



Module 2C

August 2022

Provisional Outline of Scope

(subject to submissions from Core Participants and Counsel to the Inquiry)

This module will look at, and make recommendations about, the decision-making by the government in Northern Ireland in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic between early January 2020 until Covid-19 restrictions were lifted in Northern Ireland in March 2022. It will examine the decision-making of key groups and individuals within the government in Northern Ireland including the First Minister, deputy First Minister and other Ministers, in particular between early January and late March 2020 when the first national lockdown was imposed. More detailed consideration of a number of key areas and the impact of the pandemic on those areas in Northern Ireland will be undertaken later in the Inquiry.

Module 2C will examine:

1. The structures and bodies concerned with the response to the pandemic in Northern Ireland and their relationships and communications with the UK Government, other devolved administrations and local authorities within Northern Ireland.
2. The government in Northern Ireland's initial understanding of, and response to, the nature and spread of Covid-19 in Northern Ireland in the period between January and March 2020 in light of information and advice received from the UK Government and other relevant international and national bodies, advice from scientific, medical and other advisers and the response of other countries.
3. Decision-making by the government in Northern Ireland relating to the imposition or non-imposition of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) including lockdowns, local restrictions, working from home, reduction of person to person contact, social distancing, the use of face coverings and border controls in Northern Ireland; the degree of and rationale behind differences in approach between the government in Northern Ireland and other governments in the UK; the timeliness and reasonableness of such

NPIs, including the likely effects had decisions to intervene been taken earlier or differently; the development of the approach to NPIs in light of the government in Northern Ireland's understanding of their impact on transmission, infection and death; the identification of at risk and other vulnerable groups in Northern Ireland and the assessment of the likely impact of the contemplated NPIs on such groups in light of existing inequalities; the impact of the absence of Ministers and the Executive in Northern Ireland from early 2017 to 11 January 2020; the extent to which decisions were informed by the response of the government of the Republic of Ireland; and the impact, if any, of the funding of the Northern Ireland pandemic response on such decision-making, including funding received from the UK Government.

4. Access to and use in decision-making of medical and scientific expertise, data collection and modelling relating to the spread of the virus in Northern Ireland; the measuring and understanding of transmission, infection, mutation, re-infection and death rates in Northern Ireland; and the relationship between and operation of relevant systems for the collection, modelling and dissemination of data.
5. Public health communications in Northern Ireland in relation to the steps being taken to control the spread of the virus; transparency of messaging; the use of behavioural management and the maintenance of public confidence in the government in Northern Ireland, including the impact of any alleged breaches of rules and standards by Ministers, officials and advisers.
6. The public health and coronavirus legislation and regulations that were proposed and enacted: their proportionality and enforcement in Northern Ireland.



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