



**Baroness Hallett**  
**Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

Dear Prime Minister,

## COVID INQUIRY - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Thank you for consulting me on the draft Terms of Reference ahead of your consultation with the Devolved Administrations.

When you appointed me to chair the Inquiry, we spoke about the need to ensure that I can provide you with useful and timely recommendations to inform the state's handling of future pandemics. With that in mind, I enclose herewith an amended draft of the terms of reference to ensure greater clarity in the Inquiry's remit and enable it to be conducted at an appropriate pace. In particular, I am keen that the terms of reference should make clear, at the outset, that my remit is the consideration of the state's preparedness and response to the pandemic and that the Inquiry will only consider events and decisions that took place before its formal date of establishment.

Given the likelihood that important lessons will be learned throughout the Inquiry's investigations, I would be grateful to have an express mandate to publish an interim report. This will ensure that any recommendations that seem to me to be urgent can be published and considered in a timely manner. You will be aware that under section 25(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 it is for you as sponsoring minister to arrange for the Inquiry's reports to be published unless you choose to delegate that responsibility to me. To ensure the conspicuous independence of the Inquiry I ask that you grant me responsibility for publication of reports under the Inquiries Act at an early stage so that I may determine the proper time for publication of the interim report and any other reports.

In addition to its formal findings and recommendations, it is my view that the Inquiry will gain greater public confidence and help the nation to come to terms with the pandemic if it is open to the accounts that many people - including those who have been bereaved - will wish to give. I have therefore suggested adding explicit acknowledgement of the need to hear about people's experience and to consider any disparities in the impact of the pandemic.

I look forward to running an Inquiry that looks at, and works with, all four of the UK's nations. I will be meeting Lady Poole, who will chair the Scottish Covid Inquiry, in the coming days and she and I will work together to ensure that we avoid duplication and co-operate where possible.

Thank you also for your commitment to consult me about the appointment of any panel members. In the event of any such appointment, any panellists with whom I sit would of course need to be impartial and come to the Inquiry with an open mind - they cannot have had a significant role in planning for or responding to the pandemic. Given the difficulties there may be in finding the appropriate people and the huge range of issues that the Inquiry

must cover, I am considering alternative ways in which I will be able to harness the very wide range of expertise that the Inquiry will need. Other recent Inquiries faced with a similar problem have, for example, used expert witnesses, assessors and advisers. It may be possible in this way to begin the Inquiry sooner and I am sure you will agree that if the Inquiry is to command public confidence throughout its life it is essential that we do not delay proceedings unnecessarily. I look forward to engaging with interested parties on how to achieve this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Hallett', with a long horizontal line underneath.

The Rt Hon Baroness Hallett DBE PC

Enc.

