



NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 2 – SOLACE WOMEN’S AID, SOUTHALL BLACK SISTERS, WOMEN AND GIRLS
NETWORK, LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN’S RIGHTS SERVICE AND STAR SUPPORT

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 31 August 2022, the Inquiry opened Module 2 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 23 September 2022.
2. The Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 2 provides that this module will examine the decision-making by the UK Government during the 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 23 September 2022 the Inquiry received an application from Solace Women’s Aid, Southall Black Sisters, Women and Girls Network, Latin American Women’s Rights Service and Star Support LGBTIQ+ CIC for Core Participant status in Module 2.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate the Women and Girls Network, Latin American Women’s Rights Service and Star Support LGBTIQ+ CIC. as a Core Participant in Module 2, thereby declining the Applicants application (“the Provisional Decision”), on 13 October 2022. The Applicants were provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 12pm on 20 October 2022.
5. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.

Application

6. 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.*

7. 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 set out in Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 2.

8. I have taken into account all of the information which the Applicant has relied upon. The fact that I have not, in making this determination, referred to every matter which is set out in the application does not mean that I have not considered it. The summary below is intended to capture what appear to be the most important points made in support of the application.

Summary of Application

9. Solace Women's Aid states that it is one of the single largest providers of services for survivors of violence against women and girls in the UK. It works to prevent violence

and abuse and provides services to survivors, particularly women and children. The application is made on the basis that SWA played a direct and significant role throughout the pandemic, in that SWA safeguarded and supported over 10,000 survivors of domestic abuse through front-line advice, advocacy, policy work and litigation. It is also made on the basis they have a significant interest in matters relating to Module 2, including the extent to which domestic abuse survivors were considered by the Government when making decisions relating to lockdown and other NPIs.

10. Southall Black Sisters is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 1979 to meet the needs of black and ethnic minority women. SBS is involved with challenging domestic and gender related violence locally and nationally and has campaigned for the provision of proper support services to enable women and children to escape violent relationships. The application is made on the basis that SBS played a direct and significant role throughout the pandemic, as the leading provider of front-line advocacy and support to black and ethnic minority women facing gender based violence in the UK. It is also made on the basis that they have a significant interest, given the fact that the impact of Covid-19 on black and minority women experiencing gender based violence was acute. In particular, SBS asserts a significant interest in assisting the Chair to consider any disparities in the impact of the pandemic on different categories of people, including those relating to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and specifically the disparate outcome experienced by black and ethnic minority women.
11. WGN is a black-feminist women-only organisation that supports women across London who have experienced violence against women and girls or are at risk. The application is made on the basis that WGN played a direct and significant role throughout the pandemic, in supporting about 8000 survivors of violence, through front-line services. The application is also made on the basis that WGN has a significant interest in the reasons for which domestic abuse survivors were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, in guidance given to social care providers, whether domestic abuse survivors were assessed as being an at risk and vulnerable group and whether decision making in relation to lockdown and other NPIs included consideration of the impact of these decisions on this group.

12. LAWRS is a feminist human rights organisation founded and run by Latin American migrant women. LAWRS supports the needs of Latin American migrant women and BME migrant women nationally facing intersectional violence and discrimination shaped by their race, class, gender and immigration status. LAWRS offers case work support, counselling, emotional support and advisory services in a number of areas. The application is made on the basis LAWRS played a direct and significant role throughout the pandemic, because migrant domestic abuse survivors were disproportionately impacted by Covid-19, confined to abusive homes and less able to access limited services. It is also made on the basis that they have a significant interest in assisting the Inquiry to establish why the Latin American and BAME women communities were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The application provides further detail about how LAWRS played a direct and significant role and the significant interest that is asserted.

13. Star Support is a domestic abuse organisation focusing on the needs of experiences of LGBTIQ+ survivors of domestic and sexual violence, with a specific focus on their accommodation related support needs. The application is made on the basis that Star Support played a direct and significant role throughout the pandemic, in supporting and representing the interests of LGBTIQ+ survivors of domestic and sexual violence, who were seriously impacted by the government measures introduced in response to Covid-19. The application outlines a number of ways Star Support offered support to this group of people in response to the pandemic. The application is also made on the basis that Star Support has a significant interest in addressing the causes of the acute impacts LGBTIQ+ survivors of domestic and sexual violence experienced as a result of the pandemic, with a view to ensuring the protection of these communities in the event of a further public health emergency. The application provides further detail about the significant interest that is asserted.

Decision for the Applicant

14. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the Applicants application. Having done so, in my discretion, I consider that the Applicants do not meet the criteria set out in Rule 5 for designation as a Core Participant in Module 2 and, therefore, I have decided not to designate the Applicants as a Core Participant in Module 2.

15. For a number of reasons, I consider that Solace Women's Aid and Southall Black Sisters jointly, are well placed to assist the Inquiry as to whether the interests of women were considered as part of the process of core political and administrative decision-making in response to Covid-19 without considering in detail any individual cases. However, I do not consider that the Women and Girls Network, Latin American Women's Rights Service and Star Support LGBTIQ+ CIC are sufficiently representative to meet those aims bearing in mind the aforementioned considerations.
16. I consider that none of the Applicants satisfy Rule 5(2)(a) and did not play a direct or significant role in high level core political and administrative decision making. I do accept that each has a significant interest (Rule 5(2)(b)). The Core Participant Protocol provides that while I am bound to consider the factors set out in Rule 5(2), it is also open to me to take into account other relevant matters. I am also not obliged to designate a person or organisation that meets the criteria set out in Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules as a Core Participant. It further explains that I particularly invite applications from groups of individuals and organisations with similar interests, rather than from individual persons and organisations and that the designation of Core Participant status to groups representing the interests of more than one person would assist the fair and efficient running of the Inquiry. I additionally have regard to my duty to act with fairness and with regard to the need to avoid any unnecessary cost to public funds.
17. Furthermore, I do not consider, in any event, having regard in particular to the need to manage the Inquiry effectively and efficiently, that the Applicants interest in decision making by the UK Government is sufficiently significant as to grant it Core Participant status in this Module. I am determined to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind the Inquiry's wide-ranging terms of reference and the need for the Inquiry process to be rigorous and fair. Given the vast numbers of people who were involved with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many people in this country could potentially have an interest in it and not everyone can be granted Core Participant status for the purposes of the Inquiry hearings.
18. 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. The Applicant may

wish to consider applying for Core Participant status in relation to future modules which are of relevance to them.

19. It is also not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Women and Girls Network, Latin American Women's Rights Service and Star Support LGBTIQ+ CIC. 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.

20. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by the Women and Girls Network, Latin American Women's Rights Service and Star Support LGBTIQ+ CIC., in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 2, I consider that the Applicants did not play a direct and significant role in relation to the matters sought to be investigated in Module 2, nor do the Applicants have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 2 relates. I have therefore decided that the Applicants should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 2 and I confirm that this is my final decision.

21. I will keep the scope of Module 2 under review. My decision not to designate the Women and Girls Network, Latin American Women's Rights Service and Star Support LGBTIQ+ CIC. as Core Participants in Module 2 does not preclude them from making any further applications in respect of any later modules. The Applicants may wish to consider applying for Core Participant status in relation to future modules likely to deal more directly with the matters which have been referred to in the application. I will consider any future applications the Applicants 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
26 October 2022