



## Message from Kate Eisenstein, Director of Policy, Research and Legal



Hello, I am Kate Eisenstein and have recently joined the Inquiry as the new Director of Policy, Research and Legal. I am responsible for supporting our Chair and legal teams to achieve the aims of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. This includes commissioning research, reviewing evidence, running our public hearings and providing advice on policy issues.

This newsletter is reaching you shortly before we begin our [Module 2C hearings](#) in Belfast, [which will investigate core decision making and political governance in Northern Ireland](#). Over the past few months the Inquiry has been hearing evidence in each of the devolved capitals in recognition of the fact that this is a UK-wide Inquiry. Our Chair, Baroness Hallett, is determined to identify the ways in which decision making and governance impacted the response to the pandemic in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as on a UK-wide level. Although the Module 2C hearings will be the last of our scheduled hearings taking place outside of London, the analysis of the way that the pandemic was handled in each devolved nation will continue throughout [each of the Inquiry's upcoming investigations](#).

Our Inquiry team has been travelling across the UK to speak to a wide range of individuals and organisations including healthcare and education professionals, disabled people and carers about [Every Story Matters](#), the Inquiry's way of listening to anyone in the UK who wants to share their pandemic experience. We share more information about where we have been and upcoming events in this newsletter.

This month we have taken an important step on the Inquiry's approach to investigating the impact of the pandemic on children and young people. Through the Children and Young People Voices research project, we will be listening to hundreds of children and young people about their pandemic experiences. The project will help Baroness Hallett to get a comprehensive picture of how the pandemic has affected children and young people alongside Every Story Matters, which will speak to parents, carers, guardians, teachers and older students too. You can read more about the work we are doing in this area later in the newsletter.

Thank you for your continued interest in the Inquiry's work. I look forward to seeing some of you at our Belfast hearings, which start tomorrow, and once hearings resume in London in September for our [third investigation, which will focus on healthcare](#).

### How to watch our Module 2C hearings

[Our hearings](#) will take place at the [Clayton Hotel, Belfast](#) from Tuesday 30 April to Thursday 16 May. There are a number of ways in which you can follow our hearings:

#### Watching in person



Hearings in Belfast will be open to the public to attend. A booking system will be in place. More information about this and the reservation form can be found on the [public hearings page](#).

#### Watching online

Hearings will be livestreamed on our [YouTube channel](#), where recordings of past hearings are also available.

You may wish to set up a watching room for your group - [we have provided advice on how to do this](#).

#### What's coming up?

The hearing timetable will be published on our website the week before hearings happen. You can also subscribe to our weekly hearing updates, which will provide a summary of witnesses and key issues discussed that week as well as a look-ahead to the following week of hearings. You can subscribe via our [newsletter page](#).

#### **The UK Covid-19 Inquiry in Northern Ireland**

Ahead of Module 2C hearings opening, the Secretary to the Inquiry, Ben Connah, was interviewed in Belfast. He also travelled to the Covid-19 Memory Stones of Love memorial in Donaghadee and has spoken with Peter, a local resident, about how the pandemic has affected his life and how people across the UK can share their story via [Every Story Matters](#). You can watch the video on our [YouTube channel](#). You might have also seen the Inquiry featured in news stories published by [BBC News NI](#), the [Belfast Telegraph](#), [London Evening Standard](#) and [Belfast Live](#).

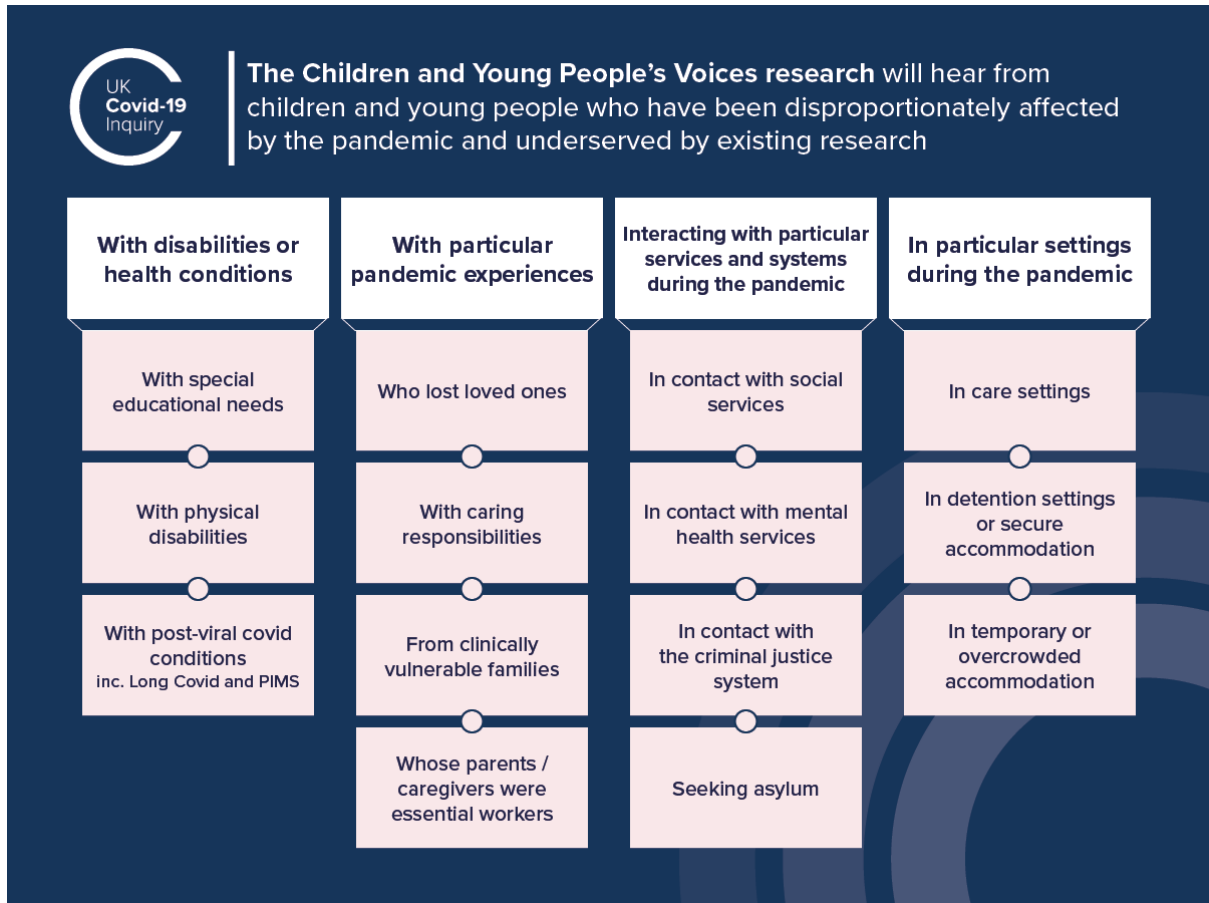
Those of you who live in Northern Ireland might have noticed our Every Story Matters adverts that launched on 25 April and will run alongside the hearings, following similar activity in Scotland and Wales. These will include adverts in local newspapers, social media adverts and digital adverts online or on mobile apps.



*Clockwise: an example of one of our NI-specific Every Story Matters adverts; the UK Covid-19 Secretary with Peter from Mencap Northern Ireland at Donaghadee; the UK Covid-19 Secretary preparing for an interview at the BBC News NI offices.*

### **Inquiry to listen to hundreds of children and young people about how the pandemic affected their lives**

Earlier this month the Inquiry took a major step forward in investigating the impact of the pandemic on children and young people - as its Children and Young People Voices research project got underway. Working with Verian, our research partner, the Inquiry has begun listening to several hundred 9-22 year olds (who would have been aged 5-18 during the pandemic) about how the pandemic affected them. The children and young people will come from a variety of backgrounds, with half being a representative sample of the UK population and the other half being from most impacted groups as shown below:



Participants from the four nations of the UK will be invited to take part. The background of participants will be carefully considered, taking into account factors such as:

- geographic location
- the urban-rural divide
- ethnicity
- socioeconomic background

This will help ensure that the Inquiry gains a comprehensive understanding of how the pandemic affected those aged 18 and under during 2020-2022.

This project is not the only way we will listen to people's experiences of the pandemic. Through Every Story Matters, we want to hear from 18-25 year olds, parents, carers and adults working with children and young people during the pandemic. The Inquiry will also be analysing existing research conducted by other organisations on this subject. We would like to thank all of the organisations working with and for children and young people who have provided us with advice. If you know anyone who has a story to share please send them the link to [Every Story Matters on our website](#).

[You can read more about the project, known as Children and Young People Voices, on our website.](#)



## Every Story Matters events update

In March and April we attended a number of events run by organisations representing some of those most impacted by the pandemic to raise awareness of how they can contribute to Every Story Matters. These include:

- the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) Annual Conference in Birmingham to speak with child health practitioners
- a Self-Directed Support event with disabled people in Edinburgh
- the National Educational Union (NEU) Conference in Bournemouth to speak with education professionals
- the UNISON Health Conference in Brighton to interact with health workers

In addition to the above, we worked with Carers UK to host an online event, to hear the experiences of unpaid carers across the four nations of the UK during the pandemic.



*Clockwise from top left: the Inquiry team at the RCPCH Conference in Birmingham; at a Self-Directed Support event in Edinburgh; at the NEU Conference in Bournemouth; preparing to speak to delegates at the UNISON Health Conference in Brighton.*





We would like to thank the hundreds of people we spoke to at these events.

In May we'll be travelling to Northern Ireland to attend the Balmoral Show in Lisburn from 15 to 18 May to encourage people living in rural communities to share their story with Every Story Matters. We will also visit Queen's University and Ulster University in Belfast on Wednesday 15 May to talk to students and will attend the Children in Scotland Conference in Edinburgh and will be at [2 Royal Avenue](#) (a Belfast City Council venue) to speak with local people about Every Story Matters on Thursday 16 May from 10.00-13.30.

We will share information about our upcoming public events in the May newsletter. These will be held at locations across the UK and will be an opportunity to speak to members of the Inquiry team about how to participate in Every Story Matters.

We are very grateful for the support offered by the organisations that have welcomed us to their events. Attending these helps us to increase our reach among the people that they represent, and to hear from a wider diversity of voices. If your organisation is running an event that you would like us to attend, please email us via [engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk) so that we can discuss further.

### **Bereaved forum**

The Inquiry has set up a bereaved forum, open to anyone who lost a loved one during the pandemic between 2020 and 2022.

Forum participants provide valuable insight based on their personal experiences to inform the Inquiry's approach to Every Story Matters and commemoration.

Those on the bereaved forum will receive a regular email detailing opportunities to provide the Inquiry with advice on our Every Story Matters and commemoration work.

If you are interested in joining the forum mailing list, please email [engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:engagement@covid19.public-inquiry.uk).