



solicitors Mailbox &lt;solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk&gt;

## Re: Covid-19 Public Inquiry - Letter requesting information - Professor Jonathan Benger - Reference - M2/SAGE/01/JB

1 message

Jonathan Benger <Jonathan.Benger@I&S>  
 To: solicitors Mailbox <solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk>

27 September 2022 at 14:19

Dear Inquiry Team,

Thanks for your reply. My response to the questionnaire follows:

### 1. A brief overview of your qualifications, career history, professional expertise and major publications.

#### Current Appointments:

1. Chief Medical Officer, NHS Digital (0.6 wte secondment, from November 2019). Please note that during the earlier stages of the pandemic I was the Acting Chief Medical Officer of NHS Digital, prior to securing a substantive appointment in April 2021).

Interim Chief Clinical Information Officer, NHS England, from May 2022.

2. Professor of Emergency Care, University of the West of England (from April 2008).

Senior Investigator, National Institute for Health Research (from April 2019).

3. Consultant in Emergency Medicine, with a specific remit for Research and Development, University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (from Dec 2003).

#### Qualifications:

- Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), for services to the NHS (2022)
- Doctor of Medicine (University of Bristol)
- Fellow of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine
- Diploma in Immediate Medical Care (Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh)
- Diploma in Child Health (Royal College of Physicians)
- Diploma in Anaesthetics (Royal College of Anaesthetists)
- Fellow Of The Royal College Of Surgeons Of England
- Bachelor Of Medicine And Bachelor Of Surgery (University of Bristol).

#### Professional Expertise:

- Clinical Leadership, Emergency Care, Clinical Informatics, Resuscitation and Airway Management, Service Design and Delivery.

### 2. A list of the groups (i.e. SAGE and/or any of its sub-groups) in which you have been a participant, and the relevant time periods.

My role in relation to SAGE was very limited. I joined one meeting of SAGE by teleconference (meeting 40 on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sage-40-minutes-coronavirus-covid-19-response-4-june-2020>) to present the results of an analysis that had been completed using data available to NHS Digital. This examined the relationship between ethnicity and outcome for patients with COVID-19 early in the pandemic. This was published subsequently in the medical journal BMJ Open (see <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/10/11/e042712.full.pdf>).

### 3. An overview of your involvement with those groups between January 2020 and February 2022, including: a. When and how you came to be a participant; b. The number of meetings you attended, and your contributions to those meetings; c. Your role in providing research, information and advice.

See above.

### 4. A summary of any documents to which you contributed for the purpose of advising SAGE and/or its related subgroups on the Covid-19 pandemic. Please include links to those documents where possible.

<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/10/11/e042712.full.pdf>

5. A summary of any articles you have written, interviews and/or evidence you have given regarding the work of the above-mentioned groups and/or the UK's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Please include links to those documents where possible.

See also: <https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-data-services-updates/ethnicity-and-outcomes-of-covid-19-patients-in-england>

6. Your views as to whether the work of the above-mentioned groups in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic (or the UK's response more generally) succeeded in its aims. This may include, but is not limited to, your views on: a. The composition of the groups and/or their diversity of expertise; b. The way in which the groups were commissioned to work on the relevant issues; c. The resources and support that were available; d. The advice given and/or recommendations that were made; e. The extent to which the groups worked effectively together; f. The extent to which applicable structures and policies were utilised and/or complied with and their effectiveness. My involvement was too limited for me to have a view on this.

7. Your views as to any lessons that can be learned from the UK's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular relating to the work of the above-mentioned groups. Please describe any changes that have already been made, and set out any recommendations for further changes that you think the Inquiry should consider making.

My involvement was too limited for me to have a view on this.

8. A brief description of documentation relating to these matters that you hold (including soft copy material held electronically). Please retain all such material. I am not asking for you to provide us with this material at this stage, but I may request that you do so in due course.

I hold material relating to the research publication noted above, and a small number of related emails.

For completeness, during the key response period and also in my capacity as NHS Digital's Acting Chief Medical Officer, I was a member of: (a) the UK Senior Clinicians' Advisory Group, (b) the National Incident Response Board and (c) a sub-group of the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG). However, as I understand that the questionnaire relates to my involvement with SAGE and its sub-groups, I have answered the questions raised by reference to that involvement only.

Yours faithfully,

Jonathan Benger.

---

**From:** [redacted] NR [redacted]@covid19.public-inquiry.uk [redacted] NR [redacted]@covid19.public-inquiry.uk on behalf of solicitors Mailbox <[solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)>  
**Sent:** 23 September 2022 17:37  
**To:** Jonathan Benger <[Jonathan.Benger@I&S](mailto:Jonathan.Benger@I&S)>  
**Cc:** solicitors Mailbox <[solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Covid-19 Public Inquiry - Letter requesting information - Professor Jonathan Benger - Reference - M2/SAGE/01/JB

Dear Professor Benger

Thank you for offering to assist the Inquiry.

We appreciate your concerns regarding your role. We would still be grateful if you could respond to the questionnaire, to the extent that you feel able. We can then follow up with NHS Digital at a later date as necessary.



Kind regards

The Inquiry Team



[solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)

On Fri, 23 Sept 2022 at 10:52, Jonathan Benger <[Jonathan.Benger@I&S](mailto:Jonathan.Benger@I&S)> wrote:

Dear Mr Suter,

Thank you for contacting me regarding Module 2 of the UK COVID-19 Inquiry (Reference M2/SAGE/01/JB).

My role in relation to SAGE was very limited. I joined one meeting of SAGE by teleconference to present the results of an analysis that had been completed using data available to NHS Digital. This examined the relationship between ethnicity and outcome for patients with COVID-19 early in the pandemic. This was published subsequently in the medical journal BMJ Open (see <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/10/11/e042712.full.pdf> ).

My participation was a direct consequence of the fact that I was, at that time, the Acting Chief Medical Officer of NHS Digital, rather than being an independent expert. However, it was not clear from your letter whether you were aware of the nature of my involvement and if not, whether this information may impact on the questions asked and who they are addressed to. I am keen to assist the Inquiry as best I can, but to enable me to do so, can you please clarify the capacity in which these questions are being asked of me (whether as Acting Chief Medical Officer at NHS Digital at that time or in a personal capacity)?

If it is the former, then questions about my involvement in SAGE may be better addressed via NHS Digital.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Benger.

---

**From:** **NR** <[NR@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:NR@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)> on behalf of solicitors Mailbox <[solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)>

**Sent:** 02 September 2022 16:07

**To:** Jonathan Benger <[Jonathan.Benger@I&S](mailto:Jonathan.Benger@I&S)>

**Cc:** solicitors Mailbox <[solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)>

**Subject:** Covid-19 Public Inquiry - Letter requesting information - Professor Jonathan Benger

Dear Professor Benger

Please find  
**attached**

a letter sent on behalf of Lady Hallett, Chair to the Covid-19 Public Inquiry. The letter provides details on how to reply and should you have any questions about the contents of the letter please do not hesitate to reply to this email and one of the team will be in touch with you.

Kind regards

The Solicitors Team



[solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:solicitors@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)