

NOTE

By Claire Mitchell KC, Senior Counsel for Scottish Covid 19 Bereaved Families for Justice. Senior Counsel would like the opportunity to make very brief submissions on the following issues:

1. As will no doubt be appreciated by the Inquiry the ability for individuals to explain how Covid affected them personally is something which is important to those we represent in Scotland. No doubt once that information is analysed and presented in a report it will bring considerable value to the Inquiry too. We have had constructive meetings with the Inquiry Legal Team in respect of the Listening Exercise. We understand that at present there are a number of matters still to be considered and have made representations as to our views. We look forward to continued discussion in that regard. We are keen to ensure that there are as many ways as possible to facilitate “listening” – by speaking to someone, providing a written response, using technology or by whatever means the inquiry considers appropriate.
2. The Note sets out very broadly the matters to be explored in module 1. Having spoken to Senior Counsel to the Inquiry we appreciate given the amount of information that is being processed by the Inquiry at present no greater detail is possible. We have not yet had the opportunity as at 27th September to have a full group meeting to discuss the detail of the matters with those we represent. Given this, combined with the lack of disclosure at present, it is difficult to know whether issues we wish covered will in fact be there. In order to assist the Inquiry, we look forward to disclosure and a list of issues/questions at the earliest opportunity in order that we can assist by flagging up any omissions that we consider exist.
3. It is important to those we represent to have the opportunity to watch the proceedings. We note that the proceedings will be placed online with a short time delay. This however does not assist those who do not have computers, access to Wifi, are not “tech savvy” or simply do not have the money to allow them to watch online. We would ask that the Inquiry gives consideration to finding places which could be made

available in Scotland so that the work of the Inquiry could be viewed by attending at said place. We would ask that this be put in place for the next hearing.

4. The Inquiry has already stated its aim to work alongside the Scottish Inquiry to assure that there is as little duplication of work as possible. (Para [21] note) . There will no doubt be issues on which there is disagreement as to whether the issue is a devolved one or not. We would wish to assist the Inquiry by providing our views on this if and when this arises. We would also ask that the Inquires work together to try in so far as is possible not to sit at the same time as those we represent have a direct interest in both Inquires.
5. We agree and support the idea of a memorial as mentioned in para 67 of the Note. Under consideration at present is “a commemorative memorial in the future hearing centre.” We understand that the hearing centre will be in London, at least for the first module. We would suggest that any commemorative memorial be capable of being moved as and when the Inquiry sits elsewhere to allow those in Scotland and in other nations to see it.
6. Over the last two years the Scottish Covid 19 Bereaved Families for Justice Group that we represent have campaigned for a robust, independent and transparent Public Inquiry into the handling of the pandemic. The Scottish families welcome the approach of the Baroness Hallett and her Inquiry in assuring them that their voices will be heard at the UK Inquiry. Today is the start of a process and the grieving families hope that this public inquiry will be an effective and credible mechanism to ensure what happened to them will not happen again.

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