



IN THE UK COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY

MODULE 4

SUBMISSIONS FOR SCOTTISH COVID BEREAVED FOR THE SECOND PRELIMINARY HEARING

1. We are grateful to Counsel to the Inquiry for the very detailed note setting out the matters which are to be addressed at the second Preliminary Hearing for Module 4, in particular the breakdown of issues to be considered, which is helpful to the Scottish Covid Bereaved in understanding the view of the Inquiry as to the scope of this module. We look forward to providing more detailed input, in particular with the names of proposed witnesses when we have a better idea in relation to whom the Inquiry has already approached.
2. It is understood from Counsel to the Inquiry's note that disclosure of materials for this Module is anticipated to begin in late Autumn of this year. While the Inquiry's eagerness to commence Module 4 is to be commended, Scottish Covid Bereaved are concerned that the likely amount of disclosure will be very considerable and would ask that every effort be made to make disclosure at the earliest opportunity.
3. In relation to evidence for the Inquiry, the Scottish Covid Bereaved hope that views of the experts on vaccine uptake/hesitancy or whether the manner in which vaccine delivery was rolled out may have resulted in reduced uptake of the vaccines. As mentioned in the last hearing, the Scottish Covid Bereaved submit that the Inquiry may wish to consider whether having couples within one household being vaccinated at

different times may have resulted in some hesitancy to receive the vaccine, where the first member of the household suffered side effects from the vaccine and the other member of the household has subsequently elected not to receive the vaccine. The Inquiry may wish to consider further whether requiring individuals to travel some distance to receive the vaccine, as those in rural areas were required to do, impacted on vaccine uptake.

4. The Scottish Covid Bereaved have no additional observations on the issue of parliamentary privilege, save to say that the process which has been in use since the Hearing 1 has worked well and it does not appear that any critical information has been lost to the Inquiry as it has proceeded to date.
5. It is noted that the issue of disinformation in relation to vaccine uptake is to be considered and the Scottish Covid Bereaved welcome this. The Scottish Covid Bereaved re-iterate the view that it may be helpful to this Inquiry to consider the use of social media in this regard. The Scottish Covid Bereaved are aware of considerable misinformation in relation to vaccines and therapeutics having been spread on social media. It is likely that, in the event of another pandemic, the majority of those seeking information will do so via social media channels rather than TV or newsprint. As a result of austerity, public health funding and messaging may have been insufficient and the increased reliance on social media platforms as a source of news and information, may have led to an increase in the number of those unwilling to receive the vaccine. The Inquiry may further wish to consider whether online misinformation may have clouded concerns from suitably qualified persons who were challenging or raising concerns with orthodox views. Scottish Covid Bereaved consider that the internet is the most powerful source of public information. It is submitted that the Inquiry ought to consider how protected or verified public health messages can be sent online and what steps can be taken to gain the trust of those who may have concerns about receiving vaccines, particularly in light of the lack of regulation of internet sources.
6. The Scottish Covid Bereaved look forward to having the opportunity to have their voice heard in respect of Module 4. We will endeavour to continue to assist the Inquiry in any way we can and look forward to receiving the disclosure materials at the earliest opportunity.

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