



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION  
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION**

**MODULE 3 - NORTHERN IRELAND COVID-19 BEREAVED FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE**

**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 2 December 2022 the Inquiry received an application from Northern Ireland Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice ("the Applicant") for Core Participant status in Module 3. This Notice sets out my determination of 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 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**

6. The Applicant is a branch of the wider UK group Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice and represents bereaved relatives of individuals who died from Covid-19 in Northern Ireland.
7. The application is put on the basis of both Rules 5(2)(a) and 5(2)(b). The Applicant is said to have played a direct and significant role in a number of aspects of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 3. The application states that the Applicant includes individuals who raised issues with staffing levels in relation to the treatment of their loved ones during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as individuals with relatives who contracted Covid-19 due to having to receive healthcare for non Covid-19 related issues, and as a result were exposed to the virus in a healthcare setting. The Applicant is also said to include individuals with significant concerns about palliative care and use of DNACPRs on relatives and individuals whose relatives were clinically vulnerable and shielding but contracted the virus, including because they were not warned to shield in time. For the same reasons, the Applicant considers that it satisfies the test in Rule 5(2)(b). The Applicant highlights the distinct nature of Northern Ireland's healthcare system and asserts that if it was granted core participant status in Module 3 it would ensure those issues which are unique to Northern Ireland are comprehensively addressed by the Inquiry.

## Decision for the Applicant

8. I wish to reiterate my deep sympathy to each and every individual who has experienced the tragic loss of a loved one as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic including those the Applicant represents.
9. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the application. Having done so, I have decided to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 3.
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 Covid-19 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 played a direct and significant role in the matters to which Module 3 relates (Rule 5(2)(a)) and that the Applicant has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 3 relates (Rule 5(2)(b)).
12. For a number of reasons I consider that the Applicant is well placed to assist the Inquiry to achieve its aims in Module 3 by representing the collective interests of a broad spectrum of those bereaved in Northern Ireland as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. I consider that the Applicant can, amongst other things, aid the Inquiry in understanding the experiences and perspectives of the bereaved when it considers the impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems in the UK and in particular Northern Ireland, without examining in detail individual cases of harm or death.

## Legal Representation

13. Applications for designation as the Recognised Legal Representative of a Core Participant are governed by Rules 6 and 7 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, which provide:

*6.—(1) Where—*

- (a) a core participant, other than a core participant referred to in rule 7; or*
- (b) any other person required or permitted to give evidence or produce documents during the course of the inquiry,*  
*has appointed a qualified lawyer to act on that person's behalf, the chairman must designate that lawyer as that person's recognised legal representative in respect of the inquiry proceedings.*

*7.—(1) This rule applies where there are two or more core participants, each of whom seeks to be legally represented, and the chairman considers that—*

- (a) their interests in the outcome of the inquiry are similar;*
- (b) the facts they are likely to rely on in the course of the inquiry are similar; and*
- (c) it is fair and proper for them to be jointly represented.*

*(2) The chairman must direct that those core participants shall be represented by a single recognised legal representative, and the chairman may designate a qualified lawyer for that purpose.*

*(3) Subject to paragraph (4), any designation must be agreed by the core participants in question.*

*(4) If no agreement on a designation is forthcoming within a reasonable period, the chairman may designate an appropriate lawyer who, in his opinion, has sufficient knowledge and experience to act in this capacity.*

14. I am satisfied that the Applicant has appointed Conal McGarrity of PA Duffy & Company Solicitors as its qualified lawyer in relation to this Module. I therefore designate Conal McGarrity as the Applicant's recognised legal representative in accordance with Rule 6(1).

15. Directions will be given in relation to applications for an award under section 40(1)(b) of the Inquiries Act 2005 of expenses to be incurred in respect of legal representation, at the forthcoming preliminary hearing. I will determine any such applications in accordance with the provisions of section 40 of the Inquiries Act 2005, the Inquiry Rules 2006, the [Prime Minister's determination](#) under section 40(4) and the [Inquiry's Costs Protocol](#).

**Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE**

**Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

**17 January 2023**