



UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry

Financial Report to 31 March 2023

Overview

The information in this report sets out the expenditure for the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry as at 31 March 2023. All figures are in £k [and exclude VAT, where applicable].

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry ('the Inquiry') is the independent public inquiry set up under the Inquiries Act 2005 to examine the UK's response to and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and learn lessons for the future. The Inquiry is Chaired by Baroness Heather Hallett.

The Inquiry was formally established on 28 June 2022, following an initial set-up phase. The set-up phase included the appointment of the Chair in December 2021 and a public consultation on the Inquiry's draft Terms of Reference in March and April 2022. The Inquiry's final Terms of Reference were received from the Prime Minister in June 2022 [UK COVID-19 Inquiry: terms of reference](#).

The Inquiry's examination of the different aspects of the pandemic covered in the Terms of Reference is divided into investigations known as 'modules'. The modules of the Inquiry are being announced and opened in sequence. The Chair considers applications for Core Participant status for each module; a Core Participant is a person, institution or organisation that has a specific interest in the issues covered by a module, and has a formal role defined by legislation. Each module has preliminary and full evidential hearings, details of which are published by the Inquiry [UK Covid-19 Inquiry Modules](#). In the period covered by this report, the Inquiry opened six modules, held eleven preliminary hearings and awarded Core Participant status to 133 people or groups.

The Inquiry is developing a national listening exercise, called Every Story Matters, to meet the Terms of Reference commitment to listen to the experiences of bereaved families and others who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic. It will provide an opportunity for people to tell the Inquiry about their experiences without the formality of giving evidence or attending a public hearing. These experiences will be collated, analysed and fed into the investigations via themed reports.

In order to perform its functions effectively, the Inquiry needs a number of operational and cross-cutting services. This includes emotional support and safeguarding services to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation for those engaging with the Inquiry. It also includes bespoke accommodation for public hearings and office accommodation for the Inquiry team.

In order to gather, analyse and share evidence securely, the Inquiry uses a digital “eDiscovery” platform for evidential material and data.

Inquiry expenditure

The total expenditure for the financial year to 31 March 2023 is £22.440m. A breakdown is provided below.

All amounts in £k	Notes	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Chair	1	100	30
Legal Costs - Counsel and Solicitors	2	9,210	172
Legal Costs - Section 40	3	3,129	-
Inquiry Secretariat	4	3,428	115
Modules	5	402	42
Listening Exercise (Every Story Matters), Engagement and Commemoration	6	2,187	251
Operational and Cross-cutting Costs	9	3,185	340
Other	10	799	13
TOTAL		22,440	963

Notes

1. Chair

On 21 December 2021, the Prime Minister [appointed](#) The Right Honourable Baroness Heather Hallett DBE as Chair of the Inquiry. The letter of appointment can be found [here](#). As a retired Appeal Court judge, the Chair is paid equivalent to a sitting Lady Justice of Appeal.

The table below shows a breakdown of remuneration and expenses for the Chair. Expenses include travel, subsistence, accommodation and IT.

All amounts in £k	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Remuneration		
Chair	98	30
Expenses		
Chair	2	-
TOTAL	100	30

2. Legal Costs - Counsel and Solicitors

2.1 Counsel

As at March 2023, the Inquiry had appointed 62 members of Counsel, including 12 King's Counsel and 50 Junior Counsel: not all of these worked concurrently or full-time.

All Counsel to the Inquiry are appointed under the authority of the Chair, who delegates responsibility for recruiting and agreeing terms of appointment with individuals to the Solicitor to the Inquiry.

2.2 Solicitors

The Inquiry has contracted Burges Salmon LLP to provide legal services including the Solicitor to the Inquiry. The Inquiry's solicitors are supported by a team of paralegals, responsible for reviewing the evidential material that is provided to the Inquiry.

All amounts in £k	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Counsel to the Inquiry		
Solicitors to the Inquiry (inc Paralegals)	9,210	172
Other	-	-
TOTAL	9,210	172

3. Legal Costs - Section 40

At the discretion of the Chair, the Inquiry may provide funding for legal representation for Core Participants in accordance with the provisions of Section 40 of the Inquiries Act 2005. The total Section 40 payments to March 2023 are £3.129m.

Applications for costs are controlled under the framework set out in the Inquiries Act 2005 and the Inquiry Rules 2006. The Prime Minister issued a [determination](#) setting out the parameters of the Section 40 awards the Chair may make (for example allowable hourly rates). The Inquiry has published a costs [protocol](#) which is relevant to applications for and consideration of awards under section 40.

All amounts in £k	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Core Participants	3,129	-
TOTAL	3,129	-

4. Inquiry Secretariat

The Secretary to the Inquiry received remuneration within the annual Senior Civil Servant Pay band 2 range (£90,001 to £95,000). Expenses of £2k were recorded for this period.

The Inquiry Secretariat consists of 77 individuals who are employed as civil servants. The Secretariat includes teams working within Module teams and running hearings, leading development of the listening exercise (Every Story Matters) and running operational delivery functions such as information management and buildings management.

All amounts in £k	FY21/22 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Permanent staff costs	3,377	115
Contingent labour costs	51	-
TOTAL	3,428	115

5. Modules

5.1 Hearings costs

Hearing costs are those associated with holding preliminary and full public hearings for the Inquiry's legal proceedings in London, across the UK or remotely. These costs include, for example:

- technology services and IT infrastructure provided within the hearing room for broadcast and display of evidence and live streaming;
- IT costs of delivering remote hearings and connections where individual participants require remote access;
- translation and interpreter services for those whose first language is not English, including to comply with the Welsh Language Act.

5.2 Expert Advisers

An expert adviser is a person who is called to give an opinion to the Chair and Counsel on matters which call for expert skills or knowledge. Their role is to provide technical analysis and expertise, which will assist the Inquiry in delivering its Terms of Reference. Expert advisers are appointed in consultation with the lead counsel and solicitor to the Inquiry. Up to the end of March 2023 the Inquiry had appointed 11 experts across a range of disciplines including epidemiology and inequalities to ensure the Inquiry had sufficient supporting knowledge.

Where it is deemed an expert is required the Inquiry reviews suitable candidates and provides clear requirements and terms to the selected individuals on an individual basis. Inquiry expert costs are based on an agreed daily rate plus any pre-agreed support team or /materials they may require depending on the nature of their investigations and any testing they may need to undertake.

5.3 Research

External research was commissioned in year to collate and analyse the responses to the public consultation on the Inquiry's terms of reference.

All amounts in £k	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Audio visual (including broadcasting and transcription)	306	-
Translation services	50	-
Research and experts	46	42
TOTAL	402	42

6. Listening Exercise (Every Story Matters), Engagement and Commemoration

6.1 Listening Exercise

Listening Exercise costs are those associated with developing Every Story Matters. They cover:

- Research to support the development of the strategy for the Listening Exercise and test multiple research methods;
- the creation and launch of a pilot online form which was launched on the Inquiry website in November 2022;
- Creation of the Every Story Matters communications materials.

6.2 Commemoration

Commemoration costs relate to commemorative content that is being produced for use in the future hearings and Hearing Centre.

6.3 Consultation and engagement

Consultation and engagement costs are those costs incurred for the Chair's consultation on the Inquiry's draft Terms of Reference.

All amounts in £k	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Listening Exercise Research	566	-
Listening Exercise Online form development	854	-
Communications materials	726	-
Commemoration	14	-
Travelling costs (staff and participants)	27	-
Consultation and Engagement	-	251
TOTAL	2,187	251

7. Operational and cross-cutting costs

Operational and cross-cutting costs cover services which are necessary for the Inquiry to perform its functions. These costs include:

- counselling and emotional support services provided for the emotional wellbeing of individuals participating in hearings, listening and commemoration activity and the Inquiry team;
- rent, service charges, facilities management, security and set-up costs for the Inquiry's hearing accommodation and office space;
- costs for the Inquiry's evidence management system and IT equipment;
- expertise to develop the Inquiry's strategic communications approach. This included polling activity to determine public attitudes towards the Inquiry's work, testing the quality and understanding of some of the Inquiry's communications materials, and learning lessons from other Public Inquiries' communications.
- administrative costs such as stationery, postage, printing and office supplies.

All amounts in £k5	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Support and safeguarding	15	-
Accommodation	2,395	261
Evidence management system	433	-
Strategic communications	63	-
IT software and hardware	214	52
Telecoms - cross cutting	51	11
Administrative costs	7	-
Personnel costs (Recruitment costs and professional fees)	7	16
TOTAL	3,185	340

8. Other

Other costs cover services utilised by the Inquiry in supporting its functions. These costs include:

- the appointment of internal auditors to provide independent and expert scrutiny of its expenditure, accounting, risk and governance systems;
- the provision of training and development to Inquiry staff;
- staff travel and subsistence to the Inquiry's offices in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- the provision of Corporate and Digital support services delivered by the Cabinet Office;
- other costs include catering and hospitality, miscellaneous expenditure, publications and subscriptions.

All amounts in £k	FY22/23 £'000	FY 21/22 £'000
Internal audit	28	-
Training and development	38	10
Staff travel and subsistence	53	3
Internal Recharges (Corporate and Digital)	664	-
Other	16	-
TOTAL	799	13

9. Basis for figures in this report

The Inquiry is an independent statutory Inquiry. This means it is not part of the Government nor is it run by any department.

The Cabinet Office sponsor the Inquiry and provide resources for the running of the Inquiry. A joint management statement [here](#) ensures clear roles and responsibilities are in place to safeguard the independence of the Inquiry, in accordance with the provisions of the Inquiries Act 2005 and the Inquiry Rules 2006.

All figures within this report are recorded on a resource accounting basis, with estimates for work completed utilised to calculate values where invoicing has not yet been received. Inquiry assets are not depreciated. Figures are audited by the National Audit Office as part of the sponsoring Department accounts (in this case those of the Cabinet Office).