



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 1 - PARENTS UNITED**

Introduction

1. In my [Opening Statement](#) on 21 July 2022, I explained that Modules would be announced and opened in sequence, with those wishing to take a formal role in the Inquiry invited to apply to become Core Participants for each module. On the same day, the Inquiry opened Module 1 and invited anyone who wished to be considered as a Core Participant to that Module to submit an application in writing to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 16 August 2022.
2. The [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 1 provides that this module will examine the resilience and preparedness of the United Kingdom for a Coronavirus pandemic. Further modules will be announced and opened in due course, to address other aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
3. On 16 August 2022 the Inquiry received an application from Parents United ("the Applicant") for Core Participant status in Module 1.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 1, thereby declining the application ("the Provisional Decision"), on 7 September 2022. The Applicant was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 4pm on 16 September 2022.
5. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.



Application

6. Applications for Core Participant status are considered in accordance with Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, which provides:

5.—(1) The chairman may designate a person as a core participant at any time during the course of the inquiry, provided that person consents to being so designated.

(2) In deciding whether to designate a person as a core participant, the chairman must in particular consider whether—

- (a) the person played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates;*
- (b) the person has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates; or*
- (c) the person may be subject to explicit or significant criticism during the inquiry proceedings or in the report, or in any interim report.*

(3) A person ceases to be a core participant on—

- (a) the date specified by the chairman in writing; or*
- (b) the end of the inquiry.*

7. In accordance with the approach set out in my Opening Statement and the Inquiry's [Core Participant Protocol](#), I have considered whether the application fulfils the requirements of Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 1.

Summary of Application

8. Parents United is described as a national voluntary organisation which emerged at the beginning of the pandemic. It is a support and advocacy group for households containing Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (“CEV”) parents and/or children. Parents United is said to represent a cross-section of the population, including the BAME community, those with children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (“SEND”), single parent families, families across the socio-economic spectrum, and



those with home-educated children. The application states that, although the group has very recently been archived, it remains open to facilitate thousands of parents to speak publicly about their struggles and to present evidence on the impact of the pandemic on themselves and their children. In particular, they wish to share the trauma experienced by CEV parents and/or children by the government's decision to keep schools open during the pandemic, which placed these families at significant risk.

9. The application is made on the basis that Parents United played a direct and significant role throughout the pandemic in supporting and representing many thousands of parents who were seriously impacted due to their/their children's CEV and other related factors. It is also made on the basis that they have a significant interest in establishing why CEV parents and/or children established such serious difficulty during the pandemic and to highlight the failures of the Government, the Department of Education and local authorities in adequately protecting and providing for these families. The application further sets out the issues that Parents United wish Module 1 to cover.

Decision for the Applicant

10. I acknowledge the increased risk to the CEV as a result of Covid-19 and the significant and important work carried out by Parents United. I wish to repeat my ongoing commitment, as set out in the Terms of Reference and repeated in my Opening Statement, that inequalities will be at the forefront of the Inquiry's investigations. This will include a focus on the disparities evident in the impact of the pandemic on different categories of people.
11. However, having considered with great care everything that is said in the application, I have decided, in my discretion, not to designate the applicant as a Core Participant in Module 1. Whilst I appreciate that the applicant brings a representative and valuable



voice on behalf of immunocompromised people, the focus of Module 1 is on the resilience and preparedness of the UK in advance of the coronavirus pandemic. I do not consider that the applicant played a direct and significant role in matters to which Module 1 relates.

12. Furthermore, I do not consider, in any event, having regard in particular to the need to manage the Inquiry effectively and efficiently, that its interest in pandemic planning and preparedness is sufficiently significant as to grant it Core Participant status in this Module. I am determined to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind the Inquiry's wide-ranging terms of reference and the need for the Inquiry process to be rigorous and fair. Given the vast numbers of people who were involved with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many people in this country could potentially have an interest in it.
13. In my Opening Statement, I said that I will publish more information about the issues intended to be covered by later modules in the coming months. The applicant is encouraged to consider making an application for Core Participant status in future modules likely to deal directly with health inequalities and the clinically extremely vulnerable.
14. It is also not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The applicant may have relevant information to give in relation to matters being examined in the Inquiry and the Inquiry will be reaching out in due course to a range of individuals, organisations and bodies to seek information, to gain their perspective on the issues raised in the modules and, where appropriate, to ask for witness statements and documents.
15. The Inquiry will also listen to and consider carefully the experiences of bereaved families and others who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic, through the listening exercise. I made clear in my Opening Statement that this



listening exercise is a significant and important task which will lead to summary reports of the impact of the pandemic on those who come forward to be used as evidence during the Inquiry's module hearings. The applicant and those it represents will have the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry, through the listening exercise if they so choose.

16. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by Parents United, in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 1, I consider that Parents United did not play a direct and significant role in relation to the matters sought to be investigated in Module 1, nor does Parents United have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 1 relates. I have therefore decided that Parents United should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 1 and I confirm that this is my final decision.

17. I will keep the scope of Module 1 under review. My decision not to designate Parents United as a Core Participant in Module 1 does not preclude them from making any further applications in respect of any later modules. I will consider any future applications Parents United may wish to make on their merits at the time they are made.

Rt Hon Baroness (Heather) Hallett DBE
Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry
29 September 2022