



NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 7 - THE TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

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. 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.
3. On 21 May 2024 the Inquiry received an application from The Traveller Movement for Core Participant status in Module 7.

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 have 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. The Applicant is the Traveller Movement ("TM") described as the largest representative body engaging with national and local government for and on behalf of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ("GRT") communities in the UK.
7. The application is made under Rule 5(2)(a) and (b) of the Inquiry Rules 2006.
8. The application notes TM's experience of GRT communities being largely unable to isolate during the pandemic and participate in the testing and tracing programme; the reasons for which are described as multi-faceted and grounded in complex issues embedded in poverty, literacy, the cultural background and historic discrimination, including exclusion and marginalisation. The application cites GRT communities' cultural distrust of institutional and government authority, digital exclusion, poorer health outcomes for GRT communities and poor access to guidance, information and advice about the test, trace and isolate system. Furthermore the application states that the Government ought reasonably to have known that GRT communities were more vulnerable to Covid-19 than the majority of the population and it cites around 10,000 Gypsy and Traveller people living on caravan sites; often overcrowded and unauthorised, making social distancing often impossible. The application relies upon

the Women and Equalities Select Committee's Report published on 5 April 2019 which is quoted as saying health outcomes for GRT people are "very poor compared to other ethnic groups." The application asserts there are 500,000 members of the GRT community in the UK who were largely ignored during the pandemic and it draws from the experience of a member of the GRT community, who describes his community as being 'forgotten' with many not advised to shield when they ought to have been.

9. The application emphasises that TM's participation in its view should not be limited to providing witness evidence only, which it says would serve to marginalise GRT communities yet further.
10. The application was made after the deadline for CP applications. The application states the reason for the late application is because of uncertainty as to their position in respect of s.40 funding in respect of Module 4. It further states no prejudice or disruption to the workings of the Inquiry in Module 7 arises from the timing of this application.

Decision for the Applicant

11. I have considered with great care everything that is said in The Traveller Movement's application. Having done so, in my discretion, I consider that The Traveller Movement does not meet the criteria set out in Rule 5 for designation as a Core Participant in Module 7 and, therefore, I have decided not to designate The Traveller Movement as a Core Participant in Module 7.
12. 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 who have suffered, and continue to suffer, from adverse health, illness and disability as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
13. I acknowledge that particularly vulnerable groups of people may have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
14. I wish to reassure the Applicant of my ongoing commitment, as set out in the Terms of Reference, that inequalities will be at the forefront of the Inquiry's investigations. This

will include a focus on the disparities evident in the impact of the pandemic on different categories of people, including those whom the Applicant represents.

15. The application is made on the basis of Rule 5(2)(a) and (b). I have considered with great care everything that is said within it. Having done so, in my discretion, I consider that the Applicant does not meet the criteria set out in Rule 5 for designation as a Core Participant in Module 7. In reaching my decision, I bear in mind that the Applicant was granted Core Participant status in Module 4.
16. In respect of Rule 5(2)(a), I do not consider that the Travellers Movement on behalf of the GRT community played or may have played a direct and significant role in the key decision making of policy and strategy in the test, trace, isolate system (Rule 5(2)(a)).
17. In respect of Rule 5(2)(b), whilst the Applicant undoubtedly has an interest in Module 7, the application has not demonstrated that the interest is “significant” to satisfy Rule 5(2)(b) such as to grant them Core Participant status in this Module.
18. Even if that were not the case, in the exercise of my discretion, and having regard in particular to the need to manage the Inquiry effectively and efficiently, I would decline to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant.
19. Module 7 is focused on the policies, decision making and strategies developed for test trace and isolate by the UK Government and Devolved Administrations. The important issues raised by the Applicant, regarding differential impact, public engagement and testing uptake and data will be covered in this Module via requests for evidence, including Rule 9 requests and potential expert evidence.
20. I am determined to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind the Inquiry’s wide-ranging terms of reference and the need for the Inquiry process to be rigorous and fair. Given the vast numbers of people who were involved with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many people in the United Kingdom could potentially have an interest in it and not everyone can be granted Core Participant status for the purposes of the Inquiry hearings.

21. It is not necessary for an organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Inquiry will be engaging in due course with a range of individuals, organisations and bodies to seek information, to gain their perspective on the issues raised in this Module and, where appropriate, to ask for witness statements and documents.
22. I have asked the Module 7 legal team to liaise with the Applicant to ensure that their concerns are considered as part of the Inquiry's Module 7 investigation. The Inquiry would welcome any assistance the Travellers Movement can provide.
23. The Inquiry will also listen to and consider carefully the experiences of individuals, families and others who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic, through the listening exercise, Every Story Matters. I made clear in my Opening Statement that this listening exercise is a significant and important part of the Inquiry which will lead to summary reports of the impact of the pandemic on those who come forward to be used as evidence during the Inquiry's module hearings. The Applicant has the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry, through the listening exercise if they choose.
24. I note the application was made after the deadline I set for Core Participant applications and the Applicant's reason for this.
25. I will keep the scope of Module 7 and the designation of Core Participants under review. My decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 7 does not preclude the Applicant from making any further applications in respect of future modules likely to deal directly with the impact on the Travellers movement and the GRT community and those with protected characteristics. I will consider any future applications the Applicant may wish to make on their merits at the time they are made.

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