



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION  
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION  
MODULE 3 - LOUISE BICKNELL**

**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 8 November 2022, the Inquiry opened Module 3 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 5 December 2022.
2. The Inquiry has published the [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 3, which states that this Module will consider the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Further Modules will be announced and opened in due course, to address other aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
3. On 5 December 2022 the Inquiry received an application from Louise Bicknell ("the Applicant") for Core Participant status in Module 3.
4. I made a provisional decision dated 9 January 2023 not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 3, thereby declining the application ("the Provisional Decision"). The Applicant was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 4pm on 16 January 2023.
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 3.

## Summary of Application

8. The Applicant states that she is interested in providing “purely factual information” to the Inquiry to assist in the information gathering in respect of core decision-making and leadership and shielding and its impact on the clinically vulnerable. The Applicant states that she is still shielding due to her husband's medical condition. The application is put on the basis that she has made a number of Freedom of Information Act requests relating to decision-making around the pre-exposure prophylaxis with Evusheld and around the treatment of the clinically extremely vulnerable. As a consequence, the Applicant believes that information provided in response to those requests would assist the Counsel to the Inquiry with the questioning of witnesses.

## Decision for the Applicant

9. I wish to extend my sympathy to the Applicant regarding the challenges faced by the Applicant and her husband, including the length of time for which the Applicant and her husband have been shielding. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the application. I have decided not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 3 for the reasons set out below. I recognise the disappointment that my decision may cause the Applicant.
10. Module 3 will consider the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This will include consideration of the healthcare consequences of how the governments and the public responded to the pandemic. It will examine the capacity of healthcare systems to respond to a pandemic and how this evolved during the pandemic. It will consider the primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare sectors and services and people's experience of healthcare during the pandemic, including through illustrative accounts. It will also examine healthcare-related inequalities (such as in relation to death rates, PPE and oximeters), with further detailed consideration in a separate designated Module.
11. The application is put on the basis that the Applicant has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 3 relates (Rule 5(2)(b)).
12. The Applicant is shielding alongside her husband and has a significant interest in shielding. The Applicant therefore meets Rule 5(2)(b). However, 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 factors. I am not obliged to designate any particular person or organisation as a Core Participant.
13. I have regard in particular to the need to manage the Inquiry effectively and efficiently. 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 and organisations in the UK could potentially have an interest in the Inquiry. Not everyone can be granted Core Participant status for the purpose of the Inquiry hearings. I have

granted Core Participant status to Clinically Vulnerable Families (“CVF”), an organisation that represents the Clinically Vulnerable; the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable; the Severely Immunosuppressed and their households across all four nations. I consider that, in the context of this Inquiry, the issues raised in the application are sufficiently addressed through the designation of CVF as a Core Participant in Module 3

14. It is not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Inquiry will also hear and consider carefully the experiences of bereaved families and others who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic, through the listening exercise. The Applicant may wish to contribute to the work of the Inquiry through this process. I made clear in my Opening Statement that this listening exercise is a significant and important task which will lead to summary reports of the impact of the pandemic to be used as evidence during the Inquiry’s Module hearings.
15. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by the Applicant in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 3, I have decided that the Applicant should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 3 and I confirm that this is my final decision.
16. I will keep the scope of Module 3 under review. My decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 3 does not preclude her from making any further applications in respect of any later Modules. I will consider any future applications the Applicant 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**

**13 February 2023**