

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

OPENING STATEMENT IN MODULE 2A

on behalf of NHS National Services Scotland (“NHS NSS”)

1. NHS NSS welcomes this UK Inquiry which has been established to ascertain the UK’s preparedness for and response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of the pandemic across the four nations of the UK, and the lessons to be learned. At the outset, NHS NSS offers its condolences to all those bereaved as a result of Covid-19, and its sympathy to the wider public who suffered as a result of the far-ranging effects of the pandemic.
2. NHS NSS is a core participant in a number of Modules in this Inquiry, including Module 2A. As a public body, NHS NSS understands the responsibility it owes to the Inquiry and to the people of Scotland, and it will continue to support the Inquiry’s work in any way it can.
3. NHS NSS is conscious that, although the Inquiry team is aware of the organisation NHS NSS, the wider public may not know what NHS NSS is or does or why it is a core participant in this Module. This opening statement, therefore, contains a brief introduction first to the NHS in Scotland, and then to NHS NSS, explaining its roles and its interest in this Module of the Inquiry.
4. The NHS in Scotland is and has always been separate from the NHS elsewhere in the UK. It was created in 1948, as a result of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1947. NHS Scotland consists of fourteen territorial NHS Boards, which are each responsible for the protection and improvement of health and the delivery of frontline healthcare services to the population within the particular Board’s geographical area. In addition, there are six national NHS Boards (Healthcare Improvement Scotland, National Education Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS24, The State Hospital, Golden

Jubilee National Hospital), and one public health body (Public Health Scotland) who support the territorial NHS Boards by providing a range of specialist and national services. The Scottish Government oversees the activities of the NHS in Scotland. It sets national outcomes and priorities for health and social care, approves plans with the territorial NHS Boards and the national NHS Boards, and manages the performance of the NHS Boards.

5. Turning now to NHS NSS, it is a Non-Departmental Public Body accountable to the Scottish Government. It was created in 1974 under secondary legislation derived from the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1972. It was established to provide national strategic support services and expert advice to Scotland's NHS. Its headquarters are in Edinburgh, but it has staff based at a number of locations in Scotland. It is structured into several different units each providing distinct services.
6. Services currently provided by NHS NSS include those given by the following units:
 - National Procurement and Logistics
 - Practitioner and Counter Fraud Services
 - Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection Scotland
 - Central Legal Office
 - Digital and Security Services
 - Health Facilities Scotland
 - National Specialist Services Directorate (NSD)
 - Programme Management Service
 - Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service
 - NHS Scotland Assure.

Prior to 1 April 2020, NHS NSS also provided a service called Health Protection Scotland – elements of that service moved on 1 April 2020 to

become part of a new organisation, Public Health Scotland. While within NHS NSS, Health Protection Scotland planned and delivered specialist national services aimed at protecting the people of Scotland from infectious and environmental harms. One part of Health Protection Scotland prior to 1 April 2020, the Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection team, remained in NHS NSS and is now known as Antimicrobial Resistance and Health Associated Infection Scotland.

7. Although it is not primarily a public facing organisation, all services provided by NHS NSS have had a role in the response to the pandemic in Scotland. Its roles during the pandemic response included the following:

- Programme management services to a range of programmes including the commissioning and decommissioning of the Louisa Jordan Hospital, Test and Protect and Covid-19 vaccination programmes
- Leading the mobilisation of construction partners including the contracting, design, construction and equipping of the Louisa Jordan Hospital, and providing technical oversight on mechanical, electrical and water systems at the Louisa Jordan facility
- Development of therapeutic convalescent plasma treatments
- Procurement and logistics for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Procurement, development, and operation of digital platforms for Test and Protect, and Covid-19 vaccination and Covid-19 status certification programmes including publicly accessible apps and web platforms
- Procurement and logistics for Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing, including consumables, equipment and laboratories
- Procurement and logistics for Lateral Flow Tests and Point of Care testing, including consumables and equipment
- Commissioning and operation of the National Contact Centre providing support to Test and Protect, Covid-19 vaccinations and Covid-19 status certification

- Operational delivery of the UK national and local Testing Programmes in Scotland working with the UK Health Security Agency, local authorities, health boards and the Scottish Ambulance Service to ensure access to appropriate Covid-19 testing for the population
 - Working with other bodies on the production of Infection Prevention and Control Guidance.
8. NHS NSS therefore played a significant operational role in the response to the pandemic in Scotland.
9. In this Module 2A, the Inquiry focuses on Scotland, examining the core political and administrative decision-making by the Scottish Government in response to the pandemic. Health in Scotland is a matter devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Prior to devolution, the Secretary of State for Scotland had responsibility for health in Scotland. Given that health is a devolved matter, the Scottish Government rather than the UK government was responsible for core decision-making on the response to the pandemic in the health sector in Scotland.
10. As a public body supporting Scotland's NHS, NHS NSS is interested in this Module's scrutiny of the Scottish Government's decision-making in relation to the health sector. It is particularly interested in the extent of co-operation between the four nations of the UK during the pandemic, specifically in relation to the sharing of relevant information and epidemiological data so that the Scottish Government was as well-informed as it could be when making decisions relevant to the health sector in Scotland.

5 January 2024