



UK Covid-19 Inquiry Newsletter

September 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 September newsletter. In this issue we will cover:

- Inquiry news and progress
- Key dates and timetables
- How the Inquiry handles evidence
- Update on the Inquiry's approach to children and young people
- Preparation for Module 2
- Community events

Message from the Solicitor to the Inquiry



Hello, I am Martin Smith, Solicitor to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. I am responsible for advising the Chair of the Inquiry, Baroness Hallett, as well as obtaining evidence, corresponding with Core Participants and helping the Inquiry prepare for hearings.

Over the course of the [Module 1 hearings](#) the Inquiry collected a lot of evidence - thousands of documents as well as written witness statements and of course the oral evidence given at the Module 1 hearing. The evidence used during Module 1 can be viewed [on the documents page of our website](#).

In this newsletter we set out how the Inquiry collects and processes information, as well as some facts and figures about the Inquiry. Obtaining the right evidence when the Inquiry needs it can throw up challenges, both to the Inquiry and those providing it. When such issues arise my team

and I liaise with organisations holding documents, witnesses and Core Participants (individuals or organisations that have a formal role in the legal proceedings) to ensure that the Chair has the evidence that she needs to examine the Covid-19 response and the impact of the pandemic in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as per the Inquiry's [Terms of Reference](#).

The legal team's main focus is now on getting ready for the [Module 2](#) hearings that begin on 3 October. In the background, we are also busy preparing the modules with hearings in 2024 and supporting the Chair to produce her first report on Module 1 by early summer of 2024, in line with her commitment to issue regular reports and recommendations.

Please join us and follow our public hearings in October in person or online. You can find out more information about [how to follow the hearings on our website](#). In the meantime, please remember you can share your experience of the pandemic directly with the Inquiry by participating in [Every Story Matters](#). More information on how this feeds into the legal process is set out below.

Share your feedback about our newsletter

We are very keen to know how useful this newsletter is and how it can be improved and would encourage anybody who has not already done so to fill 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**.

Thank you to everybody who submitted feedback in response to our request in the last issue. The vast majority of respondents told us that the newsletter increases their understanding of the Inquiry's work and that they want us to continue sending it out.

We noted some comments that the newsletter has not been displaying correctly when viewed in Microsoft Outlook. In response we have made some changes which should reduce the need to scroll horizontally to read the text. Readers accessing the newsletter via Outlook may still find that images do not resize correctly. If this is the case, we recommend viewing in a browser (by clicking the 'Web Version' link at the top of the email).

What happens to the evidence collected by the Inquiry?

There are a number of ways in which individuals and organisations can contribute to the Inquiry. These include:

- **[Every Story Matters \(ESM\)](#)**. Every story shared with the Inquiry will be analysed. Experiences are also collated and used to produce themed reports, which will be submitted into each relevant investigation from Module 3 onwards. These reports will be anonymised, disclosed to the Inquiry's Core Participants and used in evidence. The reports will identify trends and themes from the individual experiences shared. Specialist researchers and analysts will make sure that we are not missing key insights. A final ESM report will be produced at the end of the Inquiry, meaning that participants can share their experiences even if a particular model to which it relates has finished and their contribution can help inform the evidence considered by the Inquiry. This is important, as we know not everyone will feel able to share their experience at a specific time.
- **Submitting information via email or post**. Anyone wishing to share information relevant to the Inquiry's work is encouraged to contact [our Correspondence Team](#) at contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk or *FREEPOST, UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry*, outlining the information they hold. Any information received via this route will be reviewed by the Inquiry's Research and Policy Teams in the first instance; they will flag any items of note to be brought to the attention of the legal team.
- **Rule 9 Requests to witnesses**. Rule 9 Requests for evidence are written requests made under Rule 9 of the Inquiries Rules 2006. These are sent by the Inquiry to individuals or organisations asking for a statement (their description of what happened) or documentation they may hold. Such requests contain a description of the matters or issues that the Inquiry requires evidence about.
 - A witness can respond to a Rule 9 Request either directly or via their legal representative.

- Upon receiving the response, the Inquiry may consider that the evidence requires further clarification, in which case the Inquiry will seek further information.
- Evidence obtained through these requests is considered by the Inquiry, disclosed to Core Participants and may be used in the Inquiry's public hearings.

Update on the Inquiry's approach to investigating the impact of the pandemic on children and young people

We have announced that we will be delivering a bespoke and targeted research project to ensure that we hear from the children and young people most impacted by the pandemic. This ambitious and wide-scale project will help inform our investigations, findings and recommendations about the impact of the pandemic on children and young people.

Our team recently met with a range of organisations that work with children and young people to discuss the plans, which will involve collecting first-hand experiences from children and young people and combining this with existing evidence on the impact of the pandemic on this group.

Like its UK-wide listening exercise, Every Story Matters, the insights from the research will be fed into the Inquiry as legal evidence to inform questioning and recommendations for the future.

You can [read more about the plans in the news story on our website](#).

Module 2 public hearings

Module 2 is divided into four parts. Module 2 will focus on core UK decision making, 2A on core decision making in Scotland, 2B on core decision making in Wales and 2C on core decision making in Northern Ireland.

The start of Module 2 public hearings - how the legal teams have been preparing

The legal teams at the Inquiry and for Core Participants have been working hard to prepare for the first of the public hearings of the [Inquiry's second investigation](#), which begin on 3 October.

Hearings for core decision making and political governance in [Scotland \(Module 2A\)](#), [Wales \(Module 2B\)](#) and [Northern Ireland \(Module 2C\)](#) will follow Module 2 in the first half of 2024.

You can read about the schedule for this autumn's [Module 2 hearings in the news story on our website](#).

- 70 individuals and organisations have provided evidence to the Inquiry as part of the Module 2 investigation into core UK decision making and political governance.
- Over 38,000 documents provided to the Inquiry have been shared with Core Participants. Each document received goes several stages and is carefully reviewed before disclosure to Core Participants. In this way we hope that both the Inquiry and all Core Participants are properly prepared for the start of Module 2 public hearings. Input provided by Core Participants is used to develop the lines of questioning taken by the Counsel to the Inquiry.
- [39 Core Participants are involved in the first set of hearings for our second investigation](#). A 'Core Participant' is an individual or organisation that has a formal role in the legal proceedings, including having prior access to evidence, making statements at hearings and suggesting lines of enquiry.
- Nine weeks of hearings are planned for Module 2, which will run from October through to December. Module 2 will look at the initial response to the pandemic; core decision making by central government; political and civil service performance; and relationships between central government and the devolved nations, local government and the voluntary sector.
- Around 53 witnesses will give evidence during Module 2. Lead counsel to the Inquiry will be Hugo Keith KC and Andrew O'Connor KC who will lead the questioning, although the Core Participants' legal teams are likely to have the opportunity to question some of the witnesses directly. We will be publishing the witness timetable on our website so that you can see who is giving evidence each week.

Hearings update

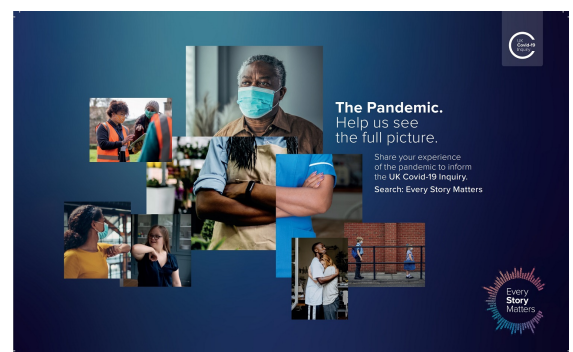
- The first preliminary hearing for [Module 4 \(vaccines and therapeutics\)](#) will take place on Wednesday 13 September. Public hearings for Module 4 are planned to take place in the summer of 2024, prior to those for [Module 3 \(healthcare systems\)](#), which are expected to begin in autumn 2024. Further information about the planned dates for future public hearings can be found in the [announcement launching the latest investigations on our website](#).
- The second preliminary hearing for Module 3 will take place on Wednesday 27 September.
- The third preliminary hearing for [Module 2A \(core decision making and political governance in Scotland\)](#) will take place on Thursday 26 October.
- The third preliminary hearing for [Module 2B \(Wales\)](#) will take place on Thursday 16 November.
- The third preliminary hearing for [Module 2C \(Northern Ireland\)](#) will take place on Tuesday 12 December.

You can read more about the [preliminary hearings in the news story on our website](#).

Every Story Matters update - events

We will be starting our community events at the Trades Union Congress in Liverpool (10-13 September), as well as attending the Royal College of Midwives virtual “Race to Lunch” event on 13 September.

We will also be in Belfast to hear from bereaved families alongside the Northern Ireland Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Conference on 30 September.



Community events are a way for the Inquiry to raise awareness of Every Story Matters and some events will enable us to listen to people’s experiences of the pandemic in the communities that they live in. They are particularly suited to those who might not be able or want to contribute via the existing methods offered on our [Every Story Matters website](#).

Inquiry provides more ways for people to share their pandemic experiences

In July we announced further ways that people across the UK can tell the Inquiry about their pandemic experiences. There is [more information about this in the news story on our website](#).

More than 60 organisations have already encouraged participation amongst those they represent in Every Story Matters (ESM), including Age UK, Marie Curie, Shelter and Sense. Our Secretary to the Inquiry will also be speaking about ESM on the Royal National Institute of Blind People’s radio station to encourage its listeners to participate in ESM, telling the Inquiry what happened to them during the pandemic. This will also include signposting to the relevant accessibility options. The support of these organisations will help ensure that the experiences gathered are representative of the UK population.

To ensure that the Inquiry hears from the widest range of people across the UK, communications specialist M&C Saatchi has been appointed as our ESM communications partner, following a competitive process, supporting us to deliver the next phase of advertising and outreach for Every Story Matters.

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.

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