting that would give people that sense of comfort that things were being listened to, and some early thoughts with a sort of longer deadline to then report back more fully so that you allow for that thoroughness, that's going to be needed. Just a thought.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:05:36] Yeah, thank you; all thoughts very welcome. Did anyone else want to come in on this question? Otherwise I think, probably not surprising for me to hear that an end date would be helpful to sort of help assuage a fear that things might get kicked into the long grass, or it might just take too long to be able to learn the lessons and that's something that our Chair, Lady Hallett, is very, very mindful of.

But also as we'd expect a desire to make sure that all of these complex issues are looked into thoroughly. So perhaps the need for some flexibility and as you said, Kath, Lady Hallett has said that she'd like to publish interim reports. So that might help with some of the timing, if we're able



to make that clear. Then the idea that obviously, once we have got our detailed work programme up, that we invite views on that and get input from all of those interested parties on what they think of the timing and the breadth again.

So, again, really, really helpful discussion. We've got about 20 minutes left before we'll go into the main group again and I think that's good, because I am expecting lots of good discussion on this last question, which a couple of you touched upon earlier and I said we'd come back to, which is how should the Inquiry be designed and run to ensure that bereaved people and those who suffered harm as a result of the pandemic have their voices heard?

So just two things I'd like to say up front, whilst you have a think, and do put your hands up when you're ready. One is, to Mark Jackson's point earlier about the bereaved, as part of this consultation exercise, Lady Hallett has been meeting with some bereaved families to hear their views on the Terms of Reference and as you said, we've felt very keenly just how significant the Inquiry is, and also, in a sense, how long they've been waiting to be heard.

So that is something that we definitely get, and because of that, Lady Hallett has said that she would, alongside the sort of legal process of hearings, she wants to find a way, or ways for people to feed in their views and their experience to the Inquiry in a less formal way. But that would still be considered as part of the evidence that she's looking at.

So, on that note, I guess we're really looking for your views on how we can make that work for people. What we can do to make it as easy as possible for organisations and groups, and a lot of you represent those groups that it's maybe harder to hear from traditionally and to tell us about their experience and to feel that the Inquiry is listening to them. Hands up, please, when you're ready. Kate.

**Kate Warburton:** [01:09:20] Okay, thank you. I think use us, organisations like ourselves, and particularly if you want to reach care home residents or more vulnerable groups. Quite often they'll feel more comfortable perhaps if they're talking with us or with organisations, we represent the actual the care home managers, the housing associations, and we run consultations and groups like this with tenants all the time.

So I think actually if you can use our networks and our ways that we reach out to residents and they feel that that's more of a safe space for them to have their views heard, you know, we'd be really happy to help with that. I think that would be a good way of getting engaged.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:10:06] Yeah, that's a great point and a great suggestion for those of you that already have those relationships, it's going to be a really valuable network for us, as you said. Leon, and then Mohammed, please.

**Leon Elliott:** [01:10:21] I guess, touching on the last question, I think we agreed that the team should set itself a clear timetable of the sections dealing with distinct issues. Then on this question, I suppose our original call, like I mentioned, is ensuring the Inquiry builds on the experiences of and gathers the input of those with all types of immigration status.

I think a lot of practical measures for achieving this is probably applied a lot more widely as well. I think it goes without saying that considerable warning should be given to a contributor so they can

properly prepare their responses. I think it should also be considerate of technological limitations and the digital divide, just coming from our experiences. For example, there's no WiFi in most [inaudible] accommodation. So that's perhaps something to be considered when we're thinking about how people can feed into the Inquiry.

I guess also, the support given for people to submit evidence should definitely be available in all languages. We think that free interpreters should be a necessity and also, I think there should be the option of submitting any evidence anonymously as well. I'd say that the Inquiry should really make use of community outreach, for example, faith groups, frontline charities, community groups to reach those most marginalised. Finally, more pointed, I suppose from our perspective, is that it should be accessible for those with irregular housing status and perhaps just considering the administrative or logistical barriers that you might face in trying to achieve that. But, yeah, thank you.

**Mohammed Shahzad Amin:** [01:11:45] Thank you, I echo all those points and one of the things we found in the pandemic that was very important to getting the buy in from communities was the messenger is as important as the message. If we have a heads up as umbrella organisations, that the Inquiry is going to be coming to us to get a sense of what we've found on the ground, we would have time to bring together members of the community, and this is what we did.

So about two weeks before we went into lockdown we realised which way the wind was blowing, and we brought together Imams, Muslim women's groups, Muslim healthcare professionals, mental health groups, and we put them all in one large meeting. It took a little bit of time to convince them that there was something really important that everyone needed to be there for. But when we got everyone around the table, we were able to make decisions, were able to frame things very clearly and then make decisions.

So the mosques actually closed before the Government announced and that's just one example of what's possible. If we have a little bit of notice we can actually arrange to get the right members of our communities together, explain to them in terms that they understand why this is important, and then hopefully be more useful and representative when we respond to the Inquiry.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:13:28] Great, thank you. Kath, and then Sara.

**Kath Abrahams:** [01:13:34] Thanks, Anisha, just to echo what Kate said, please use our organisations that exist already and we're thinking about Tommy's and the Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network. You know, we reach lots and lots of women and parents who have had really challenging situations. I guess there's two things for me. One is we can facilitate things and make sure that we're providing evidence on behalf of people, or allowing opportunities for the Inquiry to speak to people. I think there's a question for me, in some cases, people will really want to be able to share their own experience personally and in some cases, they won't want to be retraumatised. So I think making allowances for people in different situations, you know, some of whom it's part of the healing process to speak and for others, they really, probably wouldn't want to do that. So factoring people's different needs in I think will be important too.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:14:41] Thank you. Sara.

**Sara Ogilvie:** [01:14:43] I echo what everyone has said about using existing organisations and our networks. I know we'd be really happy to support where we can and I just wanted to say I suppose from our perspective, there's a sense there's kind of two groups whose voice I'm really keen to make sure represented are the parents on a low income. It is difficult to get someone to identify and sometimes to speak to those parents, but, I think their experience will have been very, very different to lots of other groups. So making sure that focus on socio-economic difference is highlighted when you're speaking to people and then maybe just thinking about some of the support mechanisms that need to be put in place in order to do that. There are lots of lots of groups, some that we've worked with, including, as I mentioned, our Covid Realities project that worked during the pandemic, to make sure that kind of research done with families on a low income was done in an ethical way.

Maybe some lessons can be learned from that. If this is different from the legal bit of the Inquiry, there's more room perhaps for flexibility around how some of that works. But also just really encourage you to speak to children directly, like I always say, never underestimate children. What they can tell you about their experience and how they can communicate that is incredibly powerful as well. You know, their ability to see things is much stronger than sometimes we give them credit for, and I think that will be a really useful perspective for you to hear and again there are lots of challenges with doing that. But we're quite experienced as are some other organisations that we work with in speaking to children about those difficult issues. So again, don't hesitate to either learn from some of those approaches, or if we can directly facilitate and support, then please do let us know.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:16:38] Yeah, that's great. I know that Samantha, who's chairing the other breakout group, she's our Director of Comms and Engagement, she'll be delighted by all of these offers to help and to get us to people that we might otherwise find it quite hard to access.

Did anyone else want to come in on this question? Sorry I see that people are putting stuff in the chat, but I am not reading it now but we will read it afterwards. Mark Jackson.

**Mark Jackson:** [01:17:20] Only very quickly, we'd be more than happy to work for you guys, put you in front of bereaved people, people who've lost people during the pandemic, both people who've had Covid, and people who have died with other conditions during the two years as well. Obviously, we're quite close to a lot of those stories because of the work we do so we'd be more than happy to arrange something if that would be of help.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:17:49] Great, thank you. Sara, did you want to come back in?

**Sara Ogilvie:** [01:17:55] Yes, sorry, it was just a really practical thing, which is the end, just to bear in mind that if you are speaking to families with children, or from a low income background, then that's going to require them to put their children in childcare, or if they've got other difficult arrangements to work around, in order to get them to participate then sometimes you need to reflect on those additional costs and provide support with them.

Obviously, that's one for you, but just flagging that it can often be a real barrier to people's participation, so just being really cognisant of those things and where possible, supporting them through that would be really valuable, too.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:18:29] Yeah, that's a really helpful heads up, actually. So obviously, we've been thinking about expenses in terms of travel and the like, but there are broader barriers to participation. That's really helpful. I'm going to ask you probably one more question before it will be time for the others to rejoin us. You've all talked really powerfully about how we hear from the people that you represent. But there is also a question for us about how we keep you and those in your particular sectors informed about the Inquiry, and I guess, give you the confidence that we're listening to you. So I'd be really interested in any views on that. Like how would you like to be kept informed and kept engaged?

Again, hands up when you're ready. Kate.

**Kate Warburton:** [01:19:39] Thank you. I think just speaking for the housing association sector, and obviously our care home members, etc., is keeping them engaged through us would be the simplest way for you and we're obviously really happy to do that, so you have one point of contact. We constantly push out information to our members and gather data and evidence back from them. So that seems to be the most sensible way to keep our sector engaged in this and we can also mobilise them in any way that we need to help submit evidence or get residents in [inaudible] or anything like that. So, for our sector I would suggest, through us, through the housing federation.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:20:24] Lovely, thank you, Alastair.

**Alastair Harper:** [01:20:29] I can only speak for Shelter as an organisation. But obviously, we do work with and enable lots of housing campaigners across the country. So there is the possibility that works for how you conduct the Inquiry and how we engage with it. There is the possibility that we could be an enabling forum for others in different parts of the country. But just to say how things have worked so far, in terms of responsiveness with the Terms of Reference, in terms of this process today of consulting on the Terms of Reference, I think it's really open, engaged, and a really positive signal of how the Inquiry is going to go ahead.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:21:13] Okay, great. Thank you. That's really nice to hear. Kath.

**Kath Abrahams:** [01:21:19] Thanks, Anisha. Just to echo what Alastair said. I think it really feels very heartening to be involved today and it will be useful to be kept informed in a way that, when there's new information, or when you need something more from us, I think it would be really great to hear back on where you end up on the Terms of Reference, and very specifically, something from this meeting that helps us understand where you got to and how you got there would be useful. Then just on an ongoing basis, as you have new things to say, and very happy, as Kate has said to kind of act as a conduit for the Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network. But thank you for involving us.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:22:06] Thank you and there will certainly be – Lady Hallett, again, is keen to kind of keep up a drumbeat of external communication about what we as an Inquiry are up to. So there will certainly be something public on the website that says where we get to, but it's something that I know the engagement team will want to think about. On top of that, what do we do that's targeted at those who have, really helpfully, engaged and have made offers of support going forward. Great, Mohammed please.

**Mohammed Shahzad Amin:** [01:22:40] Thank you, I was just going to say thank you again for inviting us. But some of the organisations may have people who are volunteers like myself, and if there's any chance of giving a little bit extra time before, let's say, a submission is needed, because we need to speak to so many different stakeholders, that would be really appreciated. Just make sure that the quality of data that we get to yourselves is actually better.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:23:14] Yeah, that's a very reasonable ask. Leon

**Leon Elliott:** [01:23:21] I just say that, as I mentioned, we straddle between the refugee sector and the homelessness sector as a UK-wide organisation. So perhaps some of those organisations like Refugee Action or Shelters in a Crisis would be a bit more dedicated or have larger teams with more dedicated communications, and perhaps hear more dedicated streams in that area. But as an umbrella organisation, we obviously represent our membership of frontline organisations who could perhaps provide a direct link to those with of the experience you are seeking to hear and as I mentioned, we are UK-wide: Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England. So we definitely serve as a conduit for membership and can get news out very quickly from membership in terms of getting news from the ground or seeking input from those working on the ground and with direct experiences.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:24:09] Brilliant, thank you. Kate.

**Kate Warburton:** [01:24:13] Thank you, just a quick point. First, just to echo what others have said to say thank you, this has been really encouraging to be involved in this and this meeting's been really clear and really good engagement. The other thing is that we just cover England, but we do have contacts with the other sort of our equivalents who cover Scotland and Northern Ireland and Wales. So we could provide contact details for those for you if you'd like to engage with those ones as well.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:24:44] Yeah, great and that was probably the last thing that I was going to ask – we've just got a few more minutes – was about for those of you who are representing UK-wide organisations or if you're not, but you have equivalents in the other nations. Is there anything particular that you'd want to say, in terms of kind of engagement and hearing from people that varies between the four nations?

Quite a big question. I suppose the key thing is that we understand who you do represent and that if you are able to as Kate's just done, offer contacts to make sure that we are reaching out and that would be great. Sara.

**Sara Ogilvie:** [01:25:42] So we have a UK-wide remit, but we have a separate office in Scotland. We also have a team operating in Wales at the moment and I think in terms of the conversation we've had today, I think that their comments would reflect mine. But I think once we start to get into more detailed stuff, then certainly they would have additional information they could provide you with in terms of how that would work and also in terms of contacts across the sector were thoroughly embedded, to be honest. So if you need anything in that, then give us a shout and we can put you in touch with people. In terms of Northern Ireland, we don't have an office there. But again, I could easily tell you kind of who the people you'd want to speak to there are if useful.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:26:42] I think we lost Alastair.

**Alastair Harper:** [01:26:44] Sorry, just to say similarly, My remarks only and anything we submit will represent the views of England for Shelter. Shelter has an office in Scotland, Shelter also has a separate but aligned organisation in Wales and we haven't consulted with them in terms of how we're planning to submit evidence, so we can propose that they get involved separately.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:27:26] Yeah, great. That's really helpful to understand Alastair. Leon.

**Leon Elliott:** [01:27:31] Yeah, I'll just say that our team is one unit all based in England, actually, now. But our work is delegated by regions as our typical communication streams. We have regional hubs and our ways of working are usually delegated to reflect devolved policy. We have 140 members, and perhaps disproportionately strong membership hubs in Scotland and Wales. So that is definitely something we'd be able to support.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:27:58] Thank you. Mark Jackson.

**Mark Jackson:** [01:28:02] Yeah, just on Marie Curie, we're pretty well devolved, just due to the nature of how devolved, the sort of health and care policy is in the four nations. But I think for the purposes of this Inquiry, we're going to try and be quite four nations in our approach. So I think if you need to engage with colleagues in any of the devolved nations, you can do that through myself, if I were to put you in touch with people, but also I'm going to be getting people to feed into all of the engagement that I'm doing on this. So it is most convenient for you, I think, but we have a pretty good sense of how things have been going on in the devolved nations as well.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:28:49] Brilliant. Okay. So thank you all so much for your contributions. I think on that last question, just loads of really practical help, and suggestions that we will note and the Engagement team will take forward with you. RTS colleagues [technical support] - if you're listening in, we're ready for the others to join us whenever they're ready and for the rest of you, I'll give you a minute of peace until they come back in and then we'll be feeding back from both discussions. But thank you very much. There's just loads of really great stuff for us to take away.

Okay, RTS colleagues, I think the other group are ready to come back in. So if you could bring them in, that'd be great.

[All participants are transferred back into one room]

Right, I can see that the others are joining us, which is great. I'll just give it another 30 seconds to make sure that we've got everybody. Sam, does that look like everybody from your group has come across?

**Samantha Edwards:** [01:31:27] Let me just have a quick look. Yeah, I think that's everyone from our group here.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:31:42] Well, we've had a really rich discussion, I hope that you have too, in your group. I think it falls to me and Samantha to wrap up. We didn't agree who was going to go first. So shall I go Sam, and then you can pick up the extra from your side?

So in terms of the coverage of the draft Terms of Reference, there's loads of detailed points that as I said to my group, we'd pick up from the transcript, but big themes were the impact on new and expectant mothers from the pandemic, and the impact on children which is much broader than educational settings, impact more broadly. A really rich discussion around inequalities and the idea that it's not just about protected characteristics, but we should be looking at socio-economic factors.

Also, within ethnic minorities, could we look specifically at, for example, the impact on the Muslim community or the response from the Muslim community, also thinking about structural inequality, so broader societal issues and how the pandemic in a sense forced us to address things like homelessness and what can we learn from that, as well as impacts beyond health. So an example of the probation service having multi year backlogs as a result of the pandemic.

There were also some thoughts about lessons to be learned about interventions and ways of working so Everyone In, the intervention for the homeless was cited by several as a really positive thing that we could learn lessons from, but also needing to think about ways of working in the health sector, like online appointments, and really evaluate that to understand both the positive and the negative before necessarily kind of carrying on down that route.

On the other questions, sequencing and timing - really helpful, overarching question on what do we need to learn first, which would help us shape the sequences, the issues that we look at, and the idea that obviously, anything that can save lives in the future should be early on our agenda. Thinking about end dates, there's definite support for an end date, to give people a sense that this wasn't being kicked into the long grass. But also that sense that it needs to have some flexibility to make sure that we don't run out of time to look at some of the really important issues, and lots of support for what Baroness Hallett has said she wants to do in terms of interim reports as well.

Then on the last question, we got into some of the real practicalities about engagement, which I said that you would be delighted about, Samantha, because lots of offers from the people represented for their organisations to help us access people and some of the people that are often harder for organisations like us to reach. A plea for a bit of early notice when we do want views, or we do want help, which helps them troops and for factoring in different needs. So thinking about things like the digital divide, language support, the ability for people to input anonymously, and a really helpful conversation at the end about the England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland representation, and again, lots of really helpful offers of help for us to reach sister organisations, if needed, or for those who represent UK-wide to corral those views for us.

So loads for us to take away which I know you and your team will be really grateful for particularly on the last point. I'll hand over to you to add what you've heard in your grip.

**Samantha Edwards:** [01:36:10] Thanks very much, Anisha and yes, I would echo that. I would really like to thank both groups, but particularly those who spoke with me. That was a really, really brilliant, insightful conversation and it's definitely brought a few more areas to think about that perhaps we haven't heard in other areas. So I just wanted to kind of mark that as how helpful it's been.

We had such a thorough conversation, particularly on question one, I'm sure there's no chance I will do it complete justice in my summing up. We talked a lot about what we did call the 'death sector' preparedness for lack of a better term, which we all appreciate is quite a tricky one and we talked about the importance of things like rituals, ceremonies and religion, in death, and how that impacts on not only the person who is passing away, but also on their families, and how long that can impact on people and how much were that sector really ready for the pandemic.

We talked a little bit about omissions that people felt were left out of the Terms of Reference. So the voluntary sector felt like a big omission. Mental health, we talked a little bit about education versus children and also, I think this was a sort of wider discussion around how sometimes the faith sector is almost the first port of call for help. But actually, it's very rarely acknowledged and mentioned and there's something around perhaps tied in with the voluntary sector as well around who do we work with to make sure that people have support, but also what do they need in return?

We also talked about the economic impacts, and that was extended right the way through, our starting point of what was our economic inequality in the UK before the pandemic and how has that manifested over the last couple of years? What has worked? So we talked a little bit about things that were done well, so around things like debt, around people who were tenants and landlord evictions being prevented, for example, but also where things have actually made economic deprivation worse for people and the length of time that that is going to affect people.

A fascinating conversation around actually, what does this Inquiry look like, in terms of the time, what are we looking at? Are we looking at March 2020 to March 2022? Is it longer? And also how do you look at the different things that happen? So do you look at almost the phases of that first kind of the shock, and the gearing up and all the things that people have to think about? And then do you look at that huge wholesale delivery across the UK to keep things moving? Whether that was from testing, to vaccines, to just ongoing support?

Then how long should we be looking at living with Covid? And what does it mean? What comes next? How do we make sure that things weren't unwound too quickly, where things need to live a lot longer, whether it's in regulation or in society for people to get the support that's needed.

We had a really good debate around the two questions about what should we look at first, and for how long and should we set dates? It was very much a kind of debate. So both of them are quite tricky questions to answer. There was probably a little bit of weighting around overall preparedness and particularly looking at what did we learn from 2015, things like the avian flu, and were they used and why not if not, etc.

But also there was a really good point around are there areas where actually we need to take action now. So the clinically vulnerable now, people who are still shielding, people who are not able to feel like they can go back to their lives pre-Covid. If you don't look at some of those areas, perhaps first, does that drag on? Do we need to think about something like that?

Then on an end date, the two words that Kayley I think gave me was, you can provide certainty and clarity without necessarily setting a date. But being really clear about what happens, what comes next, have a really clear structure and maybe set dates for things like our interim reports,



without tying yourself into an overall date. But also, what weights will be given to things like the interim reports that are released, will they be acted on ahead of time, rather than waiting until the end? And so making sure that we don't just sit there on those things.

Then a particular area of interest for me was obviously question four around hearing from people, and bringing people into the listening experience that we want to provide. We talked about how do we make sure that we are able to give people the support that's needed, the safeguarding, make sure that we look at research that's already happened, don't make people relive experiences, if it already exists, perhaps consider the role of religious and faith groups, because many parts of society will go to them first and that's where the network exists, that's where the trust exists, which is hugely important.

We also talked a little bit about the definition of harm. So in the Terms of Reference, and in the question, we talked about those who are bereaved and suffered the most harm, and I think harm is one of those things that you could say people will look at that through different eyes. So is that economic harm? Is it spiritual harm? Is it mental health, harm, physical health harm, etc. So understanding that and actually how people might want to say, 'Well, I feel like that is me because of my circumstances.'

Also, we need to design something that reflects how people will need to access us in very different ways. So some people will need to consider things like childcare. Not everybody works what we would consider a typical working week of Monday to Friday, people who are on a lower income may want to participate, but may struggle for different reasons. But also, we did have some offers of tapping into expertise, for example, the Witness service, that is provided through Citizens Advice is a really valuable thing that we might want to look at as well.

So we've made sure we put the right safeguarding and expertise around helping people access the Inquiry and things like public hearings when it comes to those. So I'm sure there is so much more; we were taking an awful lot of notes. But my thanks again to everybody who contributed. It was a really, really thought-provoking discussion.

**Anisha Worbs:** [01:43:00] Thanks, Samantha. Just to reiterate, thank you to all of you for joining us today and taking the time to give us your views. I think, like Samantha, I felt that I was hearing some things that were quite different from what we've heard before. So it's really, really valuable for us. As I said at the beginning, and just to repeat, there will be a transcript of this meeting and we will be analysing that carefully to make sure that all of the suggestions and views that you've put forward are taken into account, when we put advice to the Chair about potential changes that she may recommend to the Prime Minister on the draft Terms of Reference, and indeed, on how we progress for this Inquiry and how we hear from those that we need to hear from.

Just to say again, what I said upfront that the Terms of Reference are necessarily quite high level and Lady Hallett refers to them as the skeleton and so not everything that we've had today will end up in the Terms of Reference themselves. But beneath each of those bullet points, there'll be a large number of issues that the Inquiry will investigate, and that Lady Hallett and her legal team will be drawing up in quite some detail. So I think it's fair to say that some of what we've heard

from you today will inform those issues and may feature in that more detailed kind of programme of work and focus that we have.

So as I've said there will be a transcript of today and unless you tell us otherwise, you will be named in that transcript and that will be made available on our website when the consultation closes. So if you, for whatever reason, would prefer not to be named, please do make sure you let the team know so that we can pick that up.

As a final reminder that the consultation closes tomorrow. So if you were intending to put in a response online as well as your contribution today, please do. Make sure you get that in. Don't leave it to the last second and I think that is probably all I need to say by way of wrap up other than just to reiterate, again, our huge thanks for your really valuable contributions and our intention to keep talking to you and keep hearing from you as the Inquiry goes on.

Thank you very much for your time.

**Samantha Edwards:** [01:45:39] Thank you, everybody.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]