

## **Pre-hearing webinar with members of Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK, Scottish Covid Bereaved, Northern Ireland Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice and Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru (2023-06-07) – Transcript**

Attendees: Samantha Edwards (Director of Communications and Engagement at the UK Covid-19 Inquiry), other members of the Inquiry secretariat, Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK, Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, Scottish Covid Bereaved, Northern Ireland Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice

### **Transcript**

Samantha Edwards: I'm going to hand over to my colleague for the first topic in our webinar, where she's going to talk a little bit more about some of the ins and outs of an inquiry and what to expect.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thank you, Sam. And hi everyone. I'm just going to talk briefly about what to expect from the Inquiry and then myself and my colleague are going to go into more detail about the hearings that are coming up. We're aware that many people would not have attended an inquiry hearing before. Today we just wanted to give an insight into what to expect and the way an inquiry is run. It may look and feel like a court case and you'll have legal representatives, asking questions and witnesses giving evidence. But there are important differences, namely that an inquiry is established to examine the facts and to find out exactly what's happened. You may hear this referred to as an inquisitorial process which is different from what you might hear referred to as an adversarial process, which is when, for example, one party is suing another.

Member of the Inquiry team: Decision makers and other witnesses will be questioned to understand how or why decisions are made as opposed to prosecuting them. The Inquiry will make recommendations to try and prevent anything that's gone wrong from happening again. It therefore 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 where we are up to on this Inquiry we launch our first public hearing on the 13th June and it'll be the first time the Inquiry starts to formally hear evidence. This first module or investigation is about pre-pandemic resilience and preparedness for the pandemic. There will be six weeks of hearings.

Member of the Inquiry team: These will be taking place between 11 am and 4 pm on Mondays. And between 10 am and 4 pm Tuesdays to Thursdays. The Inquiry will generally not sit on Fridays with a few exceptions.

Member of the Inquiry team: Just to pause and say that it's already been mentioned but there will be a full transcript. So all these details will be sent around to you after the event today, so don't worry about missing anything as we go through this today. The Inquiry will 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. This Inquiry will produce regular written reports with the Chair's findings and her recommendations and the lessons learned to inform

preparations of future pandemics across the UK. It's also important to note that Every Story Matters, which as Samantha says, we will be talking about in more detail in today's session.

Member of the Inquiry team: Every Story Matters is an integral part of the Inquiry's investigations and it will provide the opportunity for everyone in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to tell the Covid-19 Inquiry about their pandemic experience.

Member of the Inquiry team: The Inquiry will base its findings and recommendations on the totality of the evidence before it which includes that provided by Every Story Matters. I'm going to hand over briefly to my colleague who will talk more about how you can get involved with the Inquiry.

Member of the Inquiry team: Fantastic. Thanks very much and just to echo what my colleague has said we will be providing a transcript. So we recognise we're telling you quite a lot of information here and there will be a break. And so, how do you get involved in the Inquiry? So all of you on the call today are affiliated with Core Participant and Core Participant organisations that have legal representation. So at hearings, Core Participant lawyers and their clients, which is you, will be present and are able to participate in the proceedings and just so that you're aware, you don't need to be a Core Participant to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Inquiry will ask for evidence from many different organisations and individuals.

Member of the Inquiry team: Just to touch on Every Story Matters, which my colleague mentioned before. Every Story Matters is designed to hear from people directly in their own words about their experience of the pandemic. It's designed to enable individuals to contribute rather than organisations. During the public hearings 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 the counsel to the Inquiry or by legal representatives of Core Participants, with the Chair's permission. In terms of watching and following the hearings, anyone can watch our hearings subject to a three minute delay on our YouTube channel and evidence referred to during hearings will be published on the Inquiry's website.

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Member of the Inquiry team: There is also limited space in our public gallery and viewing room for individuals to attend the public hearings in person. So the legal teams of Core Participants, such as yourselves, are able to book a limited number of spaces for those that they represent if they're travelling long distances or have accessibility requirements. Individuals can also contact the Inquiry directly if they would like to attend the hearings in person and have accessibility requirements. Following this, the seats will be allocated on a first come first, served basis.

Member of the Inquiry team: Some of you may want to watch the hearings with other members or groups that have been through similar experiences, or with family and friends. We'll be sharing some advice on how to set up watching rooms so that groups of people can watch the hearings together. We'll send that round when we send the transcript around after this call. If you miss the hearings or are unable to watch online, then there will be a transcript of every hearing available in the documents section of our website. And again, we can hyperlink to that in the follow-up email after this call. Within that document, you'll be able

to easily search for particular words, so you can easily find a particular topic of interest that's been discussed on that day.

Member of the Inquiry team: The public hearings won't only be based in London. My colleague in a minute is going to take you through arrangements at Dorland House, which is our hearings centre, in London, where the hearings will begin next week. Modules 2A, 2B and 2C focus on core political and administrative governance and decision making in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. So it follows that we'll be holding hearings for each module in the respective devolved nations in the New Year and these locations 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 to ensure that it remains at the heart of all the Inquiry's proceedings, those present at the hearings centre will be able to view the first panels of our commemorative tapestry installation, which will be displayed on in the main corridor leading up to the hearing room.

Member of the Inquiry team: The tapestry will consist of a number of framed panels, which have each been created from an illustration by different artists working with a different community and/or group of individuals impacted by the pandemic. I just want to take the opportunity now to thank those of you on the call that have got involved in this and spoke to an artist about your experiences during the pandemic to feed into that artwork. So thank you very, very much. Further panels will be added over the lifetime of the inquiry and the tapestry will be travelling around the country. As Inquiry hearings take place in different parts of the UK, the tapestry will be available digitally, so people will be able to view the tapestry on the Inquiry website.

Member of the Inquiry team: There will also be some photos of pandemic memorials from around the country in the public areas of the hearings centre. These include the National Covid Memorial Wall in London, the Scottish Covid Memorial Walk and Pollock Park in Glasgow, the Memory Stones of Love in Northern Ireland and the Yellow Heart Memorial in the Rhonda Valley in Wales. Thank you very, very much again to those that submitted images of those memorials around the country and again, really, really appreciate your support. The opening of the public hearing will be showing an impact film. This will be around 15 minutes long and it will feature people from across the UK. Speaking about the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on them and their lives, which includes people talking about bereavement and loss.

Member of the Inquiry team: This will include some people on the call today. So, again, thank you so much for sharing your story to camera and with everybody that will be watching the hearing next week. The film will be broadcast via the Inquiry live stream on YouTube, which as I mentioned before, will be subject to a three-minute delay and it will come with a trigger warning. 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 that those who suffered hardship and loss remain at its heart.

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Member of the Inquiry team: In terms of ways to keep up to date with the Inquiry's work, the best way to do this is to sign up to our newsletter. So, when I finish speaking, I'll pop a link

into the chat that explains how you can do that. That contains the most recent updates on our work including information from the hearings and updates from other module investigations. As I say, I'll pop the link in the chat to that and, as we mentioned before, we'll be publishing transcripts of each hearing and also all previous newsletters in the Documents section of our website in case you want to catch up that way. When the hearings begin, we will be sending a weekly roundup to interested organisations, which will give an overview of what's happened during the hearings that week, again, please do let us know if you'd be interested in receiving this roundup and we can send around a form for you to sign up to receive that.

Member of the Inquiry team: I'll now hand over to my colleague, to give you an insight into our new hearing centre at Dorland House and accessibility options that we have in place.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thank you for that. And so 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 in what to expect and I'll get my colleague to do that for me. Thank you.

[Video plays]

Member of the Inquiry team: So the Inquiry is making its hearings open and accessible to everyone and has been designed to meet the needs of the participants in mind. For example, we have public seating, hearing loops, accessible toilets and a step-free entrance. We have just completed an end of the build accessibility audit to see if we could improve our current provision now or as part of our additional works over the summer and we're hoping that that report will be with us within the next week or so, so that we can take any actions forward. We also have ventilation systems. We have a mechanical ventilation system, which is in operation throughout the ground floor of the hearings centre. And in addition to this, two air purification units with HEPA filters will be placed in the hearing room and one will also be placed in the viewing room as well.

Member of the Inquiry team: This will help with the removal of airborne contaminants such as viruses and particulate matter, and try and make the building Covid secure, we will also be placing CO2 monitors in the hearing room, and the viewing room as well. Because of the limited space, social distancing will not be possible. However, masks will be made available should people wish to wear them.

Samantha Edwards: Thank you very much and I'm sorry that the audio was so frightful at the beginning of that video. It's astonishing, we've played it in several webinars in the last few days and it's worked. Every time I can assure you, you didn't miss much apart from some nice little piano type music. So now we are all scheduled to have a short break. Now, I'm very very happy for it to be five or ten minutes according to people's needs because obviously I'm also aware that it's coming up to the end of the working day and I don't like to keep people longer. I'll work with with a show of show of thumbs, if people are happy with a five minute break,

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Samantha Edwards: Or would people like a 10 minute break? Five minutes? Yeah, that seems lovely. Okay? And as I said at the beginning, if you do need a break, if you do need longer, that is perfectly fine and you can, you can come back. When we come back, we'll be taking you through a little bit more information about Every Story Matters, and giving you an

update on that. You're very welcome to stay on the line and just turn your video off or you can disappear and come back and we'll let you back in in five minutes time, but we'll resume about 4.35.

00:20:00

Samantha Edwards: Hello everybody.

Samantha Edwards: I'm just waiting for people to appear. Okay. All right.

Samantha Edwards: Thank you everyone I do think it's important, just sometimes to give ourselves a little bit of a break, not least of because you're on receive mode and just listening to a lot of information and not always sure if you've always heard things, etc. So sometimes having a little break will give you time to think of any questions that you might wish to ask us. I'm going to switch to a slightly different topic from the hearings centre itself. And I just want to bring you all up to speed on Every Story Matters and there's two aspects of this. The first is I want to talk a little bit about the public information campaign that is going to be launching next week. And the reason I want to talk about that is I think it's really important, particularly for those of you who campaigned so hard for this Inquiry and have been awaiting it, that you won't feel surprised by just how visible the Inquiry is going to be.

Samantha Edwards: It'll be in so much media that you might consume or not on a day-to-day basis and if I don't warn you I think it could be just a bit a bit of a shock when you walk around the corner or you put the radio on one morning and you might hear one of our radio adverts. I just wanted to give you a bit more background on that so that it doesn't take you by surprise. Just to recap. Every Story Matters is the formal name for our listening exercise and it's been developed over a number of months and in very detailed consultation with people who have been most affected by the pandemic. And I want to reassure you that in every step of what we've been doing, everything from the name, to the logo, to the colours, to the images that we are using in our public information campaign, that all goes through really, really rigorous testing.

Samantha Edwards: And we speak to people who have been bereaved. We speak to people who have worked in healthcare and come from ethnic minority backgrounds and various other groups to really make sure that actually things that we put out there, are both going to resonate with people because what we're after is encouraging as many people as possible to feel that they can come and tell their story to the Inquiry. Even more importantly, it should resonate but not reopen old wounds to not trigger people into something. So it has gone through a lot of testing. In fact, our colleagues in Hestia have also been involved in us looking at wording, where we've been looking at certain messages that we would use and also the images to make sure that we are creating something that feels as emotionally safe as possible.

Samantha Edwards: It's a very fine balance though because good communications only works if it can make you stop and pause and think, oh, maybe this is for me. So you have to find a balance of, is it enough that makes somebody think? Yeah, I feel like I want to tell my story. I feel like this is a place where I can go and I'll feel safe to do so. I just wanted to give you a bit of an outline and a sneak peek at some of the images that we're going to start to launch next week. You probably won't see all of them at once over a series of months, you'll

see things in different parts of the UK to make sure that we try to reach as many people as possible.

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Samantha Edwards: You'll start to see these from the 13th of June about until the end of August, and they will appear in things like online and printed newspapers. You might see them on roadsides, if you're driving and also in city centres and in communities on posters that are close to GP surgeries or in other areas around the community. You might also hear a radio advert and radio is a really effective tool for reaching people and it's something that we in the Inquiry are really proud of, this radio advert, because we have drawn together the voices of so many different people from across the UK to encourage people to feel safe and to share their story with us.

Samantha Edwards: So the images that we're showing you, now these are how the adverts will look. They might turn up on your social media. They might turn up when you're walking through town or driving on the road and it might feel a lot at first because we're going to be putting quite a lot out there. The reason for that is we want to try and make people as aware as possible that Every Story Matters exists. And really importantly, we really want to make sure that people, if they are comfortable, that they come forward and tell their story so that we can bring an awful lot of those experiences together for the module that it is going to be really relevant for. For the first of those, that is the healthcare module.

Samantha Edwards: If you are from Wales, our Welsh campaign will be bilingual. So you will have English and Welsh, and the other thing to mention is that if you are from Scotland, you probably won't see a lot of business in Scotland right now, that's because we have talked to the Scottish Covid Inquiry and we're not going to compete for space and make sure that their own listening exercise can actually run at the right time for them. And then when they stop with their campaign, we will then advertise in Scotland, but on everything that we're doing in Scotland, we're making reference to the Scottish Inquiry. So people can choose to share their experience with the Scottish Inquiry, with our Inquiry, or both, depending on how they feel.

Samantha Edwards: So this is the campaign information. I hope that it's interesting and just gives you an idea of the sorts of things that you are about to see. We do really, really welcome feedback. Very happy to take feedback today, but also to take feedback as and when you might see things or hear things over the course of the next few weeks. But I just want to reassure you that we did try to bring in people who've been bereaved.

Samantha Edwards: So, I'll move us on to our updated web form that my colleague is going to take you through and he'll talk to you a little bit about some of the improvements that we've made and how to use it. Before he starts, I will say, to you all, what I have said to many others, the online form is there for anyone to use if they wish and it is perfectly, okay, if it is not right for you, we will make sure that there are alternative methods. We've got paper forms, we are going to hold community events and specific events for people who've been bereaved in a community or in a space that is right for you. We will look to introduce other things like a phone line later in the year. If the web form is not for you that is okay. If you know that there are some people who think, yes I'd like to go online and share my experience then do help point them in that direction.

Samantha Edwards: But if you know somebody who shouldn't use it, and it perhaps isn't quite right for them, then please by all means steer them away from it. If you don't feel that it would be right for them, I'd very much appreciate your help and support in that. I'll invite my colleague now to give you the demonstration and to show you some of the improvements that we've made.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thanks Samantha. I've shared my screen now so hopefully you can see the webpage that I have in front of me, if you can't and you're just listening today to the audio, I'll describe as I go. Anyone who's viewing as well, should be able to see the introductory page to the Every Story Matters web platform. Some of the imagery you're seeing here, you'll recognise from what you saw a moment ago. This is the page within the Inquiry website where we introduce Every Story Matters. So we've got the header area with our logo and some of the imagery that you've seen in the introductory information, about what Every Story Matters is all about. And some information about taking part and how that works and why we want to encourage people to do it as well as some frequently asked questions.

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Member of the Inquiry team: There's important information about support services because we understand that, not only living the experiences but recounting them is likely to be challenging for many people. And so there are a range of support services to which we post from here and a few other places throughout the process. And we've got some information about alternative formats and that's something that we're improving all the time and there's going to be some great improvements on that front over the next few days.

Member of the Inquiry team: There are a couple of buttons that say 'Share Your Experience' and then if I click on one of those I'm taken to the first page of the Every Story Matters platform itself and that sits sort of outside of the main Inquiry website. So there's a bit more information about taking part and some signposting to some other relevant places. For example, the Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry is running a listening project and there's a link to that. There's more detailed information about the sharing process for Every Story Matters. And again, same posting to support services. And then there's some important information about safeguarding that we include at the start and at the end of this and again, the information about asking for a different format, and some guidance about if you change your mind after you go through this process and you decide later that you want to withdraw your story, the facility to do that is there.

Member of the Inquiry team: It just depends on a response code that is issued at the end of the process. That you have to hold on to and then you can withdraw your story if you choose to do that at a later stage. So there's a button at the bottom that says 'Start', so I'll just briefly take you through the process. There's a lot of text. There are a few different questions and you won't have time to read it all as I'll scroll fairly quickly, so forgive me. But I'd like to just give you the general overview of the questions it begins by asking about a category or categories of experience.

Member of the Inquiry team: So you might choose to go through the form once or more than once. You might want to talk about one story or a set of stories. Maybe there are a lot of experiences that you've had and they are interlinked and overlapping. So you're invited to

select multiple categories or just one if you wanted to and by checking boxes on this first page. Once you've identified the categories of experience you want to talk about, you can then click on Continue at which point we we ask about the experience or experiences themselves and you're given a reminder of the categories you selected on the previous page, just as that sort of prompt to remind you about what you intended to talk about. And there are three main text areas on this page that have quite a large capacity and that's not prescriptive at all.

Member of the Inquiry team: You can choose within that how long you want to go on with the account of your experience. The first of the boxes asks about the experience itself. The second one asks about the effect of that experience on you and the people around you. And finally, of those three main text areas, we're asking about what lessons you think could be learned.

Member of the Inquiry team: So that's the final free text area here. It's not the end of the form but it's the last of the main free text areas. We ask where in the United Kingdom, the experience took place primarily or you could select more than one of these. Many of the questions in the form are completely optional, but I can continue. Perhaps before I do, I'll point out one new feature since we first soft launched this service in an earlier version. If I click on a button, it says, 'Save your progress to continue later'. I'm given a unique link. A hyperlink that I can save. I can copy it to my device. I can download a document that contains the link so that it's saved on my device and I can return to it later. That's really keeping in mind that it might be difficult to return to a difficult story. And so you might want to pause and come back to it after minutes or even days.

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Member of the Inquiry team: If I were to later return to that link, I'm taken back to where I left off, which was here. If I had entered anything into any of these text boxes, it would be waiting there for me, and I could return to it later. Then I set the demographics questions. These are completely optional but we do hope that people will help us with this information by providing it and it helps us to see the full picture. We want to understand how different people are affected in different ways. And so we ask about age, gender identity, ethnicity, religion. We also ask about postcode and we first of all, ask if you have a fixed UK postcode, and if you tell us that you do, we invite you to tell us what it is.

Member of the Inquiry team: You can tell us your postcode in full or just a partial postcode, whatever you feel comfortable sharing. But we emphasise that you do not need to enter any personal contact details to complete this form. Providing us with your postcode, helps us understand how experiences of the pandemic vary between people in different areas. So we do ask the question and we hope that people will fill that in as well. But we don't have to. So I could choose 'Prefer Not to Say' or I could leave it entirely blank and not select anything and I can continue. Then, on the next page we're asking about employment, similar reasons for the other demographics questions. If I were to select any of the first three options to say, I'm either full-time employed, part-time employed or self employed, a couple of follow-up questions will appear and ask whether I was a key worker.

Member of the Inquiry team: I'm asked about my job title. The last set of questions asks about, do I have any caring responsibilities when the experience took place, did I have any health problems or disabilities?



Member of the Inquiry team: The final question is about shielding, the question is phrased because we want to understand whether or not you were advised by the NHS or in the case of Northern Ireland, HSC, to shield.

Member of the Inquiry team: At the end of the process, before I press the finish button to complete my submission, I'm given the opportunity to review my answers and I can change any if I decide to go back to it. If I had entered my experiences here, which I didn't for the demonstration, if I did it would appear here and if I wanted to change any of my later answers, I could just click on the change button and I'm taken to the page where the question appeared and then I could I could change my answer and make sure I've got it right. And then at the top or the bottom, I can click on the finish button which I'll do now just to demonstrate. On the last page there's what we feel is quite an important thank you message. We're emphasising the importance of all of this and thanking people for taking part, acknowledging that it's a difficult process in many cases. Then on some practical points, we're offering the option to save a copy of what you've entered.

Member of the Inquiry team: Then you're invited to keep up to date with the Inquiry by following our various social media channels. We encourage you to share the web platform on social media accounts of your own if you want to do that. I mentioned that if you want to withdraw your story, you are given a unique reference code that you would quote to the team if you wanted to do that. And the contact information for this purpose. We invite feedback through a feedback survey and at the end of the process and then again, some important support and safeguarding information. All that remains is a button that says 'Submit another experience', which I'm welcome to do.

Member of the Inquiry team: Before I hand back I would like to explain that everything I'm just showing you has been designed and developed to ensure compliance with web accessibility guidelines and requirements. There are certain standards that we have to comply with, but wherever possible we go above and beyond those so users of assisted assistive technologies such as screen readers, for example, will find that the service is completely compatible with those types of technologies so that it's open and available to anyone. Any user of the Internet that is. I will hand back there.

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Samantha Edwards: Thank you. I wonder if you might also share that if a person pauses for longer than 10 minutes, what happens?

Member of the Inquiry team: Yes indeed, quite right. On the advice of our experts that we have in the Inquiry, we've also developed a new feature. If a session is idle for 10 minutes, meaning, if you haven't entered anything or you haven't clicked any buttons for 10 minutes, then a little pop-up message will appear. It doesn't interrupt someone who's typing or affect anything that's been entered and it doesn't interrupt the process in any other way but it has some information about support services that are available.

Member of the Inquiry team: It begins with the question, 'Are you OK?' reminding the user that it can be a difficult process to recall what can be a traumatic experience. It also reiterates the same posting to support services. It has a link to a page on our website with a whole list of support services for different purposes. And so we feel that this is quite an

important feature. One among many that we've built into this new version of the service that has support and safeguarding at its core.

Samantha Edwards: Thank you so much.

Samantha Edwards: I did want to draw people's attention to that and to reinforce what my colleague has mentioned. The way that we design something like this is that we create something and we put it through testing with people. Some of those people are very much like yourselves who have volunteered through your Core Participants' organisations to join and be part of our user testing. Other people are people who were wandering perfectly innocently through a street in a town in the UK, only this year who volunteered to pop into a library and sit down and look at what we've been doing. So we have done an awful lot of testing and we are trying to learn as best we can. We fully admit that we won't always be perfect and we will always be learning.

Samantha Edwards: If there are things that we can do to improve, whether it is the web form or in any other aspect, we are very keen to hear those sorts of things. If you do think of things then we'd be very happy to take feedback. On that note we do have plenty of time to take any questions from people. I'm going to handover to my colleague to take us through a Q&A session.

Member of the Inquiry team: Fantastic. Thank you, Sam. And just before I begin, I forgot to post the link to the newsletter into the chat. I'll just post that now (<https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/newsletter/>), I can see a lot of hands going up. I'll just quickly explain how this Q&A section will work. We have sent around an email before this session asking people to submit questions in advance and so I'll prioritise those questions that have been submitted in advance. Then come on to answer questions that are in the chat. And if you're not comfortable using the chat, that's absolutely fine, feel free to pop your hand up and speak to your question. That's absolutely fine. And anybody that puts a question in the chat, I'll ask if they want to speak to their question, if you want to provide extra context so we can understand better.

Member of the Inquiry team: I will start off with the first question that we have been sent in advance and that is, 'How many public seats will there be in the hearing venue?' I'm going to pass over to my colleague to provide an answer to that one.

Member of the Inquiry team: The answer to that question is that we have 41 seats that are available in the Public viewing gallery and a further 18 that are available in our separate viewing room. This is where attendees can view the hearings while they're being broadcast on screens with a three-minute delay and these seats will be allotted on a first come first served basis. However, we do have up to eight seats that can be reserved by Core Participants' legal teams for those that are travelling long distances or who have accessibility requirements. Individuals who have accessibility needs when attending the hearings can contact us via [contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk).

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Member of the Inquiry team: We are publishing these details in the Inquiry newsletter, which will be going out on the 8th of June, but will also be available to download from the website very shortly as well.

Member of the Inquiry team: Fantastic. Thanks very much. And now on to the second question, which is about how you book or reserve a space. I'm going to hand over to my colleague with that one, too.

Member of the Inquiry team: Okay, thank you for that. The way to book seats, for example, is that Core Participants are able to reserve up to eight seats, as I explained in the question beforehand, for those that have travelled a long distance or have accessibility requirements, and this needs to be done by their legal teams. We have also published a guide on the Inquiry website (<https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/public-hearings/watching-rooms-toolkit/>) which provides advice on how to set up a listening room in recognition of the interest in setting up screenings for the Inquiry's hearings once they're underway to follow hearings with like-minded groups as well. It's just that at the moment, the seating limitation is such that there's limited seating in the actual hearing room and in the viewing space, hence the reason that Core Participants can reserve up to eight seats prior to that.

Member of the Inquiry team: Fantastic. Thanks for that. That's the end of questions that have been sent in advance. I can see lots of questions coming through, on the chat, which is great. And so I'm going to go to Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK first. Would you like to speak to the questions that you've asked? So for those that are dialling in, we've been asked two questions. The first is, 'Can you explain why experience gathered through Every Story Matters isn't going to be used in Modules 1 and 2?' and the second is about how data from Every Story Matters is going to be used and who is going to be analysing the data.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Thank you for the session this afternoon. So my first question is, I'd be really interested to understand the rationale for not using experiences from Every Story Matters in Modules 1 and 2. If you take Module 2, for example, it's on high level decision making. So for example, the timing of lockdowns, the availability of PPE and so on. And there are many, many people's experiences that directly relate to those and I will just give you mine. My mother died in January 2021 after the second lockdown was called very late and obviously that will be explored by the Inquiry about whether it was late and what difference it made and so on, but I believe it directly led to her death.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: As did the inadequate PPE that her domiciliary care received. I give that by way of illustration, there are thousands and thousands of experiences that would be relevant for that module. So I'd really like to hear why they're not going to be included. My second question is to understand, you know, hopefully you're all for experiences. You will be absolutely inundated with them. Who is going to be analysing them? What experience do they have? And I say this as a research academic. What experience have they got in analysing this data? And how is it going to be used? Thanks.

Samantha Edwards: Thanks very much. The decision around where Every Story Matters feeds into the process was taken a while ago, based on the modules that were developed by the legal team and Baroness Hallett at that time. The first two modules were classed as, and forgive the terminology as it sounds very clunky, but they were about the systems that were in place and then the later modules are considered by Baroness Hallett as about impact. So the impacts that were felt by people and in order to understand those impacts we need to hear from people. I can understand your perspective that people will feel that lockdown decisions affected how people live their lives and going forward.

00:50:00

Samantha Edwards: Although the reports won't be available for Modules 1 and 2, everything that comes through to us, will be fed into a relevant module, or more than one, and it will still be counted. So they won't be lesser regarded if they are in Module 3, or 4 or 5 and so on and so forth.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Just to come back on that because my understanding is that quite rightly there's going to be recommendations made at the end of each Module so that we don't wait five years for the whole thing.

Samantha Edwards: Yes.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Which is really, really important. And I still fail to understand why if you focus on systems, you need to look at the impact of those systems at the same time. Not to look at the impact is bizarre in the extreme. So there will be recommendations made on the basis of more of the evidence in Module 2 without any of the experiences of people. I really hope you can feed this back because I think it's a missed opportunity.

Samantha Edwards: Thank you. On your second question.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Thank you.

Samantha Edwards: The Module 3 analysis is being undertaken by Ipsos. We have a contract with them that will take us through the duration of Module 3. Ipsos will do the assessment of everything that's submitted online. Ipsos is also doing targeted research where we are looking at certain areas, whether it's through people who were in healthcare provision, people who've been bereaved. A report will then be produced. And there's another question on this later on. So hopefully I'll be able to answer this question at the same time. That report will then come into the Inquiry and it will be disclosed to Core Participants.

Samantha Edwards: What I hope is that Core Participants will find that these reports enable them to say, 'We think that this is a line of questioning that should be happening in the hearings. We think you should be asking this witness these sorts of questions because look at what this report tells us.' The really important link between Every Story Matters is that it gives all the Core Participants access to a report that tells a very compelling story and hopefully if people use the web form and submit information about their postcode, about their gender and about other circumstances, we'll be able to understand much more fully how things differed in different parts of the United Kingdom and whether or not actually, you know, that can lead to recommendations going forward.

Samantha Edwards: And as for the future modules we haven't got a procurement up and running for the research analysis for Modules 4 onwards. So at the moment, we've got one for Module 3 and we need to look for a supplier that's going to do that analysis. And of course we'll be setting very, very high standards of what sort of qualifications those researchers and analysts need to have to be able to do that important work.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thank you very much both and so I think we've also answered another question, which came next on the chat about how will information gathered via

Every Story Matters be used and so I'm now going to ask another member of Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK to unmute yourself to ask your question about timescales.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Yes, it was really just to understand what has been the criteria for determining the order of modules because that obviously affects the order in which, you know, the bereaved families hear about what happened to their relatives.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thanks. I think that is a question that is best asked to your legal team.

00:55:00

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Well, it's not a legal question, is it? I mean it's a pretty basic question about the order of...it's just a basic question about how do you determine the order in which the modules are presented? It's not even a technical legal question, it's not legal, even. It's just a question of what, how did you decide what order to do the modules in?

Samantha Edwards: But to be clear the decision rested with Baroness Hallett on what order to take them in. Some of that is down to timetabling. So you know for reasons that are very clear when it comes to trying to lay it all out on a good timetable. We're actually holding the hearings for Module 4 before hearings for Module 3 because Module 4 is going to be a much smaller module. The decisions of which module topics should come first, that was all decided by the legal teams. I couldn't tell you the whys and wherefores even if I wanted to because I wasn't in those conversations.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Will there be a point at which the criteria for ordering those modules will be made public?

Samantha Edwards: We can pass that back to the legal team and see if there's any more that can be shared on that.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Okay, because it would be interesting for us to understand how the order has been determined and why. Thank you.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thanks and apologies. I wasn't clear at first there and I'm going to go on to another question from Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK. Would you like to take yourself off mute and explain the question?

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Thank you very much. I'm just wondering with all the advertising that you'll be doing for Every Story Matters, how can you be certain that it won't be hijacked as such by other groups who are past Covid, over Covid or never believed it happened? Groups who want to write any garbage in there to cause trouble for the Inquiry itself.

Member of the Inquiry team: Right. I'm happy to answer that question, and thank you. And part of the answer I think is in the question as the marketing plays a huge role. The marketing that's been done means adverts are going to be on lots of different channels, whereas if it were just to be posted on our website and little more than that, then all those voices online that were less under our control might then promote it through their own means. And then it might end up with a lopsided depiction, but the very fact that we are doing the marketing and are in control of the spend and the platforms on which it's distributed, means that to a large extent that's within our remit to control. It's almost like a

blunt instrument of a blanket marketing approach, although it is also very highly targeted and perhaps that leads into one of the other questions that's been asked today.

Member of the Inquiry team: That is about the demographics questions that we've been asked. One of the secondary benefits to us is that capturing that data is that the marketing spend on online, print and radio advertising can be fine-tuned so that we are capturing experiences from representative samples across the UK.

Member of the Inquiry team: If the details of the spend need to be finetuned in any direction we can do that. Ultimately though the truth is, we can't be the arbiters of what is and is not a valid experience. Our Terms of Reference are clear about the groups that we are to target in particular and we're making every effort to do that, but we can't at the same time, be the arbiters of what is and is not a valid experience. It is open to anyone who had an experience of the pandemic in the United Kingdom. If the experience took place in the United Kingdom, then Every Story Matters is for you.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Thank you. I understand that, I'm just worried that you might have to do a lot of cleaning of the data to make sure you get rid of the contributions that may not be [genuine].

Samantha Edwards: The danger that I think [the question-asker] was [highlighting] was probably that bots could effectively just overwhelm our system. That is very much a risk that we've been conscious of when developing the platform. [To Inquiry colleague] Could you reassure everyone that we are going to make sure that we know how to spot it?

01:00:00

Member of the Inquiry team: Sorry, I may have misunderstood the question. We have done lots of testing and security measures are in place to mitigate against risks of a whole number of different malicious threats that exist for any online service. You have malicious attacks for an online service that can exist that mean a computer program is written to to throw vastly large volumes of traffic at the service in order to disrupt it and to shut it down, that's one of many different threats that we've looked at and mitigated against.

Member of the Inquiry team: There are automated ways to perform an attack like that as well as manual ways to perform attacks like that and the analysis that goes on [to protect against this] is about identifying themes, apart from anything else. The software involved and level of human involvement is fairly complex, but there are a number [of possible countermeasures] depending on the type of malicious interference. I can reassure you that this has been carefully considered.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: All right. Thank you.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thanks for that answer. I'm now going to come to another question from Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK, who's asked a question about the hearing room.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Mine's not a question actually it's more of an observation that as far as the seating in the room goes, eight seats [that can be booked] between 28 Core Participants in Module 1 is pretty insufficient. Also the ability for those people who are sitting in the room to see. I personally live in Wales but my legal team is in England. So,

about the situation in the room. I was sitting in the third seat in the front row, if anybody's been in the actual room themselves, I just had a line of sight through legal team's, heads to Baroness Hallett. I know there's viewing screens but my head was at that angle all day watching the screen. It's pretty insufficient for what's going on.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Of those people in the public gallery, there would be probably two-thirds of those at least who have no line of sight in that room. [During] the hearing the screens kept on dropping out, which I reported to the room manager and the techie guy, so that was actually done at the time.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: The area where the public gallery is...because obviously there's 28 Core Participants, not all of them are bereaved. There needs to be a raised area so I've got a chance of actually seeing anything other than [the] back [of people's heads]. It's quite strange. I was doing this all day and as much as I enjoyed looking at my legal representative, I've seen them before.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Also, [regarding] ESM, which I have spoken on, before, on a call with the Inquiry legal team. You ran through the questions there and the list of things is 'How did this apply to you?' Now we've always been told that the bereaved would be [at the] front and centre of this Inquiry because they actually paid the biggest price. Have a look at the list. I saw it on the screen. [Bereavement is] four from the bottom, it should be number one. The first one listed. Not, you know, thrown at the bottom of that list. Online, I've been through it multiple times. I've seen the new form, I've gone through it and looked at it again, and there's a lot of statistics gathering there. That possibly is not acceptable. Also within Every Story Matters and talking about going into the public, if we're submitting an online form and the idea of that is to choose some people that you talk in more depth to, there's no way for people to enter their details.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Why would that form be of any use other than data gathering?

Member of the Inquiry team: Thank you very much and I'm going to pass over to my colleague, just to respond to the points that you made around ESM.

01:05:00

Member of the Inquiry team: I totally accept the feedback on the list of categories that you've seen. We grappled with whether or not to state this on the form itself, but the list of categories is randomised. In fact, I don't know if you have noticed, if you visited more than once, the sequence in which you can see the list of categories will be different for every single user. That's really to try to reduce the bias on our part. The only one that's not randomised is the very last one, which is a bit different to all the rest. It's something positive that you experienced because it may well have been a positive experience that the user would want to share.

Member of the Inquiry team: You've raised your hand.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: I have been in multiple times and refreshed the page multiple times and the bereaved are never at the top. They haven't come to the top, I keep going on different days, different times of days.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Refreshing the page and yes that I can see that the different types of experiences move, but bereavement, really well...I've never seen at the top. And the dead are the ones that this Inquiry is about. And we cannot forget that.

Member of the Inquiry team: I can understand your perspective and I can assure you that it is completely randomised apart from the very last entry. So were you to continue refreshing, it would just be statistically a matter of time before that one did appear at the top, I promise you. Part of the reason why it's randomised is actually about research methods to do with minimising order effects. That's to say if we were to sequence those categories in any particular order, we might find that when we have, we hope, millions of people looking at the list, we minimise the risk of patterns emerging of users focusing on the top half of the list or the bottom half of the list. That's really a psychological research method principle that we've engaged. There it is known in those terms, as minimising order effects.

Samantha Edwards: Thank you. [To Bereaved Families for Justice UK] I will just come in on your point around Every Story Matters and Every Story Matters is an opportunity for everyone to use. Absolutely. It will probably be one of the biggest, we'll call it a data gathering exercise, to use your words, but hopefully hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions, will choose to use it and share their experience.

Samantha Edwards: It is not going to produce stories that we can then dig into deeper. You're right [as it is] anonymised and that was a very important point as part of the design. What we do want to do is we'd like to talk to the different bereaved groups. We will need to come and talk to you about how we could do that and what would be the best way of doing that. So we'll pick that up as a separate conversation, but I just wanted to reassure you that Every Story Matters won't give you that but we can do something. We can do some different things that will bring those stories to life in the reports when we start to develop what those reports look like. I hope that gives you more reassurance that we are trying to evolve it as much as possible, to make it work for [you].

Samantha Edwards: I can see that you're shaking your head. I'm sorry that you feel that way.

Member of the Inquiry team: I'm sorry. We're going to have to move on to the next question, just because I'm conscious that we haven't got too long left and I want to give everybody the opportunity to get answers to their questions. So I'm going to handover to Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK, who's got two questions. Do you want to take us through those questions?

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Yeah, I mean, basically the same as [the previous question-askers], I can't understand if the bereaved are at the forefront of this Inquiry, why it keeps coming back to us a bit like a slap in the face. Why [if we are at] the forefront of this Inquiry, why are there only eight seats for 28 CPs [to reserve]?

01:10:00

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: See, even the public seats are not visible to what's going on in the Inquiry, with Every Story Matters, you say about the questions and I understand that you have to ask democratic questions. I mean, I was a marketing manager myself. So I completely understand that but, you know, we are dealing with people who are bereaved. My husband had cancer. He got Covid in a hospice. I was threatened with legal action by the



hospice if I didn't take him home with Covid. So you're dealing with people who are not only bereaved, not only grief stricken, not only not being able to bury their people properly.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: We feel minimised in this Inquiry completely. I'm speaking for myself here, [I] can't speak for anybody else but an awful lot of people I've spoken to feel that the Inquiry are using us to slap ourselves basically.

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: They're not listening to [us]. Every Story Matters, but it doesn't seem to be that our story matters. You know, we've got a marketing manager going through our stories. How are they going to collate a story? How are they going to get the feeling in things? I just don't understand that and I think Baroness Hallett yesterday in Module 2, I think it was, in the preliminary hearing said that she saw a video and she actually saw something that she hadn't even thought about during a burial. And so, how is that going to come across?

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: How can someone, in 5,000 words or something, pick out the bits that need investigating that you haven't thought about, even in questions to witnesses, even in questions to families. I mean we've had one family that is allowed to give a witness statement in the whole of how many I mean Covid Bereaved Families for Justice, I think has 2,650 odd members, let alone the TUC or the NHS and I'm sorry to take up time but it's just making me more and more angry as this Inquiry goes on and we fought tooth and nail to get this Inquiry. And I just feel minimised, that's all I can say and slapped across the face.

Member of the Inquiry team: Thank you. And I think it's really important that you did take a long time to say that, it's really disappointing for us to hear. We've got three minutes left. I think what we'll do is we will follow up with a full answer to each of your points, so that we can provide you with a full answer to all of the different points that you've raised. We don't [want to] keep anybody beyond half past five and Sam, I don't know if you want to speak to anything very quickly that was raised there.

Samantha Edwards: I think [the question-asker] speaks from the heart. And I know that there are others who feel the same way and I would echo what Baroness Hallett said yesterday that that we are trying and we are, we're trying to get it right for the whole of the UK. Our Terms of Reference make it very clear that the people who've been most harmed, who suffered most are at the heart of this Inquiry. That does include the bereaved...

Bereaved Families for Justice UK: Sorry Sam. You said it again. You said it again. You said the bereaved are at the heart of this Inquiry. That is not true. That is not true. I'm sorry. I don't care how many times you say it. It is not true.

Samantha Edwards: And that's what I'm saying, is that I can appreciate how you feel and we're not always getting it right. We do want to get it right. That's why we're having these sorts of discussions and making sure that we can talk about, you know, these sorts of things to help you understand our perspective. But [also] really importantly for us to understand your perspective. We do want to hear from you. I'm really sorry that there are things that we're doing that make you feel minimised, we don't intend for you to feel that way at all. I'm sure that there are lots of things that we could cover further. I do want to make sure that we come back to you on some of the questions that have been raised, or points that have been

raised and we can do that outside of this meeting because I note that it is one minute before we are due to finish.

01:15:00

Samantha Edwards: We do take your feedback really seriously. We've got such a tricky balance of trying to create something that is for so many people who are impacted by the pandemic and I do ask please, you know, please keep talking to us. Please keep feeding back to us. We will try to introduce new things that enable the bereaved in particular, to have stronger voices, and ability to shape more on things. Like Every Story Matters, which we will be talking to legal teams in more detail [about] in coming days and weeks.

Samantha Edwards: For feedback you can reply to us on the emails that we send. Or we do have an [engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk) email address that we can also provide to you. So you're very welcome to share with us via that. And if you do have legal points, if you can gather those and push those through your legal teams, I would be very grateful for that because there are some things that we can't speak about because they are legal questions themselves. So I would very much appreciate it if you could do that.

Samantha Edwards: I hope that some, or all of that session was useful to you. It is very useful to us, to be able to talk to you. I'm sorry that some of you are feeling marginalised and upset, I would ask anyone who is feeling upset to be mindful that we have a counsellor on the line and you can call our emotional support provider at any point. If you do want to talk to somebody, it's really important that you do reach out, if you do need just to have someone to listen and to talk through any feelings that you've got. So thank you very much for all of your time and attention and for your questions and comments. We will hold another webinar very soon for people to get up to speed on more things. Thank you very much for your time today.

END

### **Further questions submitted via chat function**

#### **Hearings centre:**

*Why was thought not taken in finding a venue that could hold more people?*

We are endeavouring to ensure that as many people as possible will be able to view the hearings from Dorland House. The separate viewing room at Dorland House has enabled us to expand the capacity in the hearings centre itself. We have also worked extensively with the legal teams of the bereaved families in particular to reserve some seats for those travelling from a distance or with accessibility needs. If you meet these criteria and are attending on a particular day, please get in touch with your legal team and ask them to book a seat for you.

*Can you explain how seats can be booked for Inquiry hearings please? People travelling especially from far away need to have assurance they will have a seat when they arrive.*

There is a [guide on our website](#) which explains how to do this.