

Witness Name: Shona Robison

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: [SR]

Dated: 19 October 2023

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SHONA ROBISON

In relation to the issues raised by the Rule 9 request dated 16 June in connection with Module 2A, I, Shona Robison will say as follows: -

1. I am Shona Robison of St Andrews House, 2 Regent Road, EH1 3DG. I am currently the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance for the Scottish Government; I have been in this post since 29 March 2023.
2. I have prepared this statement myself by reference to records and material provided to me by the Scottish Government. I have also received assistance from the Scottish Government Covid Inquiry Information Governance Division.
3. Unless stated otherwise, the facts stated in this witness statement are within my own knowledge and are true. Where they are not within my own knowledge, they are derived from sources to which I refer and are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Background, qualifications and role during the Covid-19 Pandemic

4. I am a graduate of Glasgow University in 1989 with an MA Social Sciences. The following year, I attended Jordanhill College and obtained a professional qualification in Community Education.

5. I was first elected to the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and became a Minister in the Scottish Government in 2007. My roles included Minister for Public Health (with the addition of Sport in 2009), Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport 2011-2014, Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights 2014, Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport 2014 – 2016, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport 2016 – 2018, with break from SG from 2018-2021.
6. From the 21 April 2020 until 3 December 2020, I was a member of the cross party Covid – 19 Committee (session 5) which covered the Scottish Government's response to COVID-19. The committee had a key role in scrutinising legislation and regulations. The committee scrutinised and took evidence on many bills, regulations and frameworks including key ones such as Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Bill; various SSIs introducing temporary modifications to various statutes; and the document *"Covid-19 - framework for decision making: Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis"*. The Committee remit is as below:
- the Scottish Government's response to COVID-19 including:
 - how powers under the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act, and the UK-wide Coronavirus Act are working
 - secondary legislation that comes from the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act, Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act, and UK Coronavirus Act
 - other emergency legislation related to the response to COVID-19.

All the committee's work is available on the Scottish Parliament's archive website and the timeline for this committee has already been provided to the Inquiry [SR/001-INQ000147480].

7. I rejoined government in May 2021 as Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government and I remained in that role until March 2023. In this role I was tasked with reducing child poverty as well as work to deliver 100,000 affordable homes.

Initial understanding and response to Covid-19 (January to March 2020)

8. I was not a member of the Scottish Government between January and March 2020, therefore my understanding and knowledge of the disease was no more than that of the general public. I first learned of Covid-19 via the media and government announcements. Clearly sitting on the committee (as described at paragraph 6), from April 2020 onwards, gave me a close insight into the detail of regulations and government decision making. The scrutiny role provided by the committee was very important.
9. Given I was not in government during this time, I had no role in relation to the following: Non-pharmaceutical interventions ("NPIs"); Divergence from UK Government approach; Medical and scientific expertise, data and modelling; Covid-19 public health communications; and Key challenges and lessons learned.

May 2021 – April 2022

10. As Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, I was part of the Cabinet. The Cabinet decision-making process operates on the basis of collective responsibility as set out in the Scottish Ministerial Code. I understand the Inquiry has been provided with all Cabinet papers, and my attendance and contributions to these discussions will be detailed in these.

Informal communications and documents

11. I did not use WhatsApp or equivalent for anything relating to Covid, nor do I have any notebooks or diaries to provide to the Inquiry.

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.

Signed:

Personal Data

Dated: 19 October 2023