



NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 7 - NI COVID 19 BEREAVED FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE

Introduction

1. In my [Opening Statement](#) on 21 July 2022, I explained that modules would be announced and opened in sequence, with those wishing to take a formal role in the Inquiry invited to apply to become Core Participants for each module. On 19 March 2024 the Inquiry opened Module 7 and invited anyone who wished to be considered as a Core Participant to that Module to submit an application in writing to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 26 April 2024.
2. On 26 April 2024 the Inquiry received an application from NI Covid 19 Bereaved Families For Justice (“the Applicant”) for Core Participant status in Module 7. This Notice sets out my determination of the application.
3. The Inquiry has published the [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 7, which states that this Module will consider the policies and strategies developed and deployed to support the test, trace and isolate system by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations. Further modules will be announced and opened in due course, to address other aspects of the Inquiry’s Terms of Reference.

Application

4. Applications for Core Participant status are considered in accordance with Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, which provides:

5.—(1) The chairman may designate a person as a core participant at any time during the course of the inquiry, provided that person consents to being so designated.

(2) In deciding whether to designate a person as a core participant, the chairman must in particular consider whether—

- (a) the person played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates;*
- (b) the person has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates; or*
- (c) the person may be subject to explicit or significant criticism during the inquiry proceedings or in the report, or in any interim report.*

(3) A person ceases to be a core participant on—

- (a) the date specified by the chairman in writing; or*
- (b) the end of the inquiry.*

5. In accordance with the approach set out in my Opening Statement and the Inquiry's [Core Participant Protocol](#), I considered whether the application fulfils the requirements set out in Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 7.

Summary of Application

6. NI Covid 19 Bereaved Families For Justice (NI CBFFJ) represents relatives of individuals who died from Covid-19 in Northern Ireland. It has been granted CP status in M1, M2, M2C, M3, M4, M5 and M6.
7. The group states that it has a significant interest in Module 7 on the basis that it is a group comprised of those who were affected in their own right by decisions and systems for testing and tracing in NI. This includes relatives who died in hospitals with Covid-19 on their death certificates without ever receiving a positive Covid-19 test, the transfer of patients between hospital and community sites without tests, the confusion of testing prioritisation, and Northern Ireland's capacity for a national contact tracing service.

Decision for the Applicant

8. I wish to reiterate my deep sympathy to each and every individual who has experienced the loss of a loved one as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic including those represented by the Applicant.

9. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the application. Having done so, I have decided to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 7.
10. Module 7 will consider the impact of testing, tracing and isolation requirements from the perspective of members of the public who were required to follow the guidance. This includes, but is not limited to, the impact of the test, trace and isolation system on those with physical health conditions, those who were clinically vulnerable, those with mental health issues, and those who were the carers for others. In addition, it will address the pre-existing infrastructure, capacity, scalability and efficiency of the testing and contact tracing system in Northern Ireland.
11. I consider that the Applicant is well placed to assist the Inquiry to achieve its aims in Module 7 by representing the collective interests of a broad spectrum of those bereaved in Northern Ireland as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to matters relevant to Module 7.

Legal Representation

12. Applications for designation as the Recognised Legal Representative of a Core Participant are governed by Rules 6 and 7 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, which provide:

6.—(1) Where—

- (a) a core participant, other than a core participant referred to in rule 7; or*
- (b) any other person required or permitted to give evidence or produce documents during the course of the inquiry,*
has appointed a qualified lawyer to act on that person's behalf, the chairman must designate that lawyer as that person's recognised legal representative in respect of the inquiry proceedings.

7.—(1) This rule applies where there are two or more core participants, each of whom seeks to be legally represented, and the chairman considers that—

- (a) their interests in the outcome of the inquiry are similar;*
- (b) the facts they are likely to rely on in the course of the inquiry are similar; and*
- (c) it is fair and proper for them to be jointly represented.*

(2) The chairman must direct that those core participants shall be represented by a single recognised legal representative, and the chairman may designate a qualified lawyer for that purpose.

(3) Subject to paragraph (4), any designation must be agreed by the core participants in question.

(4) If no agreement on a designation is forthcoming within a reasonable period, the chairman may designate an appropriate lawyer who, in his opinion, has sufficient knowledge and experience to act in this capacity.

13. I am satisfied that NI Covid 19 Bereaved Families For Justice has appointed Conal McGarrity of P.A. Duffy Solicitors as its qualified lawyer in relation to this Module. I therefore designate Conal McGarrity as NI Covid 19 Bereaved Families For Justice's recognised legal representative in accordance with Rule 6(1).
14. Directions will be given in relation to applications for an award under section 40(1)(b) of the Inquiries Act 2005 of expenses to be incurred in respect of legal representation, at the forthcoming preliminary hearing. I will determine any such applications in accordance with the provisions of section 40 of the Inquiries Act 2005, the Inquiry Rules 2006, the [Prime Minister's determination](#) under section 40(4) and the [Inquiry' Costs Protocol](#).

Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE
Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry
17 May 2024