



UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry

Financial Report to 31 March 2024

Overview

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry ('the Inquiry') is the independent public inquiry set up under the Inquiries Act 2005 to examine the UK's response to and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and learn lessons for the future. The Inquiry is chaired by Baroness (Heather) Hallett. The Inquiry was formally established on 28 June 2022 when [UK COVID-19 Inquiry: terms of reference](#) were received from the Prime Minister.

The information in this report sets out the expenditure for the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry for January to March 2024 (Quarter 4 2023-24), as well as the cumulative position to date from the Inquiry's set up phase (before it was formally established). All figures are in £k and exclude VAT, where applicable.

The Inquiry's examination of the different aspects of the pandemic covered in the Terms of Reference is divided into investigations known as 'modules'. The modules of the Inquiry are announced and opened in sequence. Each module has preliminary and public hearings, details of which are published by the Inquiry ([UK Covid-19 Inquiry Modules](#)).

Every Story Matters, the Inquiry's UK-wide listening exercise, provides an opportunity for people to tell the Inquiry about their experiences without the formality of giving evidence or attending a public hearing. These experiences are being collated, analysed and fed into the investigations via themed reports.

To perform its functions effectively, the Inquiry needs a number of operational and cross-cutting services. They include emotional support and safeguarding services to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation for those engaging with the Inquiry. It also includes accommodation for public hearings and office accommodation for the Inquiry team.

Inquiry expenditure

The total expenditure for Quarter 4 (January to March 2024) is £15.180m. A breakdown is provided below.

All amounts in £k	Notes	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Chair	1	80	419
Legal Costs - Counsel and Solicitors	2	4,694	29,835
Legal Costs - Section 40	3	2,918	22,464
Inquiry Secretariat	4	2,525	11,911
Modules	5	1,161	3,148
Every Story Matters, Engagement and Commemoration	6	1,316	9,118
Operational and Cross-cutting Costs	7	2,098	15,067
Other	8	388	1,792
TOTAL		15,180	93,754

Notes

1. Chair

On 21 December 2021, the Prime Minister [appointed](#) The Right Honourable Baroness Heather Hallett DBE as Chair of the Inquiry. The letter of appointment can be found [here](#). As a retired Appeal Court judge, the Chair is paid the equivalent of a sitting Lady Justice of Appeal.

The table below shows a breakdown of remuneration and expenses for the Chair. Expenses in Quarter 4 include accommodation, travel, subsistence and stationery for hearings and meetings in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Remuneration		
Chair	64	396
Expenses		
Chair	16	23
TOTAL	80	419

2. Legal Costs - Counsel and Solicitors

2.1 Counsel

As at 31 March 2024, the Inquiry had appointed 66 Counsel, including 12 King's Counsel and 54 Junior Counsel: not all of these worked concurrently or full-time.

All Counsel to the Inquiry are appointed under the authority of the Chair, who delegates responsibility for recruiting and agreeing terms of appointment with individuals to the Solicitor to the Inquiry.

2.2 Solicitors

The Inquiry has contracted Burges Salmon LLP to provide legal services including the Solicitor to the Inquiry.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Counsel to the Inquiry	4,694	29,835
Solicitors to the Inquiry		
Other		
TOTAL	4,694	29,835

3. Legal Costs - Section 40

At the discretion of the Chair, the Inquiry may provide funding for legal representation for Core Participants in accordance with the provisions of Section 40 of the Inquiries Act 2005. A Core Participant is a person, institution or organisation that has a specific interest in the issues covered by a module, and has a formal role defined by legislation.

Applications for costs are controlled under the framework set out in the Inquiries Act 2005 and the Inquiry Rules 2006. The Prime Minister issued a [determination](#) setting out the parameters of the Section 40 awards the Chair may make (for example allowable hourly rates). The Inquiry has published a costs [protocol](#) which is relevant to applications for and consideration of awards under section 40.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Core Participants	2,918	22,464
TOTAL	2,918	22,464

4. Inquiry Secretariat

The Secretary to the Inquiry received remuneration within the annual Senior Civil Servant pay band 2 range (£95,001-£105,000). Expenses of £1,976.95 were recorded for this period.

The Inquiry Secretariat consists of 146 individuals who are employed as civil servants. The Secretariat includes teams working within Module teams and running hearings, delivering Every Story Matters, running operational delivery functions such as information management and a paralegal function conducting evidence review.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Permanent staff costs	2,406	11,553
Contingent labour costs	119	358
TOTAL	2,525	11,911

5. Modules

5.1 Hearings costs

Hearing costs are those associated with holding preliminary and full public hearings for the Inquiry's legal proceedings in London, across the UK or remotely. These costs include, for example:

- audio visual services provided within the hearing room for broadcast and display of evidence and live streaming;
- audio visual services for delivering remote hearings and connections where individual participants require remote access;

- translation and interpreter services for those whose first language is not English and in order to comply with the Welsh Language Act.

5.2 Expert Advisers

An expert adviser is a person who is called to give an opinion to the Inquiry on matters which call for expert skills or knowledge. Their role is to provide technical analysis and expertise, which will assist the Inquiry in delivering its Terms of Reference. Expert advisers are appointed in consultation with the Lead Counsel and Solicitor to the Inquiry. Up to the end of March 2024, the Inquiry had appointed 41 experts across a range of disciplines. Inquiry expert costs are based on an agreed daily rate plus any pre-agreed support, team or materials they may require depending on the nature of their investigations. Payment is normally made following the public hearings at which their evidence is adduced.

5.3 Research

One external research project was commissioned in Quarter 3 with related spend recognised in Quarter 4. Remaining spend relates to research projects in support of ongoing and future modules and instruction of independent witnesses.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Audio visual (including broadcasting and transcription)	582	2,237
Translation services	10	85
Research and experts	569	826
TOTAL	1,161	3,148

6. Every Story Matters, Engagement and Commemoration

6.1 Every Story Matters

Every Story Matters costs are those associated with running the Inquiry's UK-wide listening exercise. They cover:

- Research and analysis of stories submitted to us
- The development and hosting of the online form that most people will use to share their stories
- Creation of Every Story Matters communications materials and buying space in media to raise awareness of the importance of Every Story Matters.

- Community listening events where people can come and find out more information and share their stories in person
- phone, accessible options and other ways of sharing that are not online - including British sign language, easy read and hard copy questionnaires.

6.2 Commemoration

Commemoration costs relate to commemorative content produced for use in hearings and at the Inquiry's Hearing Centre.

6.3 Consultation and engagement

Consultation and engagement costs are those costs incurred when engaging with people across the UK.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Every Story Matters Research	353	1,472
Website and Every Story Matters Online form development/maintenance	140	1,597
Communications	627	5,224
Commemoration	13	62
Travelling costs (staff and participants)	0	27
Consultation and Engagement	183	736
TOTAL	1,316	9,118

7. Operational and cross-cutting costs

Operational and cross-cutting costs cover services which are necessary for the Inquiry to perform its functions. These costs include:

- counselling and emotional support services provided for the emotional wellbeing of individuals participating in hearings, listening and commemoration activity and the Inquiry team;

- rent, service charges, facilities management, security and set-up costs for the Inquiry's hearing accommodation and office space;
- costs for the Inquiry's evidence management system and IT equipment;
- polling activity to determine public attitudes towards the Inquiry's work
- administrative costs such as stationery, postage, printing and office supplies.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Support and safeguarding	251	738
Accommodation	777	9,640
Evidence management system	780	3,679
Polling and communications set up support	26	192
IT software and hardware	0	316
Telecoms	228	394
Administrative costs	13	36
Personnel costs (Recruitment costs and professional fees)	23	72
TOTAL	2,098	15,067

8. Other

Other costs cover services utilised by the Inquiry in supporting its functions. These costs include:

- the appointment of internal auditors to provide independent and expert scrutiny of its expenditure, accounting, risk and governance systems;
- the provision of training and development to Inquiry staff;
- staff travel and subsistence when travelling on Inquiry business;

- the provision - paid for via corporate recharges - of corporate and digital support services delivered by the Inquiry's sponsor department;
- other costs include miscellaneous expenditure, publications and subscriptions.

All amounts in £k	Q4 23/24 £'000	Cumulative £'000
Internal audit	36	63
Training and development	74	145
Staff travel and subsistence	141	321
Internal Recharges (Corporate and Digital)	143	1,240
Other	-6*	23
TOTAL	388	1,792

* This reverses an accrual from Q3 relating to ESM audit fees.

9. Basis for figures in this report

The Inquiry is an independent statutory Inquiry. This means it is not part of the Government nor is it run by any department.

The Cabinet Office sponsors the Inquiry and provides resources for the running of the Inquiry. A joint management statement [here](#) ensures clear roles and responsibilities are in place to safeguard the independence of the Inquiry, in accordance with the provisions of the Inquiries Act 2005 and the Inquiry Rules 2006.

All figures within this report are recorded on a resource accounting basis, with estimates for work completed utilised to calculate values where invoicing has not yet been received. Inquiry assets are not depreciated. Figures are audited by the National Audit Office as part of the sponsoring Department accounts (in this case those of the Cabinet Office).