



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 1 - WOMEN AND GIRLS NETWORK ('WGN')**

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 WGN ("the Applicant") for Core Participant status in Module 1.
4. 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.
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 of Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 1.

Summary of Application

8. 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. WGN offers counselling, advocacy and advice for affected women and girls in London. The application for Core Participant status is made jointly with Star Support, Southall Black Sisters, Solace Women's Aid and the Latin American Women's Rights Service.



9. The application is made on the basis that WGN played a direct and significant role throughout the pandemic, in supporting around 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 particular, WGN asserts a significant interest in the government's preparedness and decisions relating to additional funding for the voluntary and community sector, to ensure domestic abuse survivors are protected in any future pandemic.

Decision for the Applicant

10. I acknowledge that particular vulnerable groups of people, including women and girls across London who have experienced violence or are at risk, may have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, requiring the assistance of services such as those provided by WGN. I wish to repeat my ongoing commitment, as set out in the Terms of Reference and in my Opening Statement, that inequalities and the vulnerable 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.
11. However, having considered with great care everything that is said in the application, I have decided, in my discretion, not to designate WGN as a Core Participant in Module 1. Whilst I appreciate that survivors of domestic abuse were at a heightened risk during the pandemic and adversely impacted, 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 WGN 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.



12. 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. WGN is encouraged to consider making an application for Core Participant status in future modules dealing more directly with the impact of Covid-19 on different groups of people, including those assisted by WGN.

13. It is also not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. WGN 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.

14. The Inquiry will also listen to 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. 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 on those who come forward to be used as evidence during the Inquiry's module hearings. WGN has the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry, through the listening exercise if it chooses.

15. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by WGN, in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 1, I consider that WGN did not play a direct and significant role in relation to the matters sought to be investigated in Module 1, nor does WGN have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 1 relates. I have therefore decided that WGN should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 1 and I confirm that this is my final decision.

16. I will keep the scope of Module 1 under review. My decision not to designate WGN as a Core Participant in Module 1 does not preclude WGN from making any further



applications in respect of any later modules. I will consider any future applications WGN 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