



## UK Covid-19 Inquiry Newsletter

July 2023

### UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry

The independent Public Inquiry to examine the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK

#### The independent Public Inquiry to examine the response to and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK

Welcome to our July newsletter. In this issue we will cover:

- Inquiry news and progress
- Key dates and timetables
- Update on upcoming modules
- Impact films and tapestry

#### Message from the Inquiry's Director of Communications and Engagement



Hello, I am Samantha Edwards, Director of Communications and Engagement at the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. I am responsible for helping to communicate the work of the Inquiry to the public, organisations and the media. I am also responsible for [Every Story Matters](#) which is the way everyone in the UK can tell the Inquiry about what happened during the pandemic and what lessons should be learned.

I have worked with many of you to find fitting ways to commemorate the human impact of the pandemic through things like the Inquiry's tapestry installation (you can [read more about the tapestry in the news story following its unveiling](#)) and the films played at the start of the public hearings.

It has been a privilege to work with so many of you and create things that will help you, and those you represent, to tell their story. I am grateful for the trust that many have in us and I hope we continue to keep that trust as we develop Every Story Matters and our commemoration work.

The public hearings for the [Inquiry's first investigation](#) have now ended. Thank you to all of you who came to watch the proceedings at our hearing centre at Dorland House or followed them online or in the media. Our Chair, Baroness Hallett, plans to issue regular Inquiry reports and recommendations. She has said she expects to publish the Inquiry's first report on Module 1 by early summer next year.

The Inquiry team is working hard to prepare for the opening of [Module 2](#) public hearings on 3 October. We will also start the next phase of Every Story Matters, including the launch of our community listening events in the autumn.

### **Share your feedback about our newsletter**

Since we started issuing this newsletter in January 2023 the number of subscribers has grown significantly, in line with general interest in the Inquiry. We are keen to know how useful this newsletter is and how it can be improved. We would greatly appreciate you filling out this [anonymous feedback form](#), which consists of a few multiple choice questions and should take **no more than a minute of your time to complete**. An optional space for you to submit further comments is provided if you would like to do this.

### **Looking back at Module 1**

Public hearings for [Module 1 \(resilience and preparedness\)](#) concluded on 19 July. Both hearing recordings and transcripts can be found on the [Module 1 hearings page of our website](#).

The Inquiry heard evidence from 69 witnesses from across all four nations of the UK, including politicians, scientists, civil servants, academic experts and bereaved individuals.

Lines of questioning covered such topics as:

- National security and risk preparedness, including pandemic modelling exercises Alice and Cygnus
- Pre-pandemic health inequalities
- Financing for public health services
- Resilience planning in relation to social care services and care homes
- The impact of preparing for a no-deal EU exit on disaster planning, in particular preparedness for any potential pandemic
- Local health services and resilience forums and their relationship with national administrations
- The experiences of bereaved individuals who lost loved ones during the pandemic

During Module 1, the Inquiry considered carefully the preparedness of the devolved administrations as well as that of the UK government.

Questioning during this module was led by Inquiry Counsel Hugo Keith KC and Kate Blackwell KC. Counsel for [Module 1 Core Participants](#) also had the opportunity to ask questions.

## **Update on future investigations**

### **Module 2: Core UK decision making and political governance**

Public hearings for [Module 2](#) of the Inquiry, focusing on core UK decision making and political governance, will open on 3 October 2023 and run until December. Module 2 will look at the initial response to the pandemic; decision making by central government; political and civil service performance; and relationships between central government and devolved administrations, local government and the voluntary sector.

Following Module 2, there will be specific investigations (Modules 2A, 2B and 2C) looking at the decision making and governance of each of the devolved nations. Module 2A will focus on Scotland, 2B on Wales and 2C on Northern Ireland. These investigations will begin in early 2024. Hearings for Modules 2A, 2B and 2C will take place in the respective devolved nations.

### **Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 on healthcare systems in the four nations of the UK**

Module 3 will look into the impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems, patients and healthcare workers. It will investigate healthcare governance, primary care, NHS backlogs, the effects on healthcare provision by vaccination programmes as well as Long Covid diagnosis and support. [Further information can be found on the Module 3 page of our website.](#)

### **Module 4 (vaccines and therapeutics) preliminary hearing**

The first Module 4 (vaccines and therapeutics) preliminary hearing will take place on Wednesday 13 September. Public hearings for Module 4 will be taking place prior to those for Module 3. [You can read more about Module 4 on our website.](#)

### **Judicial review decision**

On Friday 30 June, the High Court heard the judicial review claim from the Cabinet Office against the Chair's Notice requiring it to disclose the WhatsApps, notebooks and diaries of Boris Johnson and the WhatsApps of one of his advisers. The [notice can be found on our website.](#)

On Thursday 6 July the High Court published its judgment, which upheld the Chair's Notice. This confirms that Baroness Hallett is able to determine which documents are relevant to her Inquiry, not the Government or other document holders.

An [updated notice and further relevant documents can be accessed via the Inquiry website.](#)

### **Structural discrimination experts appointed**

Following the Chair's ruling in March 2023 that the Inquiry should obtain expert evidence regarding pre-pandemic structural racism and pre-existing structural

discrimination on other grounds, the following experts have been appointed to assist:

- [Professor James Nazroo](#), Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester and Deputy Director of the Economic and Social Research Council Centre of Dynamics of Ethnicity, is contributing expertise on pre-pandemic inequalities associated with ageing and race, including the role of structural racism.
- [Dr Clare Wenham](#), Associate Professor of Global Health Policy at the London School of Economics, is providing expertise on pre-pandemic gender inequalities.
- [Professor Thomas Shakespeare](#), Professor of Disability Research at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and [Professor Nicholas Watson](#), Associate Professor at the School of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow, are contributing expertise on pre-pandemic inequalities associated with disabilities.
- [Professor Laia Becares](#), Professor of Social Science and Health at King's College London, is providing expertise on pre-pandemic inequalities associated with race and the LGBTQ+ population.
- [Professor David Taylor-Robinson](#), Professor of Public Health and Policy at the University of Liverpool, is providing expertise on pre-pandemic childhood inequalities.

## Update on the Ethics Advisory Group for Every Story Matters

The [Terms of Reference for the Ethics Advisory Group](#) have been published. The Ethics Advisory Group will be ensuring that Every Story Matters maintains the highest ethical standards and is chaired by [Professor David Archard](#), Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast. You can read more about the Ethics Advisory Group and its members in the [news story on our website](#).

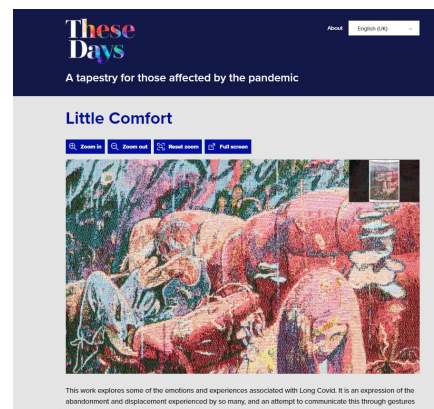
## Commemorative tapestry

The first four panels of our commemorative tapestry - titled 'These Days' - were unveiled at the Inquiry's hearing centre in Dorland House on the first day of public hearings in June.

A [digital version of the Inquiry's commemorative tapestry](#) is now available on our website, offering people a chance to explore the different panel artworks and find out more about the experiences and emotions that inspired their creation. You can also find out more about the artists and zoom in on the panel detail to see every individual stitch.

The digital tapestry also includes audio descriptions of all the panels, along with video content and other features.

## Impact films



The Module 1 public hearings opened with a statement from the Chair, followed by a short film featuring people from across the UK, sharing their experiences of loss. [This impact film can be viewed on our YouTube channel](#) but please be aware that it contains upsetting material. We would like to reiterate the Chair's thanks to those who shared their experiences, including those not featured in this first film.

Impact films do not constitute evidence to the Inquiry and are intended to provide context and ensure the voices of those who suffered most will be heard at the start of each public hearing. Impact films are not explicitly tied to the content of modules but the intention is to recognise, over the course of all the films, the hardship and loss experienced by many millions of people across the UK.

## Every Story Matters



We launched our [‘Share Your Experience’ webform](#) on 13 June to coincide with the launch of public hearings. Every Story Matters will remain open until the Inquiry concludes its public hearings in summer 2026. An [Easy Read form is now also available](#) via our website in paper format on request, with phone, British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language video relay options following later this year.



Further information about accessible formats is available on the [Every Story Matters website](#).

You may have seen some examples of our Every Story Matters public campaign either online (for example, on social media) or on your local high street. You might have also heard our radio advert.

## Sign up for weekly updates about the hearings

Since Module 1 opened, we have been issuing weekly email updates about the hearings. If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive these once Module 2 hearings begin, [you can sign up via the form on the newsletter page of our website](#). These updates will be a summary of the witnesses who attended hearings that week and the topics discussed.

Please note that these updates will be additional to the newsletter and registering via this form will not affect your subscription to the Inquiry newsletter.

## Further information

We understand updates from the Inquiry may have an emotional impact. We have provided a list of external organisations that can offer [support](#) if needed.

We have published a series of [FAQs](#) on our website to help explain the Inquiry's work.

If you do not wish to continue receiving this newsletter, you can opt out by clicking the unsubscribe button below.

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