

Witness Name: Caroline Lamb

Statement No.: 5

Exhibits: CL5

Dated: 10 November 2023

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

MODULE 2 and 2A

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Further to the issues raised by the Rule 9 notice dated 10 March 2023 served on the Scottish Government, in connection with Module 2A, the Director General for Health and Social Care will say as follows:

Introduction

1. This statement is one of a suite provided for Module 2A of the UK Covid Inquiry and these should be considered collectively. This statement combines contributions from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for Scotland, the Chief Scientist (Health) (CSH) and the National Clinical Director (NCD) for Scotland. It has been prepared to address further questions from the Inquiry and should be considered an addendum to the health entities statement provided for Module 2A by DG Health and Social Care on 23 June 2023.

Formulating and communicating expert advice to Scottish Government decision makers in the Covid-19 pandemic

2. In the early stages of the pandemic there was a particular need to develop rapid information on the nature of SARS-CoV-2 and Covid-19 in order that risk could be fully assessed, clinical approaches developed, and a policy response formulated. Due to the novel nature of the public health emergency, information about the pathogen, the disease, and the epidemiology were all absent or unclearly known and required rapid understanding to inform the operational response.

3. The four UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) published a technical report, provided: [CL5/001-INQ000130955] on the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK in December 2022, which sets out these considerations in detail within Chapter 1. The report includes examples of the type of information that was required to fill these gaps in knowledge and the approaches that were taken to develop this.
4. Building on existing research networks, with global co-operation and sharing of learning, were amongst the most important points identified for future learning. In addition to this, existing committee infrastructure groups such as the Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies (SAGE), the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) and the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M), alongside formal and informal networks of clinical practice, were all critical in revising and sharing this information with critical review proportionate to the urgency of the need.
5. Despite the rapid learning that took place, uncertainty existed on many aspects of the pathogen, the disease and the epidemiology for some time. The strength of uncertainty in the evidence at that stage required that to be reflected in the clinical advice that was given, with the need to also convey the possibility of further revision, adaptation and response as additional understanding became evident over time.

Governance during the pandemic

6. There were many examples of areas where there was uncertainty in the scientific community, but this helped to encourage considered debate in coming to a consensus. Examples of the range of differing views would include the relative contribution of asymptomatic transmission, particularly in the earliest part of the pandemic when there was still great uncertainty about the role of asymptomatic spread, or the real-world impact of different modes of transmission.
7. Further information in relation to these examples can be found in Chapter 1 of the Technical report on the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, as referenced in paragraph 3 above.

The Scottish Government's proposals for public health and coronavirus legislation and regulations

8. In providing advice to Ministers, the role of the CMO and senior clinicians was to frame this advice in the context of direct and indirect health harms as a consequence of viral spread and Covid-19. However, it was necessary for Ministers also to consider wider effects on the country in arriving at their decisions, necessitating a variety of health and non-health trade-offs. Subsequently, this approach was formalised in what became known as the “four harms” assessment that was used by the Scottish Government, additionally incorporating consideration of societal and economic harms, and presenting combined cross-government advice to Ministers for decisions.
9. The strategic approach of the Scottish Government was to prioritise mitigation of the health harms whilst recognising the wider socio-economic impacts and reducing these as much as possible. CMO and the National Clinical Director (NCD) supported the four harms approach and as such, there were no major or minor Ministerial decisions that the CMO disagreed with.
10. As the pandemic progressed, and particularly when health harms were already modified by the availability of therapeutics and vaccines, there were infrequently occasions when the timing or scope of response was modified as part of this wider holistic approach. However, these are not considered to be a major or minor point of disagreement when placed in the wider context of the four harms assessment.

National Clinical Director for Scotland

11. NCD attended pre-arranged portfolio meetings with Scottish Government Health Ministers. These meetings were normally organised by the Health and Social Care Director General office and all Scottish Government Health Directors were invited. Professor Leitch attended as the NCD and Director for Healthcare Planning and Quality.
12. While the NCD had a slot in his diary for the regular portfolio meetings, he is not able to confirm he attended every meeting, but he did attend the majority. The chronology provided below contains a list of all portfolio meetings in the NCD's diary.
13. The portfolio meetings were mostly unstructured allowing reactive and live issues to be discussed. During the meeting Directors had the opportunity to provide general updates for their own respective areas, therefore there the majority of these meetings have no formal agenda or papers issued. Minute and action points from these meetings, where held, are provided in the table below.

Date	Meeting	Organiser	Document reference
25 March 2020	Health Portfolio Conference Call	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/002-INQ000281190]
31 March 2020	Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/003-INQ000281251]
09 April 2020	Portfolio teleconference	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	
22 April 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Malcolm Wright	Not Minuted/Agenda
22 April 2020	Portfolio teleconference	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/004-INQ000281252]
13 May 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
13 May 2020	Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	
3 June 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
3 June 2020	Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/005-INQ000281191] [CL5/006-INQ000281192]
17 June 2020	Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/007-INQ000281193] [CL5/008-INQ000281194]
30 June 2020	Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/009-INQ000281195] [CL5/010-INQ000281196]
08 July 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/011-INQ000281197]
15 July 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/012-INQ000281198] [CL5/013-INQ000281199]
29 July 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/014-INQ000281200]
12 August 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
19 August 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/015-INQ000281201]
26 August 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
26 August 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/016-INQ000281202] [CL5/017-INQ000281203]
02 September 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
02 September 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/018-INQ000281204]
09 September 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
09 September 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/019-INQ000281205]
16 September 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
16 September 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/020-INQ000281206]
23 September 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
23 September 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/021-INQ000281207] [CL5/022-INQ000281208]

30 September 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
7 October 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
7 October 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/023-INQ000281209]
14 October 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
21 October 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
28 October 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
04 November 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
11 November 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
17 November 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Name Redacted	[CL5/024-INQ000281210]
18 November 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
25 November 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
2 December 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
2 December 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
2 December 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/025-INQ000281211]
9 December 2020	Portfolio pre meet	Elinor Mitchell	Not Minuted/Agenda
16 December 2020	Health Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/026-INQ000281212]
24 December 2020	Portfolio meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/027-INQ000281213]
11 January 2021	Directors Call/Portfolio pre meet	DG Health & Social Care	[CL5/028-INQ000281214]
11 January 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/029-INQ000281215]
21 January 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/030-INQ000281216]
25 January 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/031-INQ000281217]
01 February 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/032-INQ000281218]
08 February 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/033-INQ000281219]
22 February 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/034-INQ000281220]
01 March 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/035-INQ000281221]
08 March 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/036-INQ000281222]

22 March 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/037-INQ000281223]
29 March 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/038-INQ000281224]
08 April 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/039-INQ000281225]
20 April 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/040-INQ000281226]
04 May 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	[CL5/041-INQ000281227]
21 June 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/042-INQ000281228]
26 July 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/043-INQ000281229]
23 August 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/044-INQ000281230]
30 August 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/045-INQ000281231]
6 September 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	Not Minuted/Agenda
13 September 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	Not Minuted/Agenda
20 September 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/046-INQ000281232]
04 October 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/047-INQ000281233]
18 October 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/048-INQ000281234]
25 October 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/049-INQ000281235]
01 November 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/050-INQ000281236]
08 November 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/051-INQ000281237]
23 November 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/052-INQ000281238]
06 December 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/053-INQ000281239]
13 December 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/054-INQ000281240]
20 December 2021	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/055-INQ000281241]
10 January 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/056-INQ000281242]
24 January 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/057-INQ000281243]
07 February 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/058-INQ000281244]
07 March 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/059-INQ000281245]
28 March 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/060-INQ000281246]

18 April 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	Not Minuted/Agenda
03 May 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/061-INQ000281247]
06 June 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/062-INQ000281248]
13 June 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/063-INQ000281249]
20 June 2022	Weekly Portfolio Meeting	Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care	[CL5/064-INQ000281250]

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Personal Data

Dated: 10/11/2023