

2023-06-01 Pre-Hearing Engagement Webinar Transcript (1st June)

Attendees

Organisations

Age Cymru

Age NI

Clinically Vulnerable Families

Disability Action (NI)

Disability Rights UK

Disability Wales

Inclusion Scotland

Learning Disability Wales

Leonard Cheshire

Long Covid Nurses

Long Covid SOS

Mencap

Mencap Cymru

Mind

RNIB

Sense

Agenda Item
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2. How do I get involved / commemoration

3. Update on accessibility of the hearings
4. Update on the Public Facing ESM Campaign
5. Update on the Webform
6. Questions and Answers

Transcript

Agenda Item 1 - What to expect from hearings

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): The first section that we wanted to make sure we cover is what people can expect from hearings when they begin in a couple of weeks.

Inquiry Member of Staff: We know that many people won't have attended a hearing before. We are here today, to give an insight into what to expect. We will start off by explaining what an Inquiry is, then talk a little bit about the details of the hearings.

The way an Inquiry is run might feel quite like a court case, there will be legal representatives, asking questions, and witnesses giving evidence, but there is an important difference between the two. An Inquiry represents what is known as an inquisitorial process. It is established to examine the facts and find out exactly what happened. This is different from the adversarial process that characterises individual court cases, which typically involve two parties, putting forward opposing arguments. In court cases, the judge or jury will deliver a definitive verdict about the actions of a particular party based on the evidence they have heard.

By contrast, an Inquiry will make recommendations based on evidence as gathered to try to prevent anything that has gone wrong from happening again. It therefore serves a wider public interest than an adversarial trial. That being said, the Inquiry will, where appropriate, identify parties who are at fault, but the law does not give the Inquiry the power to make findings of criminal or civil liability, for example.

In terms of where we are up to as an Inquiry, our public hearings will begin on the 13th of June - just under two weeks from today, and this date will be the first time the Inquiry formally hears evidence. During the first six weeks of hearings, the Inquiry will hear evidence about its first module, or investigation, which concerns pre-pandemic resilience and preparedness across the whole of the UK.

Now, a bit more on practical details about the hearings. They will take place between 11am and 4pm on Mondays and between 10 am and 4pm for the remainder of the week. That will be from Tuesdays to Thursdays because the Inquiry generally will not sit on Fridays, but there are some exceptions to that. The first investigation will run for six weeks.

All inquiries start by asking what happened, so they will collect evidence, examine witness testimonies and analyse documents and then move on to ask why this happened and what can be done to prevent it happening again. The Inquiry will produce regular reports which present the Chair's findings and contain recommendations and lessons learned which will hopefully inform preparations for future pandemics across the UK.

It is also really important to note today that *Every Story Matters* is integral to the Inquiry's investigations. Its findings will function as evidence alongside evidence obtained during hearings. I would like to emphasise that *Every Story Matters* provides an opportunity for everyone in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to tell the UK Covid-19 Inquiry about their pandemic experiences. The Inquiry will base its findings and recommendations on the totality of evidence it hears. I'll now pass over to my colleague to talk about how you can get involved in the Inquiry.

Agenda Item 2 - How do I get involved / commemoration

Inquiry Member of Staff: I'm going to be talking to you about how your group, or organisation can get involved in the Inquiry. I'm going to be giving you some more information.

I appreciate you are hearing a lot of information today and I just want to reiterate that , we will be providing a transcript and also links to where some of this information is on our website. If you don't catch everything today, don't worry, it will be made available in other formats.

You don't need to be a Core Participant with a special legal status to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Inquiry will in some cases ask for evidence from many organisations and individuals. While we have got *Every Story Matters* set up over here to enable individuals to tell us about their pandemic experiences, we have also and got other ways for organisations to contribute. One way is when the Inquiry will ask you for evidence. The Inquiry will directly reach out to your organisation. If your organisation has done its own contemporaneous research during the time of the pandemic, and you think that this might be relevant to a module investigation, then, please do send this on to contact@coronavirus.inquiry.gov.uk. If you contact this email address, our research and legal teams will be able to review it. Outside of this, our lawyers may be in contact with you, proactively to explore particular lines of Inquiry if they think you have got relevant information that the Inquiry requires for some of its investigations.

Moving on to the public hearings, any person or relevant organisation can be called as a witness to give evidence. This doesn't have to be a Core Participant, anyone can be called if the Inquiry legal team believes that they have evidence that may be useful to a particular investigation. Witnesses can be asked questions by Council to the Inquiry or by legal representatives of the Core Participants, with the Chair's permission.

Anyone can watch and follow our hearings, which will be subject to a three-minute delay on our YouTube channel and evidence referred to during the hearings, will also be published on the Inquiry's website afterwards.

You are also able to come and watch hearings in person. There are limited spaces in our public gallery and viewing room for individuals to attend in person. Core Participants are able to book spaces via their legal representatives. There are eight spaces per Core Participant that can be reserved, for those that they represent. If people are travelling long distances, or have accessibility requirements and are not represented by Core Participant organisations, they can contact the Inquiry directly if they want to attend. Beyond those with accessibility requirements and those travelling long distances, the seats will be allocated on a first come first, served basis.

As some of you may want to watch the hearings with other members of your organisations or groups, we are going to be sharing some advice which I'll share when I send the email around after this call on how to set up watching rooms so that groups or organisations can watch the hearings

together. (<https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/public-hearings/watching-room-s-toolkit/>) There will also be transcripts of every hearing available on the documents section of our website. Within each one of those documents you are able to search for particular words so that you can find a section or a topic that is of particular interest to you or your organisation.

The public hearings won't only be based in London. I am going to pass over to my colleague shortly to talk about our hearing centre, Dorland House, which is based in London. However, modules 2A, 2B and 2C focus on Core Political and Administrative Governance and Decision Making in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We will be holding hearings for each module in the respective devolved nations in the New Year. The locations for these hearings centres are yet to be confirmed. However, we will announce these on our website, social media and via our Inquiry newsletter. When I finish speaking, I'll post a link to how you can sign up to the inquiry's newsletter to keep up to date with what we are doing, if you're not already on there.

I'm going to talk about our commemoration work, which some of you have been involved in. As part of our efforts to recognise and acknowledge the human impact of the pandemic and ensure that that remains at the heart of the Inquiry's proceedings, those present at the hearing centre will be able to view the first panels of our commemorative tapestry installation, which will be displayed in the main corridor leading up to the hearing room. The tapestry will consist of a number of framed panels, each created from an illustration by a different artist, working with a different community or group of individuals that were impacted by the pandemic. Further panels will be added over the lifetime of the Inquiry and the tapestry will travel around the country as Inquiry hearings take place in different parts of the UK. People will also be able to view the tapestry on the Inquiry website.

There will also be some photos of pandemic memorials from around the country in the public areas of the hearing centre. These include the

National Covid Memorial Wall in London and the Scottish Covid Memorial Walk in Pollok Country Park, Glasgow. (They are not limited to those, they are lots from all across the country).

At the opening of the public hearing we will be showing an 'impact film.' This will be around a 15 minute long video, featuring people from around the UK speaking about the devastating impact the pandemic has had on them and their lives - this will include them speaking about bereavement and loss. This film will also be broadcast simultaneously via the Inquiry livestream on Youtube (subject to a 3 minute delay). It will come with an explicit, detailed trigger warning, and those attending in person will be given the option to leave the room if they would prefer not to see it. The purpose of the film is to ensure that our hearings are grounded in the experiences of those most impacted by the pandemic - and to ensure that those who suffered hardship and loss remain at the heart of everything that we do.

The best way to keep up to date with the Inquiry's work is to sign up to our newsletter. It contains the most recent updates on our work, including information from the hearings and updates from other module investigations. You can sign up by visiting our website, <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/newsletter/> . We publish transcripts of each hearing and all previous newsletters in the documents section of our website in case you want to catch up that way.

When the hearings begin, there will also be a weekly round up email to interested organisations or individuals, giving an overview of what has happened during the hearings that week. Please let us know if you would be interested in receiving this round up - we can send round a form for you to sign up. The form will also be available in our newsletter.

I'll now pass over to my colleague to give you an insight into our new hearing centre at Dorland House and the accessibility options we have in place.

Agenda Item 3 - Update on accessibility of the hearings

Inquiry Member of Staff: I work on the Operational Team delivering on the hearing centre here in Paddington. The best way to give you a look at Dorland house is to show it to you. We have a short video to show

you. That will give you an insight into what to expect. I will hand over to my colleague for that.

Inquiry Member of Staff: In the video I will provide a voiceover as well, so I'll pause it at times.

There is a screen that says 'Covid-19 Inquiry, Welcome to Doland House, The UK Covid-19 Inquiry's London Hearing Center'. Here, we have got the public entrance. It is a large glass door with three or four steps in front of it. We are now panning round to the security checking area and also on the left of that there is step-free access. We have got a security area, a bit like what you might see in an airport, and there are boxes where people can put their things to be scanned, as they walk through a body scanner.

The body scanner and bag check are being shown.

We are now showing the additional public viewing room with chairs here and some screens. The public can view the hearings here if they don't want to be in the public gallery.

There are various seating options, theatre style set out in rows to the right hand side of the room and 2 cabaret style around round tables in the middle. There are also some more screens near those circular tables. There are also hot drinks available for members of the public and sofa style seating with another screen.

Support rooms are also available. We recognise that everyone's pandemic experience is different and the hearings could be potentially emotionally triggering for people. We will have counsellors on hand and support is also available if you need it on the day. The support room has a table, sofa and a chair if you need to go there to speak to our support staff.

We also have a refreshment area. There are some circular tables with chairs and two vending machines. There are also three screens. If you are planning to attend the hearings and do not want to watch the impact film, it will not be showing in the refreshment area.

Further facilities in the hearing centre include a reflection room, which can be used for prayer or general reflection, toilets and also an accessible toilet.

The public hearing room is now being shown, a long rectangular room with lots of rows of desks and seating. The shot is panning around the hearing room and the video will now zoom in. This is where hearings will take place. The Chair's desk is now being shown. She will sit on the platform at the front of the room. There is a witness desk, where witnesses can give their evidence. Core Participant legal teams desks are to the other side and the Solicitor to the Inquiry legal team desks and the Counsel to the Inquiry desks is in front of the Chair's desk. There are lots of further desks for Core Participant legal teams and a public gallery with screens. I'll hand back to my colleague.

Let me just explain a bit more about the actual hearing centre itself. The Inquiry is making its hearings open and accessible to everyone and it has been designed with the needs of participants in mind. For example, we have step-free access, public seating, hearing loops and accessible toilets. The Inquiry has carried out an accessibility audit at the end of our works and we are also talking to organisations that support disabled people to ensure the hearing centre is accessible and inclusive with the needs of the participants at the forefront. We are also going to see how we can improve our current provisions now or as part of additional work over the summer.

If participants or visitors have any specific needs they should check the website before attending or contact the operations team via operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk .

If anyone needs to contact us, please do so.

In the hearing room itself, a mechanical ventilation system is in operation throughout the Ground Floor of the hearing centre. In addition to this, two air purification units with HEPA filters will be placed in the Hearing Room and 1 will be placed in the viewing room. This will help with the removal of airborne contaminants such as viruses and Particulate Matter and make the building Covid-secure.

CO2 Monitors will be placed in the Hearing Room and Viewing Room.

Because of the limited space within the hearing centre, social distancing will not be possible. However, masks will be made available should people wish to wear them.

Thanks and I will hand over to my colleague.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thanks - there's a question in the chat. I don't know whether you want to take it now - someone is asking about our changing facilities. Is that quite a quick one?

Inquiry Member of Staff: We don't have any changing facilities, but we do have an accessible toilet. We do have the reflection/ prayer room/ first aid room, as we are calling it but we do not actually have a changing room facility as such in place. It is something we can look into and then get back to you.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Great, thanks, I'll pick up from here.

I think I've had the pleasure of meeting some of you before, if not, it's nice to meet you. I've just got a short update (following on from the section about accessibility in the hearing centre) about accessibility in a broader sense. Towards the end of last year, I met with a number of organisations to talk through putting together an approach around accessible communications and we are really grateful to a number of organisations who work with disabled people and also people who are not proficient in English and Welsh for meeting with us. I recognise that some of those people are here today. Obviously, it was really helpful to have that discussion around an accessible communications policy and we agreed to publish that policy ahead of the first public hearing.

Inquiry Member of Staff: I just wanted to run through a few of the key points from that approach, to share with you today, and as I said, the whole thing will be published on our website (<https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/documents/accessible-communications-policy/>) .

The public will be able to view the hearings including with automated captions on YouTube and we'll have access to transcripts on the same day. For witnesses, we'll be making sure we provide interpreters if they need them, to enable them to give evidence and to participate in the questioning. We're also going to be providing executive summaries of all

of our reports in British Sign Language, Easy Read and Welsh as standard.

Our approach will also include translation into other languages and accessible formats for work aimed at the public, such as '*Every Story Matters*' and our website.

For example, we will offer information about how to share your experience in British Sign Language, Easy Read, braille and ten other languages. Our website and the '*Every Story Matters*' webform have been tested by the Digital Accessibility Centre to ensure they work with screen readers.

Once again, I'd like to thank everybody who was involved in those discussions at the end of last year. Do take a look at the policy, it is under review and we will continue to monitor what demand is like and we look forward to your feedback on it. Thank you.

Inquiry Member of Staff: We'll leave questions until the end because we have bombarded attendees with a lot of information over the past twenty five minutes or so. I really want to make sure that we give people a bit of time to process some of that and let it sink in. So just to slow the pace down, I promised a break. I'm going to suggest that we have one now and we will take 10 minutes now. Feel free to either log off and log back on again, or just turn off your camera and put yourself on mute and we will resume at 14:48.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks very much indeed for coming back. I hope that people are doing okay and not feeling too taxed by the first half of this webinar. We have one topic left to cover before we get onto the Q&A part of this. The next section is about *Every Story Matters* and as I said at the beginning, that falls into two parts. In a moment, my colleague will give a sense of the types of images that we will be using in the campaign that we are running, to get as many people to engage with *Every Story Matters*. Then we will talk through the new web form and give people a sense of one of the ways that they can provide their experience of the pandemic to the Inquiry.

Over to my colleague to talk about the public information campaign.

Agenda Item 4 - Update on the Public Facing ESM Campaign

Inquiry Member of Staff: As mentioned, the *Every Story Matters* campaign is due to launch in less than two weeks. The aim of that campaign is to help us make sure the right people across the UK know about *Every Story Matters* and understand the value of sharing their experience, understand how the information they share will be used and that they have both the reassurance and practical information they need to take part.

The images now being shown on screen will be used as part of the *Every Story Matters* campaign. You will see four images. We will talk you through what's on screen in a second. There is a core image made up of a collage of different people. That has been designed to help us speak to a broad range of people. Then, there's a series of different visuals which are aimed at different communities that the insight has shown might need different types of messaging, or different types of reassurance to help them engage positively.

Inquiry Member of Staff: We have got this image here, it is aimed at a younger audience. This one is aimed at parents. This is an example of our social media copy for an older audience. You might see people that your organisation represents within these images as well, as they are not exclusively for the groups I just mentioned.

Inquiry Member of Staff: The creative we have chosen is a collage. You can see that there's lots of different images making up a scene. That aims to give us a chance to represent different people that were impacted throughout the pandemic. We do also have a version that is available to partners focusing on a single image, because I think some of the really useful insight we had from partners was that the collage approach might not work for certain audiences, based on neuro diversity. We have taken that on board and created a single image graphic. As mentioned, there will be bilingual assets as well. Welsh and English languages will be on creative that is shown in Wales.

Inquiry Member of Staff: The imagery and messaging has been built using insight from interested organisations and I know that some of you on the call have helped us since last autumn. Thank you for your insight. We have also talked directly to individuals that have been impacted by the pandemic. We have had some focus groups as well as testing of

messages and images, and that has included insight from individuals that have been bereaved, people from different ethnic minority backgrounds, frontline healthcare workers as well as disabled people. Thank you to everyone that has engaged with us on that. The campaign will launch on the 13th of June. There will be advertising in various newspapers and some billboard posters across the UK, a radio campaign, then digitally, there'll be some adverts on social media as well as various websites.

A campaign will also utilise diverse talent and community influencers. Where we know that certain audiences might have higher barriers to entry or mistrust of institutions, or that kind of thing. We are looking to use community influencers to share messages on their own podcasts or social channels, as well as partners to help us engage seldom heard audiences. We are really keen to hear from anyone who would be willing to help us disseminate messages.

Inquiry Member of Staff: For *Every Story Matters*, we have a partner's toolkit that's in production at the moment. There will be a range of *Every Story Matters* imagery and messaging that you can download - lots of ready to use assets as well as some that you can tweak for your own audiences if you are willing and able to do so. We are very keen and willing to share these with you if you are able and willing to help us with that. In terms of the campaign, it will run in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. And everything in Wales, the aim is for it to be bilingual.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks very much, indeed. I can see some very good questions coming in and we will address those at the end. First of all, my colleague will talk through the changes that have been made to the Web form that is now online.

Agenda Item 5 - Update on the Webform

Inquiry Member of Staff: What I would like to take you through today is the page in the Inquiry's website that talks about *Every Story Matters* and the Web platform link from it. That allows members of the public to share their experiences of the pandemic. In the landing pages, in the Inquiries website to do with *Every Story Matters*, the header has The *Every Story Matters* logo and a collage of different types of people

affected by the pandemic. There is lots of information about taking part in *Every Story Matters* and there is a big button that links to the web platform itself, but also more information about reasons why we would like people to share their experiences and the benefits of it and how it helps the Inquiry.

There's also a lot of information about support available, which we take very seriously. There is also other information about alternative formats. That is an ongoing work in progress, and we are improving that as we go and we will have some good improvements on that front soon. That's the landing page in the Inquiry's website and as I say it links to the main Web platform for *Every Story Matters* itself. There are a couple of buttons for that purpose so I'll click on one of them now and in a new tab on my browser I'm taking to the Web platform for *Every Story Matters* where users can actually share their experiences with us.

Inquiry Member of Staff: It has an introductory page, with a bit more information about the purpose of *Every Story Matters*. There are other bits and pieces of information such as a link to the Scottish covid Inquiry who are doing a listening project of their own and some information about that. There is more detail about the sharing process that we have for *Every Story Matters*. We are giving people information about what to expect. There is more information about the support available and some important safeguarding information as well.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Again, information about asking for a different format and as well as that there's some information about if you want to be able to withdraw your story, if you change your mind afterwards and you would like us to delete what you have sent to us. That facility was recently added.

I'll click on this big start button, the bottom of the introductory page and I'm taking the first set of questions that first of all asks about categories of experience. The idea here is that the person using the form can tell us about one or more path categories of experience and a person might want to complete the form more than once. They might want to talk about one experience or they might want to talk about lots of different experiences or interconnected experiences. It is up to you as a user of

this platform, how many categories you select when you use it. I have checked off a few just to demonstrate and now, and I'll click on continue.

I am taken to a page that is all about sharing the experience itself and I am reminded of the categories I selected just so that I don't have to remember which buttons I selected on the previous page. I am then asked three main questions where I can freely enter text up to 5,000 characters - which is a big increase on our interim version of the service that we piloted for a few months recently.

Initially we are asking about the experience itself and then we're asking about the effect that it had on you and the people around you. Then a question about lessons learned - 'What do you think could be learned from all of this?'

Finally, on this page, we are asking about the location primarily where the experience took place and you could select more than one. I'm located in Scotland. I'll just take that box here.

Before I continue, I'll show you one other new feature. We have got a button on the platform that says, 'Save your progress to continue later'. If I click on that I'm given a link that is unique to me as a user and I can copy that and then paste it somewhere else on my computer or my device or I can download it in a document so that I'm less likely to lose track of it. It will just be saved on my computer in a document. I might want to take a break for a few minutes or days or something in between. Because of course, for many people, it will be emotional, not just having the experiences but recounting them as well, and we don't underestimate that. So, if you want to take a break, you can return to it later.

So I might then click on the link, even if I'd navigated from somewhere else, and then return, exactly to where I had left off. So, I'll enter a bit of text there. I had checked off Scotland previously, so that had saved. Now I'll continue by pressing that button at the bottom.

This leads me to demographics. We're asking some demographics questions to learn about the people filling in this Web platform. This is really helpful to us. It's not mandatory, but it's really helpful because we want to understand how the pandemic affected different types of people.

It was different circumstances and different ways, so we're asking about things like age, gender identity, ethnicity, Religion.

Finally, on this page we're asking for postcode. Again, this is a completely optional question. You don't have to tell us whether or not you have a fixed UK postcode and then if you do tell us that you have one, you don't have to tell us what it is. But we are asking. The reason for that is because as it says on the page, providing us with your postcode helps us understand how experiences of the pandemic vary between people in different areas. So that is helpful, you could enter your full postcode, you could enter just a partial first part of your postcode. It is completely optional.

If I then press 'Continue', the next page is about employment, only one question appears initially, but depending on the answer, there may be two follow up questions.

If I were to select full-time employed, part-time employed or self-employed, then there are two follow-up questions asking if I were a key worker, as defined in any of any of the categories, as defined by the government. I'm asked about my job title. Again, these questions are completely optional but very helpful, if answered.

I'll skip the move for the purpose of the demonstration and click on Continue. Then finally, we are asked about caring responsibilities, health problems or disabilities, that had lasted at least 12 months. And then a question about shielding.

If I skip those, for the demonstration and click 'Continue', a new feature here is that we are invited to check our answers. Before we, we completely finish the process. There is a 'finish' button at the top and the bottom but if I wanted to change an answer, I could click on change if I want to change my answer to the shielding question for example, I am taken to the page on which that shielding question exists and then I could answer that question differently and then continue everything else would remain the same. Then I can review my answers again, if I wish, or if, or if I'm comfortable, I can go straight ahead and click on the 'finish' button. After that, I'm taking to a 'confirmation' page. And this will have a thank you page where information is given about how beneficial it is to the Inquiry, to hear about these experiences and the difference it makes.

The user is given the option to download a copy of what they submitted and encouraged to keep in touch on social media, and follow what's going on with the Inquiry on social media or indeed share *Every Story Matters* through social media accounts of their own. I'm giving a response code, if I want to be able to withdraw my story, as mentioned on the first page and and some instructions about that, are provided here.

I can give feedback on the forum and then finally we're offering the very important support services. There is signposting to a list of support services as well. There's some some front and centre on this page and then finally the safeguarding information we saw on the first page. I can then if I wish, submit another experience or I can leave it at just one.

That is the end of this demonstration.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): You talked through that really, clearly but I appreciate that it would have been easier for some than others to follow what you were describing. Can you tell us: What is the accessibility of the online form? Can it be read by screen readers, for example? Has it been checked for accessibility?

Inquiry Member of Staff: Yes, indeed, I should have mentioned that. The website for the Inquiry where this landing page appears, as well as the Web platform for *Every Story Matters* itself, both meet at least double A standard of what are known as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines put together by an organisation known as W3C. As a public body we are obligated to meet those standards.

Wherever possible, we go further to meet triple A standard. That means that this Web content is compatible with assistive technology such as screen readers, and also intended to be accessible to people with all sorts of different impairments, for example visual and colour blindness, and all sorts of things. There is work that we are doing on alternative formats to go further to make it more accessible to different groups. I hope that that gives some background.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): That's very clear. Thank you very much, indeed. I think that is a particularly important consideration for the people that many of the people on this webinar represent.

We have had some fantastic questions come in. Thank you very, very much indeed for those. We will move on to the Q&A for the next 25 or 30 minutes. I will ask my colleague to start with those questions that were submitted beforehand and then if we can, we will work our way through other questions and try to answer all of them.

Agenda Item 6 - Questions and Answers

Inquiry Member of Staff: In the emails that you received before this session, we mentioned that we will be prioritising questions sent beforehand.

I will read out the question and then ask the person who has submitted that question, to speak to that question so that we can ensure that we fully understand what is being asked. I'll then invite somebody on the call to answer that question. If you are unable to use the chat, feel free to just take yourself off mute and ask your question, or put your hand up using the hand raise hand button. We know everyone cannot use the chat function or some may not feel comfortable using the chat function.

Inquiry Member of Staff: The first questions that we received were from Mind.

I am going to take the first two first because they are similar and about equality topics and then we will move on to the third. The first question is, 'how will the voices and of people most impacted by Covid-19, such as people of colour, people with disabilities and pre-existing conditions, older adults and young people (those who are unable to share their stories through ESM) and their contributions be taken into consideration during the inquiry?' The second related question is, 'how will the voices of those most impacted be prioritised in this inquiry, so that the voices with the most power, access, and privilege don't dominate the outcomes?' Does anyone from Mind want to speak to those questions?

Mind: Hello. Yes, the questions are just as you've read them out. It's more about just wondering how the experiences of those most impacted by Covid are going to be prioritised and how people who can't share their stories through the ESM platform would be invited to engage with the process. Thank you.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic. Thank you very much for those really important questions. We have got a lot to say on them, so I will try and keep this brief. The first thing to say is that the *Every Story Matters* online form and its accessible versions are just one part of *Every Story Matters*. We have got the online form and then a host of accessible versions.

We have got versions in Easy Read and information in British Sign Language, versions in Welsh, Polish, Punjabi Bengali, Chinese and Urdu and versions in Braille etc and paper copies. That is just one way of contributing to *Every Story Matters*.

We have also got our community listening exercises which will be taking place across the UK so that people can come and tell us about their pandemic experiences in person. And these will be a range of public listening events, which anybody can attend, also recognising your point that we want to make sure that we are hearing from those that were most impacted by the pandemic. There will also be targeted events, which target speaking to specific groups, that the research might identify and make us aware that we are not hearing from and that we know need to be heard within the Inquiry.

Finally, we have what we are calling our targeted qualitative conversations: legal teams will develop key lines of enquiry for each module and then a research plan will be developed to ensure that those key lines of enquiry are properly looked into. Information from the targeted research and experiences already gathered will be brought together in reports to meet those key lines of enquiry.

So, we will have information from the form and also from more targeted research that we do based on an analysis of the demographic information within the form that indicates who is answering it and who is not. Your question also spoke to intersections as well, that is something that we will be looking at. I do not know enough about the analysis to speak about it, but I remember, though, there were three levels to be able to do that intersectional analysis and to understand who we are reaching and who we are not reaching.

Disability Rights UK: For clarification - I understand that you are going to try and promote the campaign *Every Story Matters* in a variety of

formats which is really good, but what I don't fully understand is, are you able to receive people's accounts of their experiences in any other format apart from online?

Inquiry Member of Staff: Absolutely. At our community events, you can tell us about your experience in person. We are also going to have a telephone line (although it will not be ready when we first launch) and within that we will have a language line, so people can ring up and talk to us about their experiences and they can do that in those seven languages that I have and mentioned. We are also exploring BSL video relay options. This has come up in a number of other calls and it has been brought to our attention that this is an important way for people to contribute, so at the moment we are exploring options for how to do that. We will give more information about that when and when we can. They will be the other methods that people can use to respond. Does that answer your question?

Disability Rights UK: Yes, thank you.

Inquiry Member of Staff: My two colleagues will speak a little bit more to your question - firstly about the campaign and how we are ensuring we are reaching a diversity of people through that. Then about the second part of the question.

Inquiry Member of Staff: The campaign will be running across a number of channels and certain channels have been targeted towards different audience types. For example, some of the outdoor placements have been selected for areas that have a high percentage of diversity. We are also going to be using some diverse talent and community influencers, to help share messages on their own channels and using their own voice to help us convey messages in a trusted environment. We are working with a number of partners that will help us reach very discrete groups. I think some of you on this call are lined up to help us, and a partner toolkit will be made available next week with some editable assets as well, so that they can be tailored to different audiences. We are also looking to build up our image bank as well. I note some comments in the chat already. I will put them on our brief for the future to make sure we are being as representative as possible in our comms.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thanks. Another colleague will now speak about the second part of the question.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Just to clarify, the second part of the question was about how the voices of those most impacted will be prioritised in this Inquiry, so the voices of those with the most power access and privilege do not dominate outcomes.

I will speak on the Chair's approach to this. Our Chair has been really clear from very early on that she really does want to consider inequalities throughout this Inquiry. She made a recommendation to the Prime Minister (which he accepted) which is that inequalities should be at the forefront, so that the investigation of unequal impacts of the pandemic is to run throughout the Inquiry and so that was accepted into our core Terms of Reference. Within that, our approach will be investigating the impact of the pandemic on at-risk, vulnerable groups, and marginalised people, which includes, but is not limited to those with protected characteristics. So we will be going beyond protected characteristics.

The second point is that the Inquiry is required by statute to be impartial and it will be maintaining its independence throughout. The Chair is really committed to hearing from a really wide range of voices and views throughout the course of the Inquiry. She will base her rulings on the evidence provided and I am hoping many of you will have seen one of the examples of that: the Chair considering submissions from a number of Core Participants to consider the role of structural racism in the Inquiry's work. She heard those submissions and made the decision to instruct an expert to produce a report into pre-pandemic structural discrimination, more broadly, which included structural racism to give context to the inquiry's second module on Political and Administrative Decision Making. The Inquiry is working to find the right experts to produce this work and we will update on this shortly.

Inquiry Member of Staff: We had another question, which I'll read out: "How will these places and spaces (in person and online) where the inquiry related events will be taking place be made to be accessible for marginalised people across intersections (i.e. alternative methods of contribution, translation services, interpreters, assistance needed for

participation, etc.)?” Could I just check, is that question about *Every Story Matters* or about the hearings and hearings centre or both?

Mind: Both, I think you've partly addressed the question in your Introduction about *Every Story Matters* and also through Disability Rights UK's question.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic. We can talk a little bit about the hearings then, and just to confirm, on listening events we are in the very initial stages of planning those. We would be keen to work with Mind and others understanding how listening events can work for those with mental health problems or other groups that people represent. I will hand over to my colleague to speak a bit about the hearing centre.

Inquiry Member of Staff: With the hearing centre, as we said before, we currently have 41 seats available in the public gallery and a further 18 that are available in the separate viewing room, which you saw in the brief video that we showed. This is where attendees can view the hearings that broadcast on the screens with a three minute delay. As we said before, seats will be allotted on a first come first served basis.

However, there will be eight seats that will be reserved by Core Participants and for those who are travelling long distances or have accessibility requirements. If you would like to reserve a seat, please let us know via contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk or operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk. Does that help?

Mind: Yes, thank you.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thank you both. I am going to move on to the fourth question which came in from Disability Action Northern Ireland. You asked us about Changing Places facilities. This is not something that we have come across yet, but it is definitely something that we will take away and look into. Did you want to speak to your point there?

Disability Action Northern Ireland: Yes, it was just to highlight that Changing Places facilities are fully accessible toilets for disabled people that have a hoist in them. They are more spacious than a regular accessible toilet, because for some disabled people, the accessible toilets aren't actually accessible to them and sometimes people end up being changed on the floor.

In this region, there is quite an active campaign around Changing Places facilities. What I would say is that if you don't have them in the actual building that you are in, that you know where the nearest one is, and you are able to tell people, so hopefully there will be one in a public building close by that you can signpost people to.

It gets a bit tense sometimes if you refer to it as the first aid space because some disabled people really don't like that and there has been criticism raised, when there is confusion like that.

The other thing that can be done is that, if there are particular bits that you expect a lot of disabled people to attend, you can consider hiring a portable Changing Places facility, or you can ask people wishing to attend to indicate, if that is something that they need. It just sees criticism, because events here, in this region in particular, have been criticised for not offering Changing Places facilities, or not knowing where they are available etc.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): That is incredibly helpful. Thank you very much. Would you mind if we contacted you after this and had a conversation about what we've got and what we might be able to add to that? We'll pick that up with you.

Disability Action Northern Ireland: Sure, that's fine.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thanks very much [Disability Action Northern Ireland], really, really helpful.

We don't have much time left, so I will go through a couple of the easier questions and answers. The sixth question, which is from Disability Learning Wales, 'will there be Easy Read versions available of these?'. I think that was about the posters. Just to be clear, the *Every Story Matters* form is available in Easy Read. We are working with Mencap, who are on the call today, and are very kindly supporting us to understand which assets we should make into Easy Read. If you would like to be included in those conversations, we are more than happy to include you, but we will be making some assets into Easy Reading, using photo symbols.

In terms of other quite simple ones to answer, question five about vulnerable people and this is from Clinically Vulnerable Families: "It

seems that the only vulnerable people look to be elderly on the posters, this is a concern when we vulnerable can be of all ages. And there is an ongoing impact on our group, it isn't in the past tense for us." I just wanted to say first, thank you so much to Clinically Vulnerable Families and also to Long Covid groups who have made this point time and time again about how we speak about the pandemic and making sure that we don't speak about it in the past tense. It's been really useful in developing campaign materials and more generally how we work. I wanted to make clear that those are just some options for the posters. We've got a whole image library, full of lots of different images which will include images - people with FFP2 masks, people of lots of different ages. There are also options within our partner toolkit, which we can send around in the notes to edit the posters and that sort of thing, so that you can put images that represent those that you work with and will land best with those that you represent. I'll hand over to my colleague to expand on that.

Inquiry Member of Staff: We have been careful with the language, to not to not talk about it in the past tense. For example, in the radio ad, we have got a line, specifically, that talks about the impact still ongoing. So, I hope that you see your feedback reflected in the language we have used, but any kind of further concerns, I am happy to have a look at and adapt.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thanks very much, I am aware that we are running out of time. Ben, am I okay to take one more question and then we can agree to follow up on the rest in the transcript, where we will provide a written response to the rest.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Actually, I was going to offer a response to questions from Mencap and wanting to keep their network updated with videos from outside of the hearing centre. That may be true of other organisations. It's worth us saying that there is a forecourt front and back of the hearing centre where the media team will determine on the day what's possible in terms of creating an area for clips outside because we really have to be careful not to obstruct the pavement, or the roads. Also, of course, we need to be really cautious to make sure that participants and members of the public are not filmed on their way in and out. We will do what we can to make sure people can do whatever it

is that they need to do outside of the hearing centre to keep those they represent up to date. There is no filming (as you may know) in the hearing centre, but I know your question was about outside it.

Disability Rights UK: Could I ask, are you going to be tweeting reminders about *Every Story Matters* with videos with reminders about transcripts? For those of us that have a Communication Officer, it would be an easy way to retweet and get things out there quickly, without us having to do too much work to intervene.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): It's a really good question. So yes, we already do quite a lot of tweeting, my colleague will answer that.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Yes, we have got a number of social channels. So we will be doing it organically on our channels if you follow them. If you don't follow our accounts, you should see the adverts more broadly on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and so on,

Disability Rights UK: Thanks.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks for that question and the answer provided. Let's do one more question, but it will have to be a fairly brief answer. Then we will undertake to follow up with all other questions in writing afterwards.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thanks Ben. Because it's been asked by a couple of people, I'm going to take the question about older adults and care home residents.

The question is "how are you planning to engage with care home residents"? It's been asked by Age Cymru, and thanks very much for that question.

Care home residents are very much a priority audience for us and one that we recognise may not be able to engage through the online form. However, it is important to note that when we are talking about care home residents, we are talking about a massive and diverse range of people. So, we are doing a lot of work with organisations that work with care home residents. For example, we are working with Alzheimer's society to speak about facilitation with people that have Alzheimer's. That is just one group within care home residents that we are looking to

target by our targeted events. The events are about going to places where people already are, or potentially going via people that are already speaking to them. Community events will be one way.

We are very open to working with people on other bespoke approaches to reaching care home residents. If Age Cymru and other organisations working in the space want to have a conversation, we can. You are the experts and we really, really want to learn from you. In fact, we are already speaking to Age UK about going to some of their lived experience groups as part of this. Some of those groups are based and care homes and some are not. We are more than happy to have a conversation about how we can do that in Wales.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks. That offer goes to all the organisations here, whether they represent older people or anybody, who might wish to share their experience. We desperately want to hear everybody's experience because every experience was different and to coin the phrase, 'every story matters'. We really do mean that. It really is not just a tagline.

Thank you all very much indeed for coming to this webinar and for the incredibly useful questions. They were all posed as questions and yet, most of them have helped us to learn something. Thank you very much for that. We always take a lot from these and it sounds like we are going to follow up with several people on this call. Thank you in advance for the additional time that we might spend with you. We will come back to you on the questions we didn't manage to answer.

We will also provide that transcript once it's available so that you can remind yourself and also share with others what has been covered today. If you have got any other questions, please do get in contact with the engagement team via engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk.

If you would like additional updates on the progress of the Inquiry, we have a newsletter that comes out every four to six weeks. Please sign up to that and also follow our Twitter feed because it is most excellent. We currently have a series of the Inquiry in numbers running, just to give people a sense of where we are getting to over the course of our move

from setting up into the hearings and the national launch of *Every Story Matters*.

Thank you again. It's been really, really helpful and thanks to the team, but thanks to all of you who have come along and spared the time today. We hope to see you again soon, perhaps on the 13th of June.

2023-06-01 June Webinar Answers to Questions from chat

Disability Action (NI): Are changing places facilities available?

We have now looked into the availability of Changing Places facilities.

We have investigated the possibility of converting the accessible toilet on the ground floor of Dorland House hearing centre to include a hoist and bed. We would need to double the size of the square footage that we have, to accommodate Changing Places facilities. Unfortunately, we do not have the space to do this.

Changing Places facilities are available at Paddington Station (7am-10pm) near Platform 12. This does not require pre-booking and we have been reassured that there is always an attendant available with a key. We will include information about this in our public user guide for the hearing centre.

Clinically Vulnerable Families: It seems the only vulnerable people look to be elderly on the posters. This is a concern for us. Vulnerable people can be of all ages and there is an ongoing impact on our group. It isn't past tense for us.

The images displayed were just a selection and a variety of images will be used throughout the *Every Story Matters* campaign. The wider campaign includes images with people of different ages.

There are also a range of editable templates within our partner toolkit. This will allow organisations to include images that reflect the experiences of those that you represent.

When speaking about Covid-19, we have been careful to not talk about it in the past tense. For example, in the radio advert, there is a line that talks about the impact still ongoing.

Learning Disability Wales: Will there be Easy Read versions available of these?

Every Story Matters is now available in Easy Read format. These can be accessed via the links below:

- [‘About Every Story Matters’ in Easy Read](#)
- [Every Story Matters – Easy Read form for post](#)
- [Every Story Matters – Easy Read form for email](#)

Mencap: We are wanting to keep our network and audience updated with news style videos. Will there be an area outside the hearing centre (when we report on the hearings) we can do this?

There is a forecourt front and back of the hearing centre.

On each day of hearings, the media team will determine what is possible in terms of creating an area for clips outside while avoiding obstruction of the pavement or roads and ensuring that participants and members of the public are not filmed on their way in and out.

We will do what we can to make sure people can do whatever it is that they need to do outside of the hearing centre to keep those they represent up to date.

Please note, there is no filming allowed inside the hearing centre.

Clinically Vulnerable Families: It would be nice to see images on the posters of FFP2/3 masks.

The images displayed are just some options available for the *Every Story Matters* posters.

We have an image library with a variety of images, and we have noted feedback and will be sourcing imagery that include images with people with FFP2 masks.

There are also options within our partner toolkit, to edit assets. This will allow organisations to include images that reflect the experiences of those that you represent.

Long Covid Nurses and Clinically Vulnerable Families: Some of us have retired early because of Long Covid or have lost jobs because of being Clinically Vulnerable - is that question asked under the "retired" option?

We are not collecting information within the demographics section about reasons for retirement. To enable as many people as possible to fill in the form, we have tried to keep the demographics section as short as possible to reduce the information burden on those sharing their experiences with us. However, within the three key questions you will be asked to tell us about your experience and its impact on you, so we would welcome you to tell us about the impact of Long Covid or another health condition in relation to early retirement here if you wish to do so.

It is within the three main 'About your experience' text-based questions where we hope to gain the most valuable insights about people's experiences of the pandemic. Detailed research and analysis of the experiences described here will play a key role in informing the work of the Inquiry, so we very much hope people will provide this kind of detail here in their own words via the free text fields.

Age Cymru: What are the plans to gather the questionnaire information for those people who are not online?

There are a number of ways that you can contribute to Every Story Matters if you are not able or would prefer not to contribute online.

We will be hosting community listening events across the country, starting later this year, to allow people to contribute in person, via speaking to an Inquiry member of staff, in their communities.

We also have paper copies, including Easy Read paper copies, that we are making available to people with freepost envelopes so that people can write their experience down if they wish to.

Finally, later this year we will have a telephone line which people can call to share their experience via Every Story Matters. This telephone line will include a 'language line' to enable people to speak about their experiences in multiple languages.

Age NI: will there be help available to complete the online form

[This page](#) on our website provides help with completing the online form in 13 different languages including British Sign Language.

We will have a telephone line up and running later this year which will enable people to call and receive assistance with completing the online form.

You can also attend a community event, once they are up and running later this year, to receive assistance with filling out the online or paper form.

We know that thinking back to how the pandemic impacted on your life can be challenging, so if you need emotional support while filling out the form we have a [list of support organisations on our website](#). There is a 'save and come back' feature at the bottom of each page, to enable you to fill in parts of the form and then return to it later if it's difficult to fill out all in one go.

Age Cymru: How does the inquiry plan to specifically engage with older adults in care home residents?

Creating opportunities to hear from care home residents is a priority for Every Story Matters, and we look to reach this group via our community listening events, whereby we may visit places where people that we want to hear from already are e.g. care homes. Older adults in care homes are a diverse group of people that the Inquiry recognises require

a bespoke approach - it may not be appropriate for Inquiry staff to facilitate engagement with all older adults in care homes. We are currently consulting with organisations working with older people, including older people with specific needs e.g. Alzheimer's or dementia, on this as part of initial planning for our events and would welcome any conversations or expertise on how to do this from other organisations.