

## 2023-04-05 UK Covid-19 Inquiry Equalities Forum

### Transcript

### Attendees

### Organisations:

- Action for Race Equality
- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)
- Disability Action Northern Ireland
- Disability Rights UK
- Disability Wales
- Diverse Cymru
- Equally Ours
- Federation of Ethnic Minority Healthcare Organisations (FEMHO)
- Friends, Families and Travellers
- Inclusion Scotland
- Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
- NHS Race and Health Observatory
- Race Alliance Wales
- Sign Health
- The Runnymede Trust

### Transcript

#### **Agenda Item 1 (Welcome)**

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** We are recording the session so that we can create a transcript of it and we'll be deleting the recording as soon as we've created that transcript. The transcript itself will be made available on our website so that people who are here today or indeed the wider public or anyone interested can see what sort of discussions we've been having as an Inquiry. We won't be naming you as individuals, although where it's relevant, we will name the organisation that you are from or representing.

That's why the little recording tab has popped up at the top of your screen just now (because we're providing a transcript and publishing that). Can I ask for the sake of protecting other attendees' privacy, that participants today don't make their own screenshots of everyone's faces or record this session? I should, though, just check that everyone is content with that approach.

Great, I can't see anyone saying they're not.

This is quite a big meeting and I suspect that given the crunchiness and some of the things on the agenda, we could probably talk all day about some of them.

In arranging this for 90 minutes, we have tried to strike the balance between the gravity and the depth of some of the things that we are keen to discuss, but also a recognition that you're all very busy people. That said, this is the first forum and we'd be really very keen to get any feedback afterwards on any aspect of it: on how it's run, the length, types of topics covered and how it felt for you. We want to make sure that this is the beginning of a relationship, and it evolves and it's beneficial for all of you (as I hope it will be for the Inquiry).

I would just like to remind those organisations that are Core Participants of their obligations, not to divulge any confidential material which has been shared in confidence.

This will not stay confidential forever, of course, but we need to make sure that the type of information that has been shared with Core Participants is divulged at the right time, with the right safeguards around it to prevent for example individual personal data being disclosed. That said, Core Participant status is not the only way to engage with the Inquiry, or which people and organisations can talk to us to influence elements of the Inquiry.

Inquiries are legal proceedings overseen by the Chair sitting, as a judge essentially and are, of course, one of the central ways by which she (the Chair) will hear evidence and draw conclusions, but not the only one.

The conduct of the legal proceedings, though, is for the Chair to determine. That's set out in law. There's no getting away from that. Anybody has a chance to become a Core Participant if they wish,

subject to meeting certain tests. If they become Core Participant, of course they can make representations formally before the Chair about how those investigations should be running.

Some members of this forum have already done so, really, very effectively. We'll come to an example of that later. But I need to be clear that in front of the Chair, essentially, in open court, is the only place where those sorts of representations can be made. This meeting and ones like it can't be used for that purpose, not least because I and my team aren't our lawyers and crucially, we're not the Chair.

All that said, I'm delighted to welcome you all here and I hope it will be a really a really fruitful and constructive discussion and I'm going to introduce my team briefly and then I'm going to ask all the other participants just to introduce themselves and say which organisation they're from, we've got a lot of people but given that this is the first of these, I'm really keen that everybody knows where everyone else is coming from. So, first things first, I'm gonna go to my team just so that you know who's here starting in the room.

*(Introductions by Inquiry staff)*

**Federation of Ethnic Minority Healthcare Organisations (FEMHO):**

I'm a founder member of the Federation of Ethnic Minority Health organisations. It's a younger association born during Covid.

**Disability Wales:** Hi everyone. Nice to meet you all. I'm from Disability Wales; Policy and Programs Manager at Disability Wales.

**Friends, Families and Travelers:** I work at Friends, Families and Travelers, and I'm the Development Manager.

**Sign Health:** I am from Sign Health - Policy and Public Affairs Manager. We're a deaf-led charity who provides support including domestic abuse and therapy and supervision and other areas too.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you very much. Can I just check whether that's a UK-wide organisation?

**Sign Health:** yes, it's a UK-wide service, it is national. We are based in London, mostly remote now

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you. We've had requests for people to say whether their organisations are UK-wide. So if people could do that as they introduce themselves, that would be a great help. Thank you.

**Disability Rights UK:** I'm Head of Policy at Disability Rights, UK. In terms of our policy influencing role, we're very much England.

**NHS Race and Health Observatory:** I'm from the NHS Race and Health Observatory. I'm the Head of Policy. We are primarily based in England, but we do work in partnership with similar organisations in the Devolved Administrations.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Brilliant. Thank you very much.

**Equally Ours:** I am the Head of Policy at Equally Ours. We're a network of organisations that work on equality, human rights and social justice. Some of our members are in this room.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Super thanks, very much indeed

**Race Alliance Wales:** Race Alliance Wales

**Diverse Cymru:** I'm the Chief Executive of the Welsh-based equalities charity, Diverse Cymru. We work predominantly in Wales but like Race Alliance Wales just said, we influence some of our workers UK wide as well.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Great stuff. Thank you very much indeed.

**Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants:** I am from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. We're a migrants rights charity based in London, also UK-wide in our campaigning and policy reach, but predominantly work with migrant communities in and around London.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thanks very much.

**Disability Action Northern Ireland:** I'm a Public Engagement Officer at Disability Action Northern Ireland.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you very much, indeed.

**Coalition of Racial Equality and Rights:** I'm from the Coalition of Racial Equality and Rights. We are based in Scotland.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you very much, indeed.

**Action for Race Equality:** I am the Chief Executive of Action for Race Equality, a national charity based in London, that covers England. I'm also a member of the Alliance for Racial Justice, which includes Runnymede Trust, Friends, Family and Travelers, Race Equality Foundation and a few others.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Excellent. Thank you very much for joining and representing.

**Runnymede Trust:** I'm also from the Runnymede Trust.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thanks very much. Some of you will have seen the message in the chat - an introduction from the Head of policy and research at Inclusion Scotland, accompanied by a communication support worker. You're both very, very welcome. Thanks for joining today, I think that's everybody, but please shout now, if I failed to introduce anyone.

Thank you for that and I hope you don't mind bearing with us while we did intros. But it feels important to understand where people are coming from geographically and which parts of the UK organisations cover.

Just listening to the introductions, I think it's fair to say we are probably tipped towards England in terms of pure numbers, but if there are other organisations from Devolved Administration that people think it would be helpful for us to hear from, please do let us know. We'll continue to review this to make sure that we've got the right representation.

That's the intros down. I'm really hoping that sets the scene for the forum, and I really hope that you can join us in this to promote participation in the Inquiry.

I know that colleagues have a great deal of things that they want to use these forums for going forward, including testing communications and hearing updates from different members. But for today's meeting, we're going to focus on three particular issues. I've mentioned Every Story

Matters already and in particular, we want to make sure that we give a general update on Every Story Matters, with a particular focus on accessibility, because we know that's a particular issue for different groups, who for one reason or another have tended to find themselves marginalised by some of the discourse around the pandemic. That's something that we are trying to avoid and would appreciate your help with.

Structural inequalities is the second thing that we will cover, not least because there's been some fairly recent developments within the Inquiry.

I just want to draw for a little while on that issue and then I want to dive into one particular aspect of Every Story Matters, which is the specific community listening events that we are planning to get underway as the listening exercise itself begins in earnest, later this year. Although you're very welcome to submit questions in the chat, we'll try to either pick those up as we go or, cover those in a Q&A. If you either won't be using or can't use the chat - I know that some of you will be using screen readers, for example, then any kind of sound that you or your machine is able to make will enable us to come to you for any questions that you want to ask.

To kick off on the substantive agenda, I'm gonna hand it over to my colleague who introduced themselves earlier to talk about the accessibility elements of Every Story Matters.

## **Agenda Item 2: Every Story Matters (our listening exercise) Accessibility Update):**

**Member of the Inquiry Team:** I'm going to start by giving a really brief overview of what the listening exercise is. Then, I'm gonna go on to its purpose and how it feeds into the legal process, including the research methods and importantly, how people can then contribute to the listening exercise, including those accessible formats that will be available shortly.

To give an overview, Every Story Matters is the Inquiry's listening exercise. It is for everyone who wishes to share their experience of the pandemic with the Inquiry. It will run alongside the Inquiry's legal measures to ensure as many people who wish to share their experiences can do, including those most affected and from those

whose voices are not always heard. It will help the Inquiry to make meaningful recommendations in a timely way, to ensure the UK is better prepared for future pandemics. Experiences shared will be collated, analysed and fed into hearings as evidence. This evidence will be considered by the Chair, and will inform her reports and recommendations.

There are no citizenship or residency requirements to participate, although the experience needs to have taken place in the UK and at this time, you must be over 18 to participate. We are looking for ways to understand the pandemic experiences of under-18s too. Importantly, responses will be saved anonymously.

So, what's the purpose of Every Story Matters? Every Story Matters will provide an opportunity for people to tell the Inquiry about their experiences, without the formality of giving evidence or attending a public hearing. The Inquiry's Terms of Reference (which 20,000 people and organisations gave views on) includes a requirement to listen to people in the UK, to be able to learn lessons from pandemic.

The legal process determines what happens and why. Every Story Matters will add information to that legal process about the human impact of the pandemic on the UK population. This will help us to understand the whole problem and lead to better recommendations. Evidence will be in the form of a report for each module, based both on the information, shared by the UK population proactively with us and on specific information about people's experience each module's lawyer asks us to go out and find.

After hearings, and in the process of writing those recommendations, these reports will ensure that the Inquiry takes full account of the impact on the UK population and that recommendations are as robust and well evidenced as possible. The Inquiry's reports and recommendations are important, as these recommendations are implemented by the Central and Devolved governments. I'm also going to talk about how the Inquiry will gather people's experiences, and there will be a number of ways for these individuals to feed their experiences into the Inquiry.

You may have seen, there is already an online form available on our website, as the evidence points to most people wanting to share in their

own time and in their own way. We also have a hard copy of the form available and shortly there will be one available in large print and Easy Read.

The form has been developed with members of the public telling us how they would like to share what happened to them.

We are also planning a phone line to support people with completing the form and also for people to share their experience with us verbally, that are unable to complete a written form.

The Inquiry will also provide information about how to share your experience, in alternative formats including BSL video, Easy Read, Braille and translations into other languages.

Will also be able to receive submissions in any language, and are considering alternative ways of how we might be able to receive responses in BSL and users' needs for alternatives such as video and audio submissions too.

In response to feedback from organisations, we will be piloting community listening events in cities and towns right across the UK. My colleague will be telling you more about those shortly. To ensure that we're reaching those who we need to hear from, from each module, and in response to lawyer's requests, we will carry out targeted research alongside this open research.

So far we've had 154 interviews take place and have at least 300 more to come later this spring and summer. It's important to note that the lawyers don't nominate individual people for those interviews. It's for our research team, to go out, and find those participants, according to experience, demographics, and so on. This targeted research will ensure that the experiences of those disproportionately affected, underrepresented, or seldom heard, and those groups relevant to the modules of the Inquiry, are heard.

This research will not be open to the general public as it's designed to respond, specifically to legal lines of Inquiry. This means that participants are selected because they have particular features or characteristics. The selection criteria will be driven by the key lines of enquiry for each module, and further requirements identified from analysis of the open

research submissions or the ongoing work of module lawyers. Whilst characteristics such as ethnicity and disability may not be a primary criteria for selections, in the research for all modules, characteristics will be monitored to ensure diversity of the sample groups.

So, how did these two forms of research come together in analysis? The experiences shared within the listening exercise and its different ways, will be collated, analysed and fed into legal hearings as formal evidence. In analysing a large volume of people's experiences and turning this into legal evidence, researchers will make use of a range of analysis techniques. This will combine human analysis, computing software, and at scale, artificial intelligence, which will work together to produce strong analysis and conclusions and will reduce human bias.

Each report will be submitted as evidence before the modules first hearing, so Core Participants will see it. The intention is to produce the final report at the end of the Inquiry also. This means that participants can share experiences relating to the module that has passed, and that will be also included as evidence. This is really important given that we recognise that not everyone will be able to share their experience at a specific time.

So to give you an idea of where we are and in the timeline of developing Every Story Matters, we are still testing our approach. In November 2022, we launched the interim online form, and asked people to give feedback on it. That form is currently still available and it is not the final version, but we felt it was fundamental to test this, to learn and to improve on it and we've been getting input from the people that will actually be using it. The feedback that we've received will be addressed in the revised version of the online form that will be available later this year. For example, by adding a save and come back feature, offering to be able to withdraw your submission, improved sign posting for support and also making the service a bit warmer.

We're looking to formally launch Every Story Matters this summer with wide advertising and marketing. We would welcome your support in reaching as many people as possible who would like to contribute their experiences to Inquiry.

I hope I've been able to convey the complexity, sensitivity and the scale of the listening exercise and its importance to the Inquiry's work. Shortly after today's meeting, emails will be going out to disability organisations, setting out those proposed formats that I mentioned earlier and seeking views on how we can make Every Story Matters as accessible as possible. I believe that some of those organisations are present here today. However, if there is anyone else that would like to receive this, please do let me know via the chat and I can make sure that you're included in that circulation. We really do value your time and expertise in helping us to improve the accessibility of Every Story Matters. If you have any comments or questions, please do let me know again via the chat. The team is also really happy to meet with organisations directly, to discuss your audience's particular requirements in more detail.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you very much indeed - loads in there. Thanks for taking us through it. We must move on, but please, if anyone's got any questions, either put them in the chat or hold them until we get to the Q&A. At the end of this, we're gonna have plenty of time for questions. I anticipate quite a lot of them will be about Every Story Matters.

### **Agenda Item 3: Structural Inequalities**

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** You'll see the next thing on the agenda is around the many issues of structural inequalities and structural racism, in particular or at least that's how this began. I just wanted to say a few key words about the work that's been done within the Inquiry and beyond it on this. Many, many thanks to those of you on this call who had a hand.

To address some of the concerns that have been raised by organisations right across the spectrum, about the Inquiry's approach on equalities (now, I would say this wouldn't I, because I work for her) it's true that I think the Chair sees it as a moral responsibility to make sure that inequalities are really at the centre of this Inquiry.

She has made a set of decisions over the past few weeks, that will I hope bring that even more to the fore. We were aware of the huge interest in the way that the Inquiry investigates these matters and over

the course of the last couple of months, that has become particularly focused on the issue of structural racism.

The Chair heard calls on structural racism from organisations, several of whom got together under the auspices of The Runnymede Trust to send an open letter to the Chair about making sure that structural racism was one of the issues that's investigated by the Inquiry, to make sure that the Inquiry is instructing experts in structural racism, but also to broaden that out to look more broadly at the embedded inequalities that existed ahead of the pandemic, and into the pandemic to see what impact they had on the plight of people during the pandemic, and the impact that the pandemic had on different groups of people.

The Inquiry will be investigating the impact of the pandemic on at-risk, vulnerable people and marginalised people, including but not only those with protected characteristics, either under the Great Britain Law or Northern Irish Law. She's keen to make sure that that's done across the UK, so looking at the actions that the UK government took and also looking at those that the Devolved Administrations took and to properly, understand the extent, to which they took into account, the considerations and interests of people from the different groups that I've talked about, and all those who are at risk vulnerable or marginalised.

The Inquiry's first investigation, (as you may know, it's called Module one) it's about the UK's pandemic, preparation and resilience. The Inquiry has instructed two genuinely world leading experts in inequalities. Professor Sir Michael Marmot is an expert, particularly in health inequalities, is of long-standing and, and eminent reputation. Professor Clare Bambra, who's based in the Northeast is also a long-standing expert in health inequalities and inequalities more broadly. Together, they'll be providing a report on preparedness and resilience that I hope will go into all the areas that have been set out by the legal team.

That investigation, which is already underway, and where evidentiary hearings are due to begin in June, will consider the extent to which the government took into account the needs not only of ethnic minority people, but of many, as they were making their plans for civil emergencies both at UK level and and Devolved Administrations.

Then, having considered the submissions that were made at two hearings at the end of February, in the beginning of March, where, as I said, Core Participants made representations to her, some of which focused specifically on structural racism, but also to go wider and look at structural discrimination in the round.

We don't yet know who that expert, or experts are going to be and there is a continued work, right across all of our investigations to find the right expertise and to make sure we have a balance of expertise because of course, and it is never the case when it comes to this pandemic, that all experts agree, and so we need to make sure that we have the right balance of expertise across the Inquiry to make sure that the voices we need are being heard.

On all of the other issues, there's a whole bunch of experts who've already been instructed and we have announced the names of those already and they're available on our website, if you need them, or I think they're in the monthly newsletter that we set out most recently. If you're not already on our mailing list, allow me to use this as a plug for joining and getting the newsletter.

I will stop there. Again, do let me know if you've got any burning questions on that. We did have a couple of questions on this very topic that were put forward, ahead of time by FEMHO and an organisation that represents migrants who can't be here today but have provided us with a question. I'm going to come to those at the start of the Q&A session to kick us off. So, don't despair, we will be coming back to those. I do want to loop us back to the listening exercise. Having heard about the overall approach, I'm now going to come to another colleague to talk to us about one very specific plank of our listening activity, which is the community listening events that will be running across the country.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Every Story Matters: Community Listening Events**

**Member of the Inquiry Team:** I am going to talk to you about our proposal for community listening events, as part of Every Story Matters. It's an area where we very much value your input.

As part of Every Story Matters, we will be running a program of in person listening events across the UK in all four nations. This is in direct

response to feedback from organisations, who have told us that people want to be able to share their stories in their local communities, so we should meet people where they are.

We're at a very early stage of designing these events and we will be procuring some specialist community engagement support to help us design the events. Our early thinking is that we will run around 300 events, across the UK, at local authority level.

There will be a mixture of larger and smaller events. Some of the larger events will be open to the public, and then we will do much smaller targeted events at those people who have been most impacted by the pandemic. Our early thinking on that is that we will have some smaller events targeted specifically for the bereaved and for minority groups who have been most impacted by the pandemic, as well as for people living in care homes and for those that are clinically vulnerable.

Healthcare workers was another group that we were going to target and as I say we're at a very early stage. We will be procuring some expertise to help us design the format of these events. We think they will be a mix of events in traditional community engagement settings, then perhaps less traditional wherever we can meet people to make it easy for people to take part. Initially, we are looking to pilot the events in September through to December. We will be coming back out to you with some proposals. At this stage, if you have any thoughts on how we can engage the communities that you represent, please put them in the chat or email us directly. We are very happy to speak with you.

I can see a comment in the chat that Deaf people were really impacted by the pandemic due to a lack of information or access in healthcare settings, and absolutely, that's something that we'll feed into the design, and we'll be really happy to have a chat with you about how we can design events for Deaf people.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Yes, can I just re emphasise that we don't want anyone to be missed.

**Disability Rights UK:** I wasn't sure whether to wait for the question and answer but I was just going to say that in that suite of listening events, maybe some consideration should be given to online events, particularly

with people who are clinically extremely vulnerable or people who have particular difficulties in travelling. I was just going to add that deaf people are a really important group as are people with learning disabilities. I think maybe online settings for some groups, particularly with those of the energy limiting conditions and those with Long Covid might be better than forcing people to travel to a physical building.

**Member of the Inquiry Team:** : Yes, absolutely, completely agree. And I should have said that. Actually, that is part of our early thinking - that we will have a strand of online. Thank you.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Absolutely right. In fact, very early on, more than a year ago, when we were consulting on the Terms of Reference, we held one bespoke session with people who are suffering from Long Covid and had very strong feedback that most of them would much rather not have to travel and therefore, we we did conduct that one online and, certainly we will have an appropriate mix that engages as many people as possible.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Question & Answer session**

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** We've got a few more questions being added, many thanks. That probably heralds the start of the Q&A. I promised we would start with those questions that were sent in in advance. The first of those came from FEMHO: What means will the Inquiry use to determine how the social determinants of health have affected BME communities during the pandemic? Do you want to say anything more by way of context?

**FEMHO:** I would like to thank you for inviting me to this important event. I think we need to also define what structural discrimination might look like.

I think that definition could be crystallised by the Inquiry. There are a number of definitions, so we do need to know what those inequalities might look at.

You alluded to the fact that this is going to look at events pre-pandemic as well. So that pleased us obviously. The family of course is the Federation of Ethnic minority organisations. I should say a conglomerate of about 45 or 46 different health care organisations that came together

during the pandemic. What we thought is that it is important to properly investigate these inequalities, and we need to address the underlying causative factors and how such factors might influence the planning response and the impact of the pandemic. Crucially our interests are in these factors because they might well indicate the preexisting structural racism and discrimination and health inequalities. Of course in terms of human rights issues, this is a very important matter of principle. I appreciate, this event isn't about the law but certainly it is about human rights and how it impacted on people, generally, particularly, of course, from my point of view from the Federation's point of view, those in BME communities as well as BME health workers. We know that the first 14 doctors who died were all BME. That was in April, reported in the Guardian when we wrote to the Prime Minister to express our concerns.

And I'd like to know what the framework would be around all of this in order to discuss and eliminate those pre-existing inequalities so that this sort of event doesn't happen again. Thank you.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you very much indeed for that. I will ask my colleague to just come in on that.

**Member of the Inquiry Team:** Thank you so much for the question and I hope some of what you've heard today has answered some of your original question. Thank you for your additional context there.

Just to reiterate, again, the Inquiry has commissioned evidence from two of the world leading experts on inequality, Professor's Marmot and Bambra. Both of those do work extensively on the social determinants of health, so that is very much feeding into their expert report and will be available for the Inquiry. The Inquiry is also instructing a new expert or experts on evidence around structural discrimination with a focus on structural racism in the UK before the pandemic, which will be available for legal teams in the Inquiry. You're completely right in your requirement to define some of those. I think that will come out in the initial conversations with the experts that have been chosen.

There's a lot of work going on in the background to select the right experts, experts who can cover the kind of issues that we want to make sure are drawn to the Chair's attention and give that kind of evidence of exactly what the context was at the beginning of the pandemic, so that

can really feed into the rest of and of the Inquiry's work. Those experts will also be giving more context around what will be covered and what will be defined in those terms. So, we hope to be able to be clearer on that once those experts have been selected and have accepted the role.

Across the Inquiry more broadly, we are weaving consideration of inequalities throughout the modules. The way we can do that includes requesting evidence from a really wide range of organisations, representing different groups and supplementing experience together through the Every Story Matters. That's been talked about today.

Coming back to your point specifically around healthcare workers. That's something that we are really aware of and it's definitely something that's been taken into consideration around module three and there will be consideration about how those issues in the healthcare system may have contributed to inequalities for patients and healthcare workers. Those are definitely topics that the Inquiry is really aware of and we'll be taking forward and really hope to be able to give you updates on that soon.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Just to add to that, I think it's a really good point. FEMHO, You're representing healthcare workers. Occupation is something that we will need to look at as an Inquiry, in addition to other characteristics. It goes to the point I missed out, I think it was Action for Race Equality who made the point about intersectionality and the importance of looking at layer upon layer of disadvantage. It's very much something that we're alive to. And, and it certainly isn't just the intersectionality of occupation and race. There are lots and lots of others and I think we'd be doing all of you and the people you represent a disservice, if, for example, we were to simply rest on, 'well disadvantage equals and socioeconomic disadvantage equals, high impact. I'd be surprised if it turns out to be as simple as that.

Thank you very much FEMHO.

**FEMHO:** Could I just say, one of the things that you might want to look at is what I mentioned earlier. So yes, all of that is great and thank you very much. I mean that, but we also need to know whether and how pre-existing inequalities were factored into the UK's planning for and response to the pandemic. I'm not quite sure, you might have addressed

that, but I think it's important that the Inquiry does look into that and whether that then led to evidence of any systemic failures in breach of the human rights regulations. So maybe you could take that away. I don't expect you to answer that just now, but I think those are important features of this Inquiry.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you. I'm in danger of getting this wrong. I think I'm right. Is FEMHO a Core Participant in module one. That correct?

**FEMHO:** Yes.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** That in itself is a sign that you will have a voice in court and influence the direction of that investigation. As I said earlier, the content of the investigations themselves, ultimately is for the Chair, in response to representations. Of course, as an overall approach, making sure that we're understanding the backdrop, not just the things that happened from about January 2020 is going to be vital.

Thank you.

Migrants Organise weren't able to join us today, but have popped in another question. And I might again, turn to my colleague on the substance of this. So, and here's what Migrants Organise say: "We have applied for Core Participant status but were denied an opportunity to testify about systemic discrimination issues many of our members experienced during the pandemic. We have some concerns about the seriousness with which our experiences will be considered by the inquiry. Especially the impact of NHS charges regime on delivery and access to healthcare during the pandemic? How will inquiry address these systemic issues fairly and inclusively? Would you be able to address this at the webinar?"

I'm just going to say something about what I think is a misapprehension, and that's implicit in this question.

Migrants Organise clearly have been denied Core Participants status for whichever module it was that they applied for. I don't know which one it was, but they have not been denied the opportunity to testify as they say. You don't have to be a Core Participant to be a witness, or to provide evidence or to engage with the Inquiry and its proceedings.

Core Participants have a particular status and for example, it is somewhat easier to ask questions if you're a Core Participant or witnesses but certainly Migrants Organise aren't being barred. I will pass over to my colleague to add to what you've already said to FEMHO about inequalities.

**Member of the Inquiry Team:** We will be sending an answer to Migrants Organise specifically on this, but just to reiterate, Core Participant status isn't the only way that people can provide evidence to the Inquiry. Events like this is one of the ways we're going to be continuing to try and reach out to hear from different groups. We really hope that this is a helpful forum for raising those points.

I don't want to repeat too much, but I'll just go through the second part of their question, specifically around health delivery and access to health care. Module Three in particular, is focusing on the impact of Covid, on the healthcare system. Within the investigations, we will be considering how systemic issues in the healthcare system might have contributed to these inequalities. As I said before, for both patients and healthcare workers. Later modules will look at the impact of the pandemic on specific groups and organisations are free to apply to be Core Participants for any module. Further applications will be considered on their merits. We will take this question away and feed it into the Module team, so that they are aware of the topic raised specifically by Migrants organised.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thanks, I am really keen that we reassure Migrants Organise that this is not their last chance to become Core Participants, and I'm fairly sure that an investigation later on in the Inquiry will be looking specifically at migrants.

Over to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

**Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI):** I would just echo the question from Migrant's Organise and obviously, at JCWI, we work closely with Migrants Organise. I've had similar concerns, and I think this was mentioned in the previous forum, but I think as much as it's kind of reassuring to hear that there'll be other opportunities to feed in, we are concerned that these groups would be used as a kind of alternative to Core Participant status. Up until now, we feel that migrants groups have

been a bit siloed off and aren't represented within Core Participants, and the importance of really looking at those hostile environment policies as one of the causes of inequality that kind of predates the pandemic. I think it's not kind of an issue that can be put together with, obviously it's related to other issues that are being looked at like systemic racism and racial justice, and some of the other groups we've mentioned, but I think it does really require looking at in its own right, especially where the hostile environment comes into it and so we're just kind of echoing all of that and ask if there'll be another chance for Core Participant status, that will be looking more specifically at migrants than I'd be really interested if you had any other information about that you could share.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thanks very much. The Terms of Reference explicitly referred to migrants. I think I'm writing saying that the scope of modules, one, two and three, which are the only modules that have been opened so far. They're the first three investigations and don't touch on migrants. That suggests to me that the Inquiry hasn't yet got there. I can say no more than that yet because it's all in the planning for, for what the rest of the Inquiry is going to look at.

To be clear, without wishing to state the obvious, the reason why the Chair has decided to split the Inquiry into modules, is precisely so that each one of those can be manageable. So there can be a manageable number of Core Participants for each.

So that each of the many issues that are in the Terms of Reference can be given due weight without trying to create a very big nebulous investigation that tries to do all things for all people.

**Sign Health:** I know obviously, we're going to talk later about certain things. In terms of the continuation, what I'd want to do is remember that Deaf communities sit within all of those groups. It's not just Deaf, within one group. It's also Deaf and BME, Deaf and disabled. I think it's important that we have that, that the organisations that we engage with, we do it in the right way. At the same time, we recognise that our reach is covering all of those areas. So it's a massive reach. It's to make sure we gather all participants from all groups. I think it's a consideration, we're talking about socio economic, mindful that there isn't just Deaf that are just sitting in the Deaf group. There's also all the groups that we

need to reach, that have their own smaller, internal, say sub Deaf community within that. And it's not just this is a sign language user that we need to support. It's all those other characteristics as we mentioned again.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** It's a really good point. Thank you very much, indeed. It goes to Action for Race Equality's point about intersectionality. You're absolutely right. There are at least two ways in which we need to be thinking about that. This one is, as you say, making sure that people who use sign language can properly engage with the Inquiry, but also that Deaf people's many experiences are properly reflected into the Chair's evidence.

Thank you very much indeed. While we're on the subject, I might just pick up the point about Irish Sign Language also being a language that's used in the UK. Of course there are many, many other languages that are used across the UK. We haven't talked much about that today but one of the things that we are keen to do is to make sure that we find the right way to talk to as many people as we can. That will mean using a great many different languages. I can't promise you today that Irish Sign Language will be one of them, but it is something that we are considering and speaking to Disability Organisations in Northern Ireland about.

**Sign Health:** Northern Ireland, they have got their own sign language they also use NIBSL they've got, a mixture of Irish and British sign language. Just to be conscious of that.

NIBSL is what is used and it's a very, very different type of sign language as it follows a different format and to BSL. So it might just be worth it, whoever you contact just to be aware of different regional and different types of sign language that are used depending on who you're contacting and where they're based.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Brilliant, thank you very much for raising the issue in the first place. I'm going to bring in the NHS Race and Health Observatory now.

**NHS Race and Health Observatory:** This is a question about the evidence that emerges out of these listening exercises, and everything

you've describe so far, and I'll probably expose some ignorance of the legal process, but I wonder what status the evidence will have, compared to everything else that we put in front of the Inquiry. I ask this because, historically, established hierarchies of evidence tend to value hard data and academic analysis above lived experience, and what's often dismissed as anecdotal evidence around people's experiences. So has that been considered or put another way when this evidence reaches the hearings, is there a risk that it will be listened to and actually not meaningfully contributed to the outcomes of the Inquiry.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** The Chair is as committed to the listening exercises, as she is to the legal proceedings. She sees those as two sides of the same coin, the same investigative coin.

Recent history suggests that there are ways to do this really, really powerfully in a way that works. I have in mind in particular, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse which published its final report quite recently. It published a number of reports, I think about 15 in the end, many of which were not completely reliant but heavily informed by what they called their Truth Project, a very extensive participation exercise that they ran for survivors and victims of sexual abuse.

That was very powerful and it changed the course of the findings and recommendations of the Chair and the panel. I don't think that we ought to be pessimistic about that. And of course, there'll be a balance to be struck, but I think I think Chair is up for doing that.

There are a couple more questions that came in the chat including about under 18s, about healthcare workers who died, about mental health, rurality, and being in a safe environment.

**Disability Action Northern Ireland:** I just wanted to come back to Sign Language. For example, the UK government makes some announcements, you have a British Sign Language interpreter, then our local government makes an announcement, there's an Irish Sign language interpreter and British. So it is not a statutory requirement but it's a good practice.

Today we were booking sign language interpreters for an event. I had to go for British Sign Language and for Irish sign language just to make

sure that all people get access from the Deaf and disabled community. Also, different kinds of formats for submissions were mentioned. What about Easy Read?

**Member of the Inquiry Team:** I've been in correspondence with Disability Action Northern Ireland and they have given me some really good advice on that. We'll be looking at that as part of our BSL, offering. With regards to Easy Read, again, I'm working with organisations. I've got meetings next week to check our approach. There will be an Easy Read version of the form which will be offline. But we are hoping to provide an online form as well as information that will support understanding of how they can participate. That there's something we're looking at with Mencap next week.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thanks, some very helpful contacts in the chat as well. Over to Equally Ours.

**Equally Ours:** Hi. Thank you. First of all, I was going to say thank you very much for putting this forum together. I think it's really important and really timely. The discussions we've just been having showed the kind of level of complexity there is about engaging on equalities and with the communities affected by inequality and by discrimination, including within communities. There's two things I wanted to ask about: one is about the community engagement events.

I've had some conversations with staff before about your planning to procure a provider to deliver that work. I wondered if you could say more about that and how you're building in some of these kinds of complexities into that criteria, and if you're considering either as part of that procurement or alongside it, more targeted work which would enable partnerships and collaboration with the kind of organisations that we are talking about here. I mean, for example I've seen in other large-scale community engagement activities, on big national policies, where there's been either collaboration and partnership that's been resourced and supported. There's been, for example, a small grants fund being made available, that is small enough, that a small organisation with minimal capacity, could apply for it, then use those resources to engage with communities. I wondered, if some of that kind of thinking has been done, because there will be very, very many organisations including national

organisations who want to be doing this and will want to facilitate and work with you to enable engaging with their communities, but are not currently resourced to do so because the resourcing for this sector (and somebody's commented on it in the chat already) is significantly under resourced.

A lot of organisations and communities are not just reeling from the covid pandemic, but currently dealing with the cost of living crisis and the effect that is having on communities that have already been hit by the pandemic are now being hit again. So, thinking about that resourcing and support for the community engagement at that very grassroots level, I think it's going to be really important.

The other question I had, is a bigger picture one around the policy side of things. We have regular engagement with the government and with the Equality Hub within the Cabinet Office and we did throughout the pandemic. It won't come as a surprise to anybody on this call, that we were not happy with the government's analysis around the role of race and the role of structural inequalities within the pandemic. The most recent information we've had from them is that they're going to be leaning very heavily on the reports that were put out during the pandemic that denied the impact of structural racism. In fact, try to position that unequal impact of the pandemic as being about socio-economic inequality and kind of remove from that dialogue, the element of racism. I know that report was rejected by some of the organisations on this call and by many of our members.

So, just ask for assurance that, that particular position in particular, is going to be challenged. I'm glad to hear there's experts who are going to be brought in to support the Inquiry on this, because it will require experts to help with that challenge. I am very familiar with the work of Professor Marmot. I have absolute admiration for his expertise. But he's a recent convert in some ways to the role of structural racism, and I'm not saying he doesn't get it now. He absolutely does. But, it's not going to be embedded in the same way as somebody who is starting from that perspective originally. So I'm really glad to hear that there's going to be expertise alongside him. Those are my two points and questions.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thanks very much, indeed. What you've asked is an investigative question. It comes down to the investigative approach that the Inquiry takes and that, as I say, is down to the Chair. But, I can assure you that she is intending to run a very thorough Inquiry that will investigate all sides of the debate. I'll hand over to my colleague to take the point on the listening events in particular.

**Member of the Inquiry Team:** Thanks Equally Ours for a really great question. I will try my best to answer it, with the caveat that we are at an early stage with designing the community listening events. We want them to be as inclusive as possible. It's obviously about striking the right balance with being able to listen to as many people as possible, with delivering value for money for the public purse.

In terms of the procurement, we are looking to work with a community engagement specialist. We are talking to lots of different experts and providers at the moment, to get their input into shaping the scope of what we can deliver, and the best ways to deliver that.

All of your input, and all of these sessions that we are having, are really really helpful in making sure that we are considering all the complexities that you're talking about, and that we're capturing those. We very much want to target people at a local level in local communities by working with trusted local organisations, grassroots organisations. I think we'd be looking for an overarching communication engagement supplier to help coordinate that (whether it's a consortium) in terms of the best way to do that.

On your point about limited resource and grants, nothing is off the table at the moment. I think it is about striking the right balance in terms of value for money. I know that's a little bit woolly. Once we've developed our scope a little bit more, we'll be coming back to talk to organisations, and testing some of the proposals and seeing if there are limitations to that.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you for the questions and response. I will try to pick off the questions that have been asked in the chat now. I'm going to start with Race Alliance Wales first question.

You've asked for a bit more detail on the listening events that we're planning across the country. Again, we are at such an early stage that we're not yet in a position to give more detail about how they will work or who they'll be targeting.

The one thing I will say though, is your point about the fact that just talking to people in ethnic minorities isn't enough, because different ethnic minorities have different experiences, different people in different parts of the country from different ethnic backgrounds have different experiences, and we are acutely aware of that. One of the reasons that we are doing the multi-layered approach outlined earlier with the online offering, the in person offerings, is to make sure that we can target as many different people from, as many different backgrounds, and as many different communities, as we possibly can. The community events will be one way in which we do that. But, we take the point that we don't yet have a definitive answer on that.

A couple of other points around the design of the listening exercise that I'll just attempt to cover if I may. FEMHO, thank you very much. You asked the very important question about how we're going to capture the stories of healthcare workers, who died. Of course sadly, those people aren't able to tell their own stories anymore, and we have designed the listening exercise and are working very closely with organisations that represent bereaved families, and other organisations who in some way represent those people who've been bereaved. Those communities who lost many of their members. So we are anticipating that a very large chunk of the responses that we get from people for the listing exercise will be those who've been bereaved and who can provide some colour about the lives of their relatives and the circumstances under which they were tragically lost. That is one of the key tenets of listening exercise.

There was a question about how we're going to listen to the voices of under 18s, which is crucial. My background is in education. I feel as passionately about this as anyone. The Chair is absolutely of the view that we need to do this and we need to be doing it quickly because every day that goes by children's memories fade and the proportion of their life that was the pandemic becomes smaller and smaller.

We don't know exactly how that's going to be done yet, as you can imagine, we're still designing the mainstream offer for listening exercise. We need to make sure that we get the children's offer absolutely right, for different experiences and frankly, the different types of children because a child of 16 is far better able or will engage differently than a child of seven or eight. We've got a lot of thinking to do.

We've had a couple of round tables with children's organisations including disabled children's organisations to make sure that we can be mindful of how we capture the voices of children.

The point that some of this input will be triggering is a really, really good one. Perhaps don't make enough of the fact that and from very early on in our existence, as an Inquiry, we have set out to be a trauma informed organisation, and a trauma informed Inquiry. Therefore, we will be making sure that however people choose to engage with the listening exercise, whether online or at events, we have the right level of support in place, a bespoke offering from the Inquiry, that means that if people are triggered (and inevitably, some will be) they are looked after. Also, the design of everything we do, avoids retraumatising people where we can.

I hope that reassures you. Sign Health, let me bring you in now and then I'll revert to a few of the other questions.

**Sign Health:** It's linked to, what we were talking about - social, health, education and we're talking about, different lives, how people live their lives. Linked to what FEMHO was saying earlier about the Terms of Reference, I was talking about deaf communities. It's difficult to access because obviously like I said, there's many different Deaf people in the world. So it's thinking about how we include those, how we make the questionnaires etc within health fitting for those and also how powerful those will be. Obviously, I'm an advocate for deaf people, access to health for deaf people, I do that every single day, we fight for the rights of deaf people. I attend conferences, government conferences. It's a lot of campaigning and it's a lot of protesting and sometimes the Deaf community struggle to access that effectively. So, how strong in terms of these questionnaires, how powerful in terms of this, influences change in

the future. How is it going to influence? How powerful is the result of the response going to be?

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** Thank you, Sign Health. I'm going to try and answer that and I'll ask my colleague to come in if she's got anything she'd like to add. In some ways we're only as well informed, as these types of conversations allow us to be and of the roots that they then send us down. I've learned more than I was expecting to today about the different types of British sign language that exist. That's been incredibly helpful and will give us some new lines of Inquiry in designing our engagement that we will pursue. I'm not quite sure I follow the question about how powerful it will be, but I hope that you've seen today, the commitment of me and my team in making sure that where we can, we are as inclusive as we possibly can be, because unfortunately, the pandemic was indiscriminate and, and in many ways it impacted those who were less able to be heard or less able to protect themselves.

**Sign Health:** Obviously you know the covid, pandemic, the issues, how it affected people, how it was inequality. This, what we're doing now, how are we going to basically make sure that those views are worthy and valid. How will this influence NHS policies? Will it influence NHS policies? Will it be in terms of reference? Will there be some kind of difference in the law? Will things be changed? How powerful is this Inquiry to influence changing policies to therefore enable access? Obviously I'm advocating for this, this is what we always advocate for. What is the situation with that? Is it strong enough? Is it powerful? Are we going to change the internal structures of the NHS? Are they going to be better health systems for those barriers that were already imposed? Are they going to change? Is there going to be that? Is there going to be a different direction with NHS policies? Are we going to have such a massive influence with this Inquiry?

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** It's a great question. Let's not forget this Inquiry hasn't heard a minute of evidence yet and that begins in June and will last throughout the course of this year and beyond. I'll give you an example. Public Inquiries are as powerful as the quality of their recommendations. By having conversations like this, we make sure that the Inquiry will be as well informed as possible, and that we will have the right information flowing into it. That's why we're here. As an example, at

the weekend, the Home Secretary announced that the government will be bringing in mandatory reporting for child sex abuse. That is not something that would have happened had it not been a recommendation at the end of last year from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse. I think that shows the power of public inquiries.

I don't know what the recommendations are going to be, that will be for the Chair, after she's heard the evidence. But, we're intending to make sure that the country is better prepared next time.

**Sign Health:** Okay, we'll see what happens.

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** We're running short of time. I do want to make sure that we pick off those questions that have already come in. I can deal fairly quickly with the mention that several of you made about mental health and the fact that the pandemic had a huge impact on people's mental health. It did and that was something that we heard very loudly when we went around the country, during the consultation on the Terms of Reference this time last year. As a result, it was one of the Chair's recommendations to the Prime Minister that mental health should be included in the Terms of Reference, so that she can investigate it and he accepted that.

The question about rurality, the difficulty that can be had accessing those individuals and communities that live in the islands, rural Wales, and some parts of England and Northern Ireland. It's a really good one. I will simply say now that we are aware of that. We are thinking about what our outreach strategy needs to look like both in terms of physical and digital communications, but also people like us getting out about and going to some of this nation's most beautiful places. We are acutely aware that this isn't just a nation of cities.

A question was asked about whether there will be Welsh language opportunities outside of Wales. I don't know the answer to that. It may well mean, certainly we will be having some Welsh language opportunities that are online, which will do some of that. I think, as with all of this, we don't have a blank cheque. We need to make sure that we are spending our money wisely, but we will be making sure that we are catering for what demand exists. And so if it turns out that there's a

grand swell in favour of that and it's sufficient for us to prioritise that, then, of course, we'll look at that.

With the questions I see we've had a few from Race Alliance Wales. And from Action for Race Equality. We said that we would do this in 90 minutes and we've run out of time. Can I just reassure everybody, we're copying the chat, so that we can make sure that we reply to every single question that hasn't had a response today. Apologies, that we haven't managed to answer all of them.

I think at the very least we've answered one or two questions from everybody who asked one and I'm sorry to those of you who put a few in towards the end and we didn't manage to get to.

### **Agenda Item 6: Conclusion**

**Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary):** I really hope that that has been a helpful conversation for all of you. Let me assure you that it really, really has been for us.

I've learned not just about British Sign Language but I've learned about the sheer variety and commitment that exists across all four nations of the UK, to help us to get this right. We're incredibly grateful to you for that and I hope we can rely on you from time to time, to spend a little bit of time checking in with us and maybe a quarterly edition of this forum to keep the conversation going and to keep you updated. Hopefully, also to keep us on the straight and narrow and make sure that we hold true to our commitment and the Chair's commitment that we will put equalities at the forefront of what we do.

I'm really, really grateful. We will make sure that we circulate transcripts to attendees here before anything goes online.

We would also be really grateful for any feedback on this session. Any views, comments or additional questions, please send them through.

Thank you all very, very much for that. I'm so grateful to you and look forward to seeing you again soon.

**Questions raised during Equalities Forum**  
(via Google chat and before webinar)

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Webinar questions submitted (via Google chat function)</b>	<b>Answer</b>
FEMHO	How will you capture stories of those Health and Social Care workers who died from Covid?	<p>We have designed the listening exercise and are working very closely with organisations that represent bereaved families and communities who lost many of their members.</p> <p>We anticipate that a large proportion of the responses that we get from people for the listening exercise will be from those who have been bereaved and who can provide information about the lives of those who died and the circumstances under which they were tragically lost. That is one of the key tenets of listening exercise.</p> <p>We also hope to hear from people working in health and social care who can share their experiences of working through the pandemic, some of whom are likely to have lost colleagues.</p>

<p>Action for Race Equality</p>	<p>Concerned about under 18s having a voice!</p>	<p>The Chair is of the view that the Inquiry needs to hear from those under 18.</p> <p>We are still designing the mainstream offer for listening exercise but are aware that we need to make sure that we get the children's offer of the listening exercise right.</p> <p>We have had discussions with children's organisations, including disabled children's organisations to make sure that we can be mindful of how we capture the voices of children and young people in an appropriate way.</p>
<p>Sign Health</p>	<p>I'd like to highlight that deaf people were also severely impacted by the pandemic as well</p>	<p>We will ensure that people who use sign language can properly engage with the Inquiry, and that Deaf people's many experiences are properly reflected into the Chair's evidence. We are keen to ensure that we find the right way to talk to as many people as we can.</p> <p>Concern about access to information for Deaf people is an issue we are aware of and we will be speaking to organisations that represent Deaf people regarding how we can design listening</p>

		events for Deaf communities.
Disability Action Northern Ireland	What about ISL users? In Northern Ireland we have some deaf people using ISL and some BSL	We are keen to make sure that we find the right way to talk to as many people as we can. That will mean using many different languages. Irish Sign Language is something that we are considering and speaking to Disability Organisations in Northern Ireland about.
FEMHO	Impact of covid on mentally ill people and the impact of the pandemic on mental health of the population deserves particular scrutiny	The impact of the pandemic on mental health was highlighted by many people and organisations during our Terms of Reference consultation in 2022.  As a result, it was one of the Chair's recommendations to the Prime Minister that mental health should be included in the Terms of Reference, so that she can investigate it, and he accepted that.
Race Alliance Wales	People experienced barriers due to rurality. This is a regular barrier in Wales, and also impacted people particularly in Wales when 'distance travelled'	We are aware of issues regarding rurality and the difficulty that can be had accessing those individuals and communities that live in the islands, rural Wales, and some parts of England and Northern Ireland.  Therefore, in developing our

	<p>restrictions were implemented during the pandemic / different restrictions for different Local Authorities.</p>	<p>outreach strategy, we are considering physical and digital communications as well as outreach in rural areas. We are acutely aware that the UK is not just a nation of cities.</p> <p>The Inquiry appreciates that rural communities across the UK experienced different impacts from various government restrictions. These will be explored in the Inquiry's investigations and in particular in Modules 2A, 2B and 2C.</p>
<p>Inclusion Scotland</p>	<p>Rurality: Scotland too. And island communities. There needs to be sensitivity there as people can be reluctant to comment openly in small communities where e.g. the social worker's brother lives next door. Will community events be targeting particular groups? How will they be 'safe'?</p>	<p>We are still at an early stage of developing our community listening events and will be working with a community engagement specialist to help us design the events and ensure they are as inclusive as possible. We are planning to pilot the events in the Autumn. Our early thinking is some events will be open to the general public, while others should be targeted to specific groups that have been impacted by the pandemic such as the bereaved, healthcare workers, disabled people, the clinically vulnerable and children and</p>

		<p>young people. The events will be across the four nations and include a mix of urban and more rural communities. Listening staff present at the events will be trained in safeguarding participants and trauma-informed practice and we will ensure participants' anonymity is maintained in how experiences are captured.</p>
Sign Health	<p>Marmot's social determination of health doesn't include barriers to access as a non-medical factor that influence health outcomes - how will this be included in the enquiry?</p>	<p>This is an investigative question. It comes down to the investigative approach that the Inquiry takes and that is down to the Chair. She is intending to run a very thorough Inquiry that will investigate all sides of the debate.</p> <p>Later Modules will consider the impact of the pandemic on different groups of people across the UK.</p>

<p>Action for Race Equality</p>	<p>Very pleased the Inquiry is baking in structural racism - how does this square with a Government that rejects there is systemic and institutional racism?</p>	<p>The Chair 's recommendation to the Prime Minister, which he accepted, was to put inequalities at the forefront so that investigation of unequal impacts of the pandemic would run throughout the Inquiry. The Inquiry will be investigating the impact of the pandemic on at-risk, vulnerable people and marginalised people, including but not only those with protected characteristics, either under the Great Britain Law or Northern Irish Law.</p> <p>The Chair considered submissions from a number of core participants that she should consider the role of structural racism in the Inquiry's work. She decided to instruct an expert to produce a report into pre-pandemic structural discrimination, including structural racism, to give context to the Inquiry's second module on political and administrative decision-making of the UK and devolved governments. The Inquiry is working to find the right expert (or experts)</p>
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		<p>to produce this work and will update Core Participants and the public on this shortly.</p> <p>The Inquiry is required by statute to be impartial and will maintain its independence throughout. The Chair will hear from a wide range of voices and views on these issues during the course of the Inquiry, and will base her rulings on the evidence provided.</p>
Race Alliance Wales:	<p>Community Listening: Will these be facilitated by the inquiry team or will orgs be able to facilitate their own with support from the inquiry team? If the latter, how do we contribute community voices in general, rather than individual</p>	<p>In terms of the procurement, we are looking to work with a community engagement specialist.</p> <p>We very much want to target people at a local level in local communities by working with trusted local and grassroots organisations.</p> <p>It will be important to strike the right balance in terms of value for money.</p> <p>We are at an early stage and once we have further developed our scope, we will come back to your organisations to test some of the proposals.</p>
Runnymede	Echo the concern of MO and JCWI	The Inquiry's Terms of Reference explicitly

	re: the need to specifically look at the impact of hostile environment policies	<p>references migrants as one of the groups that will be considered in its investigation.</p> <p>The Inquiry is hearing from a wide range of Core Participants and impact organisations, including those that represent migrants and refugees.</p>
FEMHO	our application for CP status for Module 1 was rejected. Can we reapply?	Later modules will examine the impact of the pandemic on particular groups and sectors of society. Any organisations who were not granted Core Participant status in a particular module can apply to later modules at the appropriate time if they wish.
Race Alliance Wales	Would we be able to know at some point the breakdown of the 300 proposed community listening events - as with migrant stories, we know that the experiences of different ethnic minority groups is, in basis, different - and not enough	We are still at an early stage of developing our community listening events and will be working with a community engagement specialist to help us design the events and ensure they are as inclusive as possible. We are planning to pilot the events in the Autumn. In designing the events careful consideration will be given to the geographic approach to include all regions of the UK and with a focus on those

	<p>effort is made to disaggregate in many instances beyond 'black', 'asian', 'GRT', 'muslim'...</p>	<p>most impacted by the pandemic. Some examples of those we may hold targeted events for are the bereaved, ethnic minority groups most impacted by Covid-19, young people, people in care homes, clinically vulnerable with conditions such as Long Covid and healthcare workers. We are happy to update you on our plans as they develop.</p>
<p>Race Alliance Wales:</p>	<p>trauma informed does not mean that people know how to deal with trauma that is triggered, it just informs them</p>	<p>We will be making sure that however people choose to engage with the listening exercise, whether online or at events, we have the right level of support in place, a bespoke offering from the Inquiry, that means that if people are triggered they are looked after.</p> <p>Also, the design of everything we do, avoids re-traumatising people where we can.</p>
<p><b>Organisation</b></p>	<p><b>Webinar questions submitted (ahead of forum)</b></p>	

<p>FEMHO: Federation of Ethnic Minority Healthcare Organisations</p>	<p>What means will the Inquiry use to determine how the social determinants of health have affected BME communities during the pandemic?</p>	<p>Hopefully some of the conversation today will have answered this but to reiterate, the Inquiry has already commissioned evidence from two of the world leading experts on inequality, Marmot and Banbra, both of who work extensively on social determinants of health. As Ben has discussed today, the Inquiry will be instructing a new expert or experts on the evidence around structural discrimination, with a focus on structural racism in the UK before the pandemic.</p> <p>Across the Inquiry more broadly we're weaving consideration of inequalities throughout modules, requesting evidence from a wide range of organisations representing disadvantaged groups, and supplementing with experiences gathered through ESM.</p> <p>The Chair will carefully consider all the evidence and information she hears on this important topic and will take this into consideration when reaching her conclusions and making any</p>
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		recommendations.
Migrants Organise	<p>We have applied for Core Participant status but were denied an opportunity to testify about systemic discrimination issues many of our members experienced during the pandemic. We have some concerns about the seriousness with which our experiences will be considered by the inquiry. Especially the impact of NHS charges regime on delivery and access to healthcare during the pandemic?</p> <p><b>How will inquiry address these systemic issues fairly and inclusively?</b></p> <p><b>Would you be able to address this at the webinar?</b></p>	<p>The Chair designates Core Participant status to those who she considers may have played a direct and significant role or have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to be examined in a specific Module. It is not necessary for an organisation to be a Core Participant to provide evidence to the Inquiry and today's forum is one of the examples of how we're hoping to hear from a wider range of organisations other than core participants.</p> <p>Module 3 is focusing on impact on the healthcare system. Within our investigations, we will be considering how systemic issues in the healthcare system may have contributed to inequalities for patients and healthcare workers. Later modules will examine the impact of the pandemic on particular groups and sectors of society. Any organisations who were not granted Core Participant status in a particular module can apply to later modules at</p>

		the appropriate time if they wish. I will take away this question and feed it back to the module team so they are aware of the topic raised.
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