

2023-05-30 UK Covid-19 Inquiry Pre-hearing Engagement Webinar Transcript (30th May)

Attendees

Organisations

Care Campaign for the Vulnerable
Care Quality Commission
Carers UK
Churches Together in Wales
Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)
GMB Union
Hospice UK
Jewish Leadership Council
NEU
Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality (NICRE)
Royal College of Nursing (CP)
Traveller's Movement
TUC (CP)
UNISON
Widowed and Young

Transcript

Agenda Item 1 - What to Expect From Hearings

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Let's begin the proper agenda items today. Starting with what to expect from hearings when they begin in a couple weeks time.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thank you, Ben and hello everyone. I'm just going to be talking briefly through what is an Inquiry and what you can expect.

We know that many people will not have attended an Inquiry hearing before and we just wanted to give you an opportunity to give some insight into what to expect once the hearings get started. I'm going to

start off explaining what an Inquiry is and then we will go on to talk about the hearings themselves.

So the way an Inquiry is run, may look and feel quite like a court case. You have legal representatives, asking questions and witnesses giving evidence. But there is an important difference, an Inquiry is an inquisitorial process - it is established to examine the facts and to find out exactly what happened, which is different from an adversarial process. An Inquiry will make recommendations to try and prevent anything that's gone wrong from happening again, meaning it serves a wider public interest than an adversarial trial. If appropriate, Inquiries will include identifying those at fault. However, the law does not allow an Inquiry to make findings of criminal or civil liability.

In terms of this Inquiry, and as Ben has mentioned, we are due to start to launch our first public hearing on the 13th of June and it'll be the first time the Inquiry starts formally hearing evidence. This first module, or investigation, is about pre-pandemic resilience and preparedness for the pandemic. There are six weeks of hearings planned for this first investigation, and those will take place between 11am and 4pm on Mondays, between 10am and 4pm Tuesdays to Thursdays. In general, the Inquiry will not sit on Fridays, with some exceptions.

All Inquiries start by asking what happened, collecting evidence, examining witness testimonies and analysing documents. They can then move on to asking why it happened and what can be done to prevent it from happening again. So this Inquiry will be producing regular written reports with the Chair's findings, the recommendations and the lessons learned to inform preparation for future pandemics across the UK.

As Ben's already referenced, it's important to note the [Every Story Matters project](#), which we'll go on to talk about in more detail later. Every Story Matters is an integral part of the Inquiry's investigations and it will provide an opportunity for everyone in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to tell the Covid Inquiry about their pandemic experiences. The Inquiry will base its findings and recommendations on the totality of evidence before it, including that which is provided by Every Story Matters.

We're now going to talk about how your group or organisation can get involved in the Inquiry.

Agenda Item 2 - How do I get involved?

Inquiry Member of Staff: I've met a fair few of you already, and it's great to see so many people here on the call today. I'm going to talk to you about how your group, or organisation, and those that you represent, can get involved in the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

Some of you will be Core Participants with legal representation, as Ben talked about at the beginning. At hearings Core Participants' lawyers and their clients, i.e. organisations, will be present and are able to participate in the proceedings. But you do not need to be a Core Participant to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Inquiry will ask for evidence from many different organisations and individuals and any person or relevant organisation can be called as a witness to give evidence, if the Inquiry legal team believes that they have evidence that may be useful to a particular investigation. So witnesses can be asked questions by Counsel to the Inquiry or by legal representatives of Core Participants with the Chair's permission. But beyond this, anybody can watch the hearings subject to a three-minute delay on our [YouTube channel](#) and all evidence referred to during hearings will be published on the [Inquiry's website](#).

There is also limited space in our public gallery and viewing room for individuals to attend the public hearings in person and Core Participants are able to book spaces. Reservations for that are to be sent via legal representatives for those that they represent if they're travelling long distances or have accessibility requirements. Individuals can also [contact the Inquiry directly](#) if they want to attend and have accessibility requirements. But following this, the seats are available on a first come, first serve basis.

Some of you may want to watch the hearings with other members of your organisations. So we'll be sharing some advice on [how to set up watching rooms](#), so that groups of people, or organisations, can watch

the hearings together. I'll send a link to that advice when we send round the notes for this call, once the page has gone up.

If you miss the hearings or are unable to watch online, then there'll be transcripts of every hearing available on the [“documents” section](#) of our website. Within the document you're also able to “ctrl F” and search for particular words, so that you can find a certain section, or topics, that have been discussed or that are most relevant to the work of your organisation and those that you represent.

The public hearings won't only be based in London. Modules to 2A, to 2B and 2C focus on core political and administrative governance and decision making in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We'll be holding the hearings for each of those modules in the respective devolved nations in the New Year. The locations of those are yet to be confirmed, but we will be announcing these on our website, social media and [via our Inquiry newsletter](#).

As part of our efforts to recognise and acknowledge the human impact of the pandemic and make sure that's really central to everything that this Inquiry does, 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. I know that some people who are on call today have been involved in co-creating some of the art that we're going to be putting up there, so I just want to say thank you very much for your support with that.

So 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 the Inquiry hearings take place in different parts of the UK. We're also looking to make the tapestry available online, so you'll be able to view the tapestry on the Inquiry website.

At the hearing centre, there will also be some photos of pandemic memorials from around the country, in the public areas of the hearing centre. And again, I'm not sure if we have anybody that's contributed to those photos, but if we do, thank you very much for sending those

photos across to us. These include the National Covid-19 Memorial Wall in London and the Scottish Covid-19 Memorial Walk in Pollock Park, Glasgow, along with lots of other ones from across the UK.

At the opening of the public hearing, we're going to be showing an impact film. This will be around a 15 minute long video that will feature people from across the UK, speaking about the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on them and their lives, which will include people talking about bereavement and loss. This film will also be broadcast simultaneously via the Inquiry live stream on [YouTube](#) and 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 experience of those most impacted by the pandemic, including those who suffered hardship and loss. We want to ensure that their experiences remain at the heart of everything that we do.

In terms of keeping up to date with the Inquiry's work, the best way to do that is to [sign up to our newsletter](#). Our newsletter contains the most recent updates on our work, including information from hearings and updates from other module investigations. After I stop speaking, I will post a link to that into the chat. And as I mentioned, we also publish transcripts of every hearing and all previous newsletters are in the documents section of our website, in case you want to catch up in that way.

When the hearings begin, there will also be a weekly roundup email to interested organisations like yourselves and that will give an overview of what has happened during the hearings that week. So please do let us know by emailing me or via the engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk email address that you've been emailing, if you would be interested in receiving this roundup email that will be coming into your inboxes every week. In the next edition of the newsletter, we're also going to put a [form in to allow people to express an interest](#) in receiving that email.

I heard a hand go up, but will answer any questions if you just pop them into the chat, and we can address them once we've finished presenting.

Agenda Item 3 - Update on Dorland House

Inquiry Member of Staff: Hi everybody, I work on the operational delivery team, delivering the hearing centre at Dorland House. The best way to give you a look at Dorland House is to show you it. So we have a short video to give you an insight into what to expect.

Video of Dorland House shared on screen

Inquiry Member of Staff: So that is just a short insight as to what to expect when you arrive at Dorland House. And the Inquiry is making its hearings open and accessible to everyone. It's been designed with the needs of participants in mind, for example, with public seating, hearing loops, accessible toilets and step-free entrance. We are currently in the process of completing an end-of-build accessibility audit to see if we can improve our current provisions that we have, or as part of additional works over the summer period as well.

Also, we have ventilation systems, a mechanical ventilation system is in operation throughout the ground floor in the hearing centre. And in addition to this two air purification units with HEPA filters will be placed in the Hearing Room and 1 and will be placed in the viewing room that you have seen as well. This will help with the removal of airborne contaminants such as viruses and particulate matter and make the building Covid-secure. We will be placing CO2 monitors in the hearing room, and the viewing room as well. Because we have limited space within the hearing centre, social distancing will not be possible. However, masks will be made available to anyone who wishes to wear them.

We will be placing hand sanitizers and boxed tissues throughout the centre. And, as I said, FFP2 masks and disposable face masks will be available for anyone who requires them for the hearings. Thank you.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): As more than one person has doubtless noticed, there's been quite a lot of information given in the last half hour and so, just to be absolutely clear that the recording that we're taking at the moment is to enable us to pull together a transcript of what's said, by us, but also by anyone attending and we'll circulate that as quickly as we can afterwards, so that you've got verbatim, what we've said, in one place. Quite a lot of what we're talking about though is

already on the website and we'll continue to update the website to make sure it's as useful as possible. And where there are links to things that are already available, we'll put them on the website.

I said we wouldn't do questions as we go, but I don't know the answer to the question about whether the video that has just been shown will be available on our website. I hope it will be, but does one of the team know the answer to that?

Inquiry Member of Staff: It's a no, at the moment Ben, but we may be able to share it through our newsletter.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): I presume that's to do with hosting things and technological things that I don't understand. But we'll endeavour to find a way to make that public if we can.

Look there was quite a lot in that last half hour. We've said we'll have a break and it feels like this is probably going to be the best point, before we come back for a couple of updates on the public facing Every Story Matters campaign, we'll then be straight into Q&A. So it may well be that you have some more questions that you want to post now. Feel free to put them in the chat, we'll continue to answer them if we can as we go in the chat, otherwise we'll save them up for when we get to Q&A. But it's exactly 12 o'clock. Now we will be back at exactly 12:05 after this short comfort break. Thanks very much indeed. See you shortly.

Short Break

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks very much for coming back to us and let us move straight on with the second half of the presentation from the Inquiry team. And we're going to shift the focus now from the hearings to [Every Story Matters](#), the Inquiry's listening exercise.

One thing that I think is worth saying and I perhaps should have said at the beginning, is that this is genuinely a UK wide Inquiry. As well as the point that has been made about the hearings moving around the country, we also want to hear from people right across the country through Every Story Matters. And the reason I'm sitting on my own in this office in London is that the team is also spread right across the country. You're about to hear from a staff member who's in Cardiff, you've already heard from one who's across town in Paddington. We've also got colleagues

on the call today who are in Bristol and Edinburgh. We've got a team that is really across the country. We've got representatives in all four of the nations of the UK and in various parts of those too.

Agenda Item 4 - Update on the ESM Campaign

Inquiry Member of Staff: As Ben said, I'm here to talk to you about the Every Story Matters campaign, which is due to launch in a few weeks. The aim of the Every Story Matters campaign is to help make sure people right across the UK know about Every Story Matters and that they understand the value of sharing their experience, that they know how the information will be used and that they have both the reassurance and the practical information they need to be able to take part.

So on screen now you can see some of the imagery which will be used in the Every Story Matters campaign. What you're seeing now, on screen is a kind of a core image, so that's been designed to help us speak to a broad range of people affected by the pandemic.

If we flick through this, there's a different focus on some different audiences. That's based on lots of the insight that we've had from individuals and interested organisations. That's helped us to really understand the types of messaging imagery and the different kinds of reassurance people might need to engage positively with the campaign. And you can see here, this is one aiming to communicate with parents, people that became parents during the pandemic. If we keep flicking through, there's kind of a different focus - you can see the focus shifts.

The imagery and the messaging has been built on insight as I mentioned. A number of you on this call have joined round tables with us from last autumn onwards. We've also heard directly from individuals through focus groups and testing, just to really get under the skin of the kind of barriers they're facing, what they need to hear to motivate them to take part and to really test some of the messaging and images as well. So we've spoken to people that have been bereaved, people from different communities, healthcare workers, people with disabilities - and just big thanks to anyone that's worked with us so far. It's been really, really insightful and helpful to make us fine-tune what's going to be shown as part of the campaign.

As I mentioned, it's going to launch on the 13th of June, which is the first day of the public hearings. It will be in the printed press, newspaper advertising, quite heavy online presence on social media and a range of websites that help give us access to key audiences. There'll be some poster sites across the UK as well. So you might see it on the roadside or near community centres and quite a lot of radio advertising.

All the adverts will direct audiences to the Inquiry website where they can share their experience [via the form](#), or they can access various other methods. We're also in the process of producing a [toolkit](#) full of assets for you to use, so lots of the engagement we've had so far has been incredibly valuable in understanding the relationships you hold and the members that you can help us to reach. We'd be really keen to speak to anyone if they're able to help us amplify the campaigns. So, we've got some assets that partners can use to update with them. If their members aren't represented in some images, you've seen already, there's some adaptable assets, you can tweak them to include any imagery you think will resonate with your members, and [that toolkit](#), we'll send a link out as part of the notes from this session if you'd like to help us with that.

If there's any kind of ideas of types of content or any opportunities over the next few months that you think would be really valuable for us to link up on, or take some materials to, then again, please help us spread the message about Every Story Matters. It's actually crucial to help us get reach across the UK. As Ben mentioned it is a UK-wide campaign, so it will be in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. You might have seen one of the assets is part of our bilingual assets, so the placements in Wales will be fully bilingual to make sure we reflect the two languages.

I'm happy to take any questions and I said, if you're keen to help us then we'll be massively grateful and we'll put a contact email in there if you are willing to help us. So, That's it from me.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Any questions, please put them in the chat or save them up and you can ask them at the end.

I just reiterate the point about our desire and indeed the Chair's desire, Baroness Hallett is very keen to hear from as many people as we possibly can about their experience of the pandemic. She will, over the

next three years, be hearing from a great many people by way of witness testimony in the hearing room. But the thousands and thousands, indeed millions, of people who are affected by the pandemic won't all, of course, get the chance to give evidence in front of her. Yet, we do really want to hear how the pandemic impacted different communities, different people across the country.

The Chair's job fundamentally is to make findings about what happened and to make recommendations about how it could be improved next time around and that's both in terms of the state's response to the pandemic, but also in terms of the impact that it had on people. So the only way that we are going to get a really definitive view of how the nation was impacted by the pandemic is by hearing from as many people as we possibly can. So, anything else you can do to help us to get the message out and to tap into communities that maybe didn't have their voices heard in the pandemic, will be incredibly helpful.

One of the biggest ways that we're anticipating that people will share their stories with us, their experiences, is online and we have for several months now had a [web form](#) available on our website, under the "Share Your Experience" tab. But in the past week or two the team have improved greatly the online offer around Every Story Matters.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Hopefully, you're seeing my screen load up at your end. So what I'd like to show you is the online platform we have for users to be able to submit their experiences to us about the pandemic.

So, the starting point for this online journey is a page on the Inquiry's website. We have this [landing page as information about Every Story Matters](#) and how you can take part, and some FAQs, and some support services.

I'll go through all of this fairly quickly and I'll be scrolling around fairly fast. It means there won't quite be time to read every single line of text, but you'll be free to explore this at your leisure on your own if you haven't already. I'll focus, of course, on this online part of the journey and there are other offline aspects to know about, but it's the online platform I'd like to show you today.

As I said, there's information on this landing page about how to take part. There are two buttons that say, "Share your experience". So that's where we'd like people to click to open up the platform itself where the experiences are actually shared. The platform in question has further information about the sharing process and some information about what we're doing. Other information about the [Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry](#) for example and some quite important information about safeguarding and alternative formats - that's being developed at the moment. There's other information about how you can withdraw your story if you want to do that at the later stage.

I'll just carry on into the first page of the actual form itself, which asks, first of all, what sort of experience, or experiences, you would like to tell us about. You can do this as if you were telling us about one experience, or a set of experiences all in one. You can also complete the whole process multiple times if you want to do it that way as well. But there are lots of different categories of experience, so I'll just select a few at random here. Then I can proceed to the next page once I've decided what I want to broadly talk about by clicking the "Continue" button.

So on this next page, I'm reminded of the categories I selected and then the form goes on to ask about the experience itself. So I have a big text area, I can add some information about my experience and it's all about telling us what happened and then separately to that, we're asking "what was the effect of the experience on you and the people around you?"

After that we're asking about lessons learned - "what do you think could be learned? What could have been done better, differently, or was indeed something done well?" If I may, I'll respond to any comments just at the end of the segment, hopefully I won't miss anything. Then we're asking about the rough location where the experience took place and I happen to be in Scotland, so I'll check that box.

Before I proceed to the next page though, I'll show you a new function that we've recently developed, which is the ability for users to save their progress and then continue later. So if a user has found that it's been a challenging experience, obviously if it's quite an emotional account you'd been writing about, you might want to pause and then return later. We've built in that facility allowing you to save a link, or copy and paste it

elsewhere, or just download a document as a link, where you can return later. It could be days later or even just minutes later after a short break. So, that's one new feature.

I'm just going to continue into the next page, where after we've asked about the experience itself and the effects on you and the people you know, and the lessons you think could be learned. We're then going to ask some demographic questions. These are really helpful to us and really important, so that we can understand "how", as it says here in fact, "how" Covid-19 affected people in different ways.

We ask about age, we ask about gender identity, we ask about ethnicity, and religion and then finally, we ask about postcodes. You don't have to tell us any of this, these are all optional questions, but we do ask about this, as we explain, so that we can understand how experiences of the pandemic vary between people in different areas. It's optional whether you tell us if you have a fixed postcode and it's also optional after that, including the "please tell us what it is". You can also enter a partial postcode and the first part of your postcode, if you feel more comfortable doing that. But it's really helpful to us, so we do ask the question.

Onto the next page, we're then asking for employment for similar reasons. If you were to select any of these first three options, there are a couple of follow-up questions. So if I were to say I'm full-time employed, part-time employed or self-employed, I'm asked a couple of follow-up questions about whether I was a key worker and what was my job title and it could be more than one. I'll continue into the next page, I'll skip those questions though for the purposes of the demonstration.

Step 5 of 5, the last step in the process is about caring responsibilities, long-term health problems or disabilities and finally, a question about shielding. If I skip those questions for now and click on "continue".

At the final stage I have the opportunity to review my answers, just so that I can sort of reflect on what I've entered. I can just immediately finish, if I want to do that, if I'm happy. But I can review my answers and then I can go back and change anything I wanted to change. If I wanted to change that very last question, I could click on "change", and it'll take me straight back to that "step five or five" where that question appeared. I could answer it and then click on "continue", review my answers again.

If I wish, alternatively, I can just press finish at the top or the bottom of the page and when I do that, I'm given the message that says "Your Story Matters" and here's why it really matters.

Then there are options from a practical point of view, about saving what you have provided and basically everything you saw in that previous page and we're also inviting you to keep up to date about the progress of Every Story Matters and the Inquiry more broadly and we offer the opportunity for you to share it yourself. We've tried to enable that as easily as we can on social media platforms and an email. The response code is quite important if you want to be able to withdraw your story. We don't capture any mandatory personal details and we rely on this response code if you want to be able to withdraw your story later, as we've said, it's in a couple of places, it's important that you do keep note of that if you want that ability.

We invite feedback through a [separate feedback form](#). And we've reiterated our safeguarding and support and messages and finally there's the opportunity to submit another experience, if you want to be able to do that. So that's basically the process from start to finish in terms of the online web platform anyway.

Agenda Item 5 - Q&A

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks to you and the team for the work that's gone into that. I know that we've been greatly benefiting from a lot of user input and user insight including from some of the organisations represented on this call, so thanks to those of you who organised some assistance for us on that.

We now move to the much awaited Q&A session, and thank you to everyone who's already been popping questions in the chat. Please carry on doing so, or if you prefer, you can pop your hand up. Again, if you're new to Google on the bottom of your screen in the middle, there will be a few buttons, one of which is a raised hand. So click that if you want to put your hand up and come in to ask a question.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Just to explain a little bit about how the Q&A will work. We're going to first prioritise questions that came in advance - if you remember I sent around an email asking for questions in advance,

we're going to take those questions first. Then I'll go in chronological order in terms of the questions that have come up on the chat, but recognise that not everyone feels comfortable or able to use the chat, so feel free to pop your hand up if you'd rather and speak to your question. If you have put your question on the chat, I'm going to give everybody the opportunity to speak to their question. Sometimes this might feel a bit pedantic, if your question is pretty self-explanatory, but feel free to then just say, "no more to say here". Do please keep putting questions in as they come up, into the comments section and "in call messages" section of the chat and we will come to those when we can. If we run out of time, although we've got a good time left over for questions, but if we do run out of time we can answer questions within the transcript and get back to you on those questions.

So this is your opportunity to get your questions answered and we should be able to answer everyone's questions. Does that make sense? So if you've asked a question I'll ask you to come off mute and kind of explain a bit more about the question.

The first question that we have is from the Royal College of Nursing: *"Do you know whether there is any provision from Module One witnesses, to visit and familiarise themselves with the venue and hearing process before giving evidence"* - I don't know if you want to come in, add anything to that?

Royal College of Nursing (RCN): I don't think so - it's just a question about addressing those anxieties that I anticipate a lot of witnesses who haven't given this type of evidence before will be feeling.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Absolutely. It's a really important question. Yes this will be possible and it will either be possible the day beforehand or early that morning before people arrive. So the Inquiry will be contacting witnesses individually when their date and time slots have been confirmed to start this process and start familiarising them with what they can expect.

Our witness team will call the witness or their legal representatives to discuss their arrangements for the day and talk through the hearings process and answer any questions that they may have. Then in the morning, or before the date of the hearing, depending on kind of what

their preference is, we will greet them at the hearing centre before the public and the press and Core Participant teams are present, to take them around and familiarise themselves, allow them to see where the witness rooms are, where they can kind of go at any point and a member of the witness team will be assigned to each witness - they will be their person who's on hand to coordinate their arrival to leaving and anything that they need in the whole time that they're there.

So I hope that answers your question. I'm going to move on to the second question, which came in earlier today. So the second question was from GMB Union, who asked, *"Will the TUC be the only participant for module one, or will constituent unions be able to give evidence?"*

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks very much. So I'll say a bit about what the Core Participant is and isn't. Core Participants are designated by the Chair for each of the investigations, the modules and as you say the TUC is a Core Participant for Module One. TUC, like many other organisations applied for Core Participant status on the basis that they have a particular and significant interest in the issues that are being looked at in Module One and they can have a particular role in assisting the Chair to investigate those issues.

Alongside the TUC, there are, I'm not sure how many, 20 or 30 Core Participants, quite a few organisations, representing bereaved families, government departments, both UK government and in the devolved administrations. There's a few of the health bodies, such as the UK Health Security Agency, some of the NHS bodies, Public Health Scotland, Public Health Wales and as we know, the TUC.

That list is now settled, so they are the Core Participants for Module One and there's a very helpful link earlier in the chat if you want to check who else is on it. But being a Core Participant is not the same as having the right or the ability to give evidence to the Inquiry and some Core Participants might give evidence, some might not, but many other people and organisations will, over the course of the Inquiry, be called to give evidence.

Some of those might be suggested by other Core Participants as people, or organisations, who might be especially useful in shining a light on particular issues, some will have come to the attention of the Chair or the

Inquiry's legal team, either because of stuff they've published or stuff they've said publicly, or because of a specific role that they might have played. Just to give you an example, Matt Hancock is very likely to give evidence in Module One because he was Health Secretary. Now he's not a Core Participant but he, like many other people in Module One, will be asked to give evidence about some of the issues that are in play here.

That probably doesn't answer the follow-up question, which is, "So how does one get to give evidence?" And the answer that actually, is that of course we only have a finite amount of time in which the Chair is prepared to hear evidence, and she's made it very clear that she doesn't want to preside over a long and drawn out Inquiry, but the legal team are working away at the moment to work through exactly who the right witnesses are and they're being assisted by Core Participants in doing so.

GMB Union: Ok, I think I understand. Thank you. And so really the simple answer to my question is that if a Core Participant is approached by the team for a particular piece of evidence that Core Participant will then decide who best to put forward to speak on it?

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): No, not exactly. Core Participants will be asked in the Module One for any suggestions of witnesses that they might wish to put forward. If anybody, any person, organisation is asked to give evidence, then they will be expected to do it themselves, that organisation - unless there is a very good reason why they can't. That's not to say that only Core Participants can give evidence; anybody can give evidence if they've got information that will be helpful to the Inquiry.

GMB Union: Okay.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): If you're not already on the list of witnesses for Module One and bluntly, the witnesses for Module One, I think now probably all know who they are, and that [the list will be published over time](#). That doesn't stop your organisation from being able to submit evidence in writing to the Inquiry and that will be considered like any other evidence.

GMB Union: Thank you.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thank you.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic. Thanks both. And I'm going to move on to the third question, which has come from the TUC. *The TUC would welcome a conversation about an event at the TUC Congress in September. When numerous key workers will be present and has asked who is best to get in contact with,* the short answer is engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Just to say, we absolutely welcome that conversation and in more generally for everybody else on the call, if you have these kind of events that are coming up, where you're going to be listening to your members or those that you represent, or where they're going to be congregating we would absolutely love to know about those events and know about any opportunities to kind of speak at and be present at those events, so that we can make sure that your members are given opportunities that are as easy as possible to feed into Every Story Matters and make sure that their experiences are heard by the Inquiry. So if you have anything similar to the TUC conference, please do let us know.

The next question, question number four came from Unison, so that's "can you say some more about how people can engage with Every Story Matters, physically, through meetings etc?" Do you want to speak to that question?

UNISON: *Perhaps a little bit of an overlap with the previous question. Obviously Unison, it's a large trade union. We've got members who are working in social care, working in the NHS, local government, and schools, and so on. There's quite a big demand to be able to meet people face to face who are running the Inquiry to talk about their stories. So whilst I think the online offering is really positive and really important and I can see lots of our members engaging with that, those other opportunities to physically share their stories, I think that they will be important and it will be good to hear some more about how that will work. Thank you.*

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic. Thanks very much and we completely agree and I'll talk about what we're doing with people sharing their experiences physically in person. You might remember when we spoke with UNISON and others at the roundtables that we organised in

November and December, that one of the things that we heard really clearly from organisations and individuals was that they wanted a way to be able to share their stories, in person, and not just in person, but in their local communities, they want the Inquiry to come to them and speak to them in places where they already are.

So in response to that, we're going to be piloting "Community Listening Events". They're not going to be kicking off in a couple of weeks when we launch the webform, they'll be starting a bit later into the year.. So we'll be piloting those Community Listening Events right across the UK, in towns and cities, enabling people to share their story in person with members of the Inquiry team in places where they already are.

A part of that will be taking a dual approach. So some of those events will be public events and some of them will be more targeted events where we're looking at specifically reaching particular groups and those more targeted events may sometimes be us piggybacking on events that are already existing, such as the TUC conference, for example, so that we can reach people in places where they already are.

That'll be a program of events that will kick off later on this year. As I mentioned, they will be a pilot, so just to just preempt any questions about what kind of proportion will be targeted or public events, we don't know yet and we want to work out which ones work best for making people feel listened to and then we'll roll those out in 2024 onwards. That's our Community Listening Events, does that answer your question? Fantastic. And again, as with everything, we'll be announcing more information about that within our newsletter, and on our website, when we have more information.

I'm going to move on to the fifth question now, which has come from TUC. *Your question is about seeing in the news that there are new partners to deliver the next phase of the project, I think the project is Every Story Matters? You're asking when will we know who these new partners are?* Did you want to speak to that question?

TUC: *It's obviously really important Every Story Matters is successful and you know, there's just an open honesty thing there that it hasn't been without controversy that has, in my view caused a bit of a distraction away from it. I think one of the ways you can get ahead of*

that is by just declaring who the new partners are as soon as possible to get buy-in. Again, not saying anything controversial here, I think that the Inquiry is just a delicate stage given last week's events and talk about transparency and the rest. So I'm just keen to understand when it will go public and I appreciate there are negotiations to go through and contracts and you have the frameworks set by the government, I'm sure, across how you can engage with those contractual obligations and tendering processes. But it would just be helpful to understand the journey you're about to go on in terms of identifying those new partners and spaces. And an additional bit which is, have you learnt anything or taken any other steps? Bearing in mind the controversy over the last year.

Inquiry Member of Staff: So for those of you that don't know the background to this, we have some suppliers working with us on Every Story Matters, our communications agency, which has been designing some of the creative assets that I just showed you and then a research provider that's helped us design the questions we ask and how we're going to analyse the information that comes through Every Story Matters.

The communications side we hope to have a new supplier in place by mid-July and so as soon as that's confirmed and awarded, we'll put a notification out on our newsletter and then the information is publicly available on contracts finder as well. On the research side, I think that will follow a few weeks after. So again, aiming for July on the research side.

In terms of learning, I think, it was never the intention for the communications agency to handle, or have access, to any of the experiences shared, and they never did have that access. I think we've tried to reiterate that message that it's not a communications provider listening, or handling any of that. Their role has always been to help us with the messaging and look and feel of the campaign, so I think we'll continue to try and reinforce that message to allay any fears. Like you said, it's really delicate and I think we've benefited from their expertise in how the campaign looks and feels, when we combine it with the insight of lived experience. So the aim is to have the new ones, both in, by July pending the commercial process.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic. Thanks. So coming on to the next question. So the next question is from Carers UK. So the question is, *“are there different submissions for organisations and individuals?”* And I see you’ve written a little bit, so do you want to speak to that question?

Carers UK: *Thanks and hi everyone, I’m from Carer’s UK. So I possibly have missed something, but I just wanted to check are organisations being invited to submit or are you in, inverted commas, just seeking responses from individual people, because I wasn’t sure. And then another question seems to suggest that you can’t if you weren’t an official organisation, who hasn’t been asked by a solicitor, so, just wanted to clarify that thanks.*

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thanks very much. Yes, I think I'm seeing quite a lot of questions in the chat around this and so just to be very clear. Every Story Matters is for individuals to submit their experiences to, so it's the Inquiry's way of understanding individuals' experiences. We're also aware that we're not the first people to have asked people about their experiences of the pandemic and there's lots of contemporaneous research done at the time that can also be really useful to us.

So another person has mentioned that sometimes our solicitors will directly ask organisations for this. You can also submit evidence to the Inquiry without being specifically asked for it. If you email contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk you can send various research reports, which will then be reviewed by our legal teams. But that is basically the way of doing it, so you go directly into the process rather than going through Every Story Matters. Every Story Matters is for individuals and going via the contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk is where organisations should send their research. Does that answer your question?

Fantastic, I'll go on to the next question. So the next question is from CRER in Scotland. So, you have said that *“you mentioned Module Two will take place in the respective nations, but will other modules have a physical option? So Module One in Scotland, will that be set up at a later point etc?”* Did you want to speak to that question?

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER): No sorry, my wifi is really patchy, so I'm cutting in and out as well.

Inquiry Member of Staff: It's no worries at all and I'll pass over to Ben to take that question.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks very much and hello. It's a great and very timely question, because one of the things I was keen that we update on in the second half of this meeting, is the [announcement that has been made](#) about half an hour ago by the Inquiry. It's just gone on our website, you might have to refresh to find it under the "updates from the Inquiry" section on the home page. New investigations have just been announced by the Inquiry and we've set out the next three modules that will open over the course of the rest of this year. Module Four on Vaccines and Therapeutics, Module 5 on Government Procurement and Module Six on the Care Sector.

The reason that it is relevant to your question, is it shows the evolution of the Inquiry. These aren't the last modules that will open, we'll certainly be having more than six and the Chair has said, in the same announcement, that she is hoping to finish the evidential hearings, the hearings that start in a fortnight's time, within three years. As the Inquiry evolves though, so too does our approach to working out which hearings will be heard where. We've already said that of the first five sets of hearings, the first two, Module One and Module Two will be heard in London. The next one, Module 2A will be in Scotland. The next one in Wales and the one after that in Northern Ireland.

We haven't yet made any decisions about where the hearings will be after that. Except to say that, we know that probably, the majority will be in our London hearing centre and you saw that earlier today. In due course, as we make more announcements about the progress of the Inquiry, we'll be able to say more about locations, but what I do know is that the Chair has already said how keen she is to make sure that the Inquiry has a physical presence right across the country and probably more than once. I think we can anticipate that there's likely to be hearings held in the devolved administrations and possibly elsewhere in England at various points in the life of the Inquiry.

Will there be a Module One in Scotland? Well no there won't, the only module so far that is being split up like that is Module 2 and that's because of the very, very different circumstances of political decision making that exists in the different devolved administrations. All of the other modules will look at all four nations of the UK at the same time, but that's not to say that they will all be in London. I hope that's clear, if not entirely definitive yet?

Inquiry Member of Staff: Thanks Ben and thanks CRER. Did you want us to speak? I saw you come off mute?

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER): No, it's okay. Thank you.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic. Thanks very much. And so the next question is from Churches Together in Wales. *It's a very similar question to the one that Carers UK asked before about supporting organisations to submit written evidence to the Inquiry.* Churches Together in Wales, I don't know if you wanted to come in and speak to that question or whether it's already been answered?

Churches Together in Wales: *I just wanted to check that what you said earlier is the case, it's obviously changing policy if it is. Because when in March we contacted that contact@coronaviruspublicinquiry.org address, we were referred to the solicitors. The solicitors said that we could not submit unsolicited written information as an organisation, we had to justify it. In the end it took the intervention of the Welsh Government and the leader of the opposition in Wales and one of the Core Participants to get the solicitor to agree that we could submit. So I just wanted to check that there has been a change in policy and that it is open to other organisations. For us, we've now got that permission, but by golly, it was a difficult process to get that.*

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): I'll try and clarify that, and apologies I don't think I was clear enough. So there is a distinction, which I'm sure you know about, between evidence which is pored over and published as part of the hearing process and all of the other information that the Inquiry will sift through in its consideration. Some of which might become evidence at a later date, but some will turn out not to be sufficiently

enlightening, or useful, to the specific issues that the Inquiry is looking at. Anybody is welcome to send us anything that they wish to send. But it is true that the solicitors are also in the process of contacting organisations that they know will be able to specifically provide evidence that the Inquiry can use.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic, thanks both. The next question is quite similar. Do you still want to ask that question or speak to it? No? You're all good, has Ben answered?

Carers UK: No, that's great, thanks - *if you could just let us know the date to send things by, that would be really helpful, because we all love a deadline.*

Inquiry Member of Staff: So on time frame, I don't know if others want to speak to the module time frame, I know it was mentioned before.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Actually the module time frames will evolve in the same way that the module plan is doing so. But Module One, if the legal teams haven't already received the information, then, I think it's going to be very, very difficult for that to be considered quickly enough to really inform the decisions that need to be taken on - which witnesses will be asked which questions in Module One. But if there's something that's absolutely essential to the issues in Module One and we don't already have it, then, of course, we would like to see it. Module Two is on a slower timeline of course, that has its hearings starting in October and therefore, there's a bit more time, but I'm afraid there is no hard and fast cut off date. Frankly, the sooner we get the information, the better able the legal team will be to consider it and if necessary admit it as evidence and circulate it to Core Participants.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Carers UK, did you want to ask your next question?

Carers UK: Yes. Sorry, I'm confused again. *So the organisations are welcome to submit information to the Inquiry, is what I think I've understood. But as soon as possible, then I guess when we're thinking about the Module One, how would we know what those questions are to see how we should be informing those? I guess I'm still not sure. Are we*

trying to inform the solicitors? Or are we trying to inform the Inquiry? I'm not clear.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Forgive me, I was using “solicitors” as shorthand for the Inquiry’s legal team. So all modules once they open will have a [scope published on our website](#) and I can add a link to the [scope for Module One](#), which sets out, in broad terms, the issues that will be covered in that module. That really is the place to go to understand whether there are specific issues that you might be able to add to the information that the Inquiry already has, either because it’s publicly available or because you can see that one or more of the Core Participants for that module would have been able to provide it.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Fantastic thanks to both. Is all understood there Carer’s UK? Fantastic.

I just wanted to add to that a question that we get coming up quite a lot is around deadlines for Every Story Matters. So just wanted to make clear that there isn't a set deadline for Every Story Matters and we'll be asking people to feed into Every Story Matters for just short of the lifetime of the Inquiry (Summer 2026). So if people don't feel ready to share their experience now, or they want to start and kind of save and come back, as the demonstration today showed us how to do, that's absolutely fine. You'll just see a lot about it as we start our campaign over the next few weeks, which we spoke through, but you, or your members, are welcome to submit whenever works best for them. Ben just posted that [scope document for Module 1](#) into the chat, you can look at that. Did anybody have any further questions? We're at the end of the questions now.

Churches Together in Wales I saw you put a comment into the chat. Did you want to speak to that point? Or is it more of a comment than a question?

Churches Together in Wales: *Well, it's really a comment isn't it, but I wonder is there somewhere which the Inquiry could make it clear that there won't be a call for evidence? I think a lot of us, I get the impression, perhaps Carers UK too, are amongst the organisations who are waiting for that call for evidence, which is what would happen in a parliamentary Inquiry or government Inquiry. It hasn't come and*

obviously particularly in Module One now, basically, the boat has been missed. As we go through the Inquiry, I suspect the Inquiry is going to be inundated with people sending things in too late, which it strikes me will be a shame. It'll be frustrating for the people sending it in and it'll be frustrating for the Inquiry, if in fact, that would have been useful had it been sent earlier. I just wonder, is that, as well as a question for the way the solicitors are responding, which as I say, we found to be quite negative - but I mean, that's not your responsibility on this call. It may also be a comms question about making sure that people, people in a sense of organisations, understand how best to do what would be helpful for everyone, if we did.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thank you. I think that's a really, really good and valuable point and we will take that one away. Thank you very much.

Inquiry Member of Staff: Indeed, thanks very much. I think it's something that we've heard before, about organisations being used to a policy process where there's the kind of things that you're talking about, called for evidence, government consultations, and that kind of thing. And it's worth us doing some thinking about how we can make clear, you know, where there are similarities and where we differ quite considerably and to make that process clear to organisations. So thank you very much for that point.

Did anybody else have any final questions? If not, then I'll hand it back to Ben to wrap up, but thank you very much for all your questions.

Ben Connah (Inquiry Secretary): Thanks. And thank you to everybody from me as well. And really useful to hear what isn't clear to people and to get some suggestions about how we can improve the way we communicate, in particular some of the technicalities. But also the wider points on Every Story Matters in particular. So thank you, for sharing your thoughts, your ideas and your questions with us.

If you've got any further questions, please carry on being in touch with us. The point of having an engagement team is to engage and this webinar is only one way that we do that. So, please get in contact with the team at engagement@coronavirus19.public-inquiry.uk

As I said, we'll follow up with the notes by way of a transcript of this meeting, which hopefully will enable you both to tell us if we've missed anything, but also to remind yourself what was discussed today, so that you can share the the salient points with your members, or those that you represent.

We are extremely grateful for any promotion or encouragement that you can help us with. You know, part of this is about us getting the message directly to you, but we're hoping that some of those messages, especially around Every Story Matters, might be telegraphed a bit wider so that we can reach as many people as possible.

Please do keep an eye on the Inquiry website, where we will continue to [post updates](#), including the one about the Chair's plans for the whole lifetime of the Inquiry. [Sign up to our newsletter](#) if you haven't already. Please continue to help us to make this Inquiry, the Inquiry for the nation that it needs to be, but also the Inquiry for those whose voices weren't heard during the pandemic. We're really, really grateful to you, thanks very much.