



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION**  
**CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION**  
**MODULE 1 - HOUSING LAW PRACTITIONERS' ASSOCIATION ('HLPAs')**

**Introduction**

1. In my [Opening Statement](#) on 21 July 2022, I explained that Modules would be announced and opened in sequence, with those wishing to take a formal role in the Inquiry invited to apply to become Core Participants for each module. On the same day, the Inquiry opened Module 1 and invited anyone who wished to be considered as a Core Participant to that Module to submit an application in writing to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 16 August 2022.
2. The [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 1 provides that this module will examine the resilience and preparedness of the United Kingdom for a Coronavirus pandemic. Further modules will be announced and opened in due course, to address other aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
3. On 16 August 2022 the Inquiry received an application from the Housing Law Practitioners Association ("The Applicant") for Core Participant status in Module 1.
  1. I made a provisional decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 1, thereby declining the application ("the Provisional Decision"), on 7 September 2022. The Applicant was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 4pm on 16 September 2022.
  1. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.



## Application

4. Applications for Core Participant status are considered in accordance with Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, which provides:

*5.—(1) The chairman may designate a person as a core participant at any time during the course of the inquiry, provided that person consents to being so designated.*

*(2) In deciding whether to designate a person as a core participant, the chairman must in particular consider whether—*

- (a) the person played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates;*
- (b) the person has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates; or*
- (c) the person may be subject to explicit or significant criticism during the inquiry proceedings or in the report, or in any interim report.*

*(3) A person ceases to be a core participant on—*

- (a) the date specified by the chairman in writing; or*
- (b) the end of the inquiry.*

5. In accordance with the approach set out in my Opening Statement and the Inquiry's [Core Participant Protocol](#), I have considered whether the application fulfils the requirements of Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 1.

## Summary of Application

6. The application states that HLPAs is an unincorporated organisation of individual solicitors, solicitors' firms, barristers, numerous Citizens Advice Bureaux, law centres, and other advice centres. HLPAs is a body with particular knowledge and expertise in housing law. The objectives of the organisation is to promote, foster and develop the rights of homeless persons, tenants and others who receive housing services or are disadvantaged in the provision of housing. HLPAs agrees to be jointly appointed as



core participants with Shelter, Porchlight and those representing the families of bereaved such as Arfan Bhatti of Oliver Fisher, whose circumstances relate to housing and homelessness.

7. The application is made on the basis that HLPAs played a direct and significant role in the unprecedented suspension of housing evictions and preventing homelessness during the pandemic. The application is also made on the basis that HLPAs have a significant interest in housing and homelessness, safeguarding and support for victims of domestic abuse and the justice system. The application provides details about the role HLPAs took once lockdown was announced in 2020 to ensure the safety of its members.

### **Decision for the Applicant**

8. I acknowledge that people experiencing homelessness, people in receipt of housing services and people who are disadvantaged in the provision of housing were seriously impacted by the pandemic. I wish to repeat my ongoing commitment, as set out in the Terms of Reference and in my Opening Statement, that inequalities will be at the forefront of the Inquiry's investigations. This will include a focus on the disparities evident in the impact of the pandemic on different categories of people.
9. However, having considered with great care everything that is said in the application, I have decided, in my discretion, not to designate HLPAs as Core Participants in Module 1. Whilst I appreciate the important work HLPAs are said to have done during the pandemic and the expertise the organisation can offer, the focus of Module 1 is on the resilience and preparedness of the UK in advance of the coronavirus pandemic. I do not consider that HLPAs played a direct and significant role in matters to which Module 1 relates nor do I consider that they have a significant interest (of the kind required by the Rules) in the matters under investigation in Module 1.



10. In my Opening Statement, I said that I will publish more information about the issues intended to be covered by later modules in the coming months. HLPAs are encouraged to consider making an application for Core Participant status in future modules dealing more directly with the impact of Covid-19 on homeless and vulnerably housed people.
11. It is also not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. HLPAs may have relevant information to give in relation to matters being examined in the Inquiry and the Inquiry will be reaching out in due course to a range of individuals, organisations and bodies to seek information, to gain their perspective on the issues raised in the modules and, where appropriate, to ask for witness statements and documents.
12. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by HLPAs, in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 1, I consider that HLPAs did not play a direct and significant role in relation to the matters sought to be investigated in Module 1, nor does HLPAs have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 1 relates. I have therefore decided that HLPAs should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 1 and I confirm that this is my final decision.
13. I will keep the scope of Module 1 under review. My decision not to designate HLPAs as a Core Participant in Module 1 does not preclude HLPAs from making any further applications in respect of any later modules. I will consider any future applications HLPAs may wish to make on their merits at the time they are made.

**Rt Hon Baroness (Heather) Hallett DBE**  
**Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry**  
**29 September 2022**