



IN THE UK COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY

MODULE 2

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN CLOSING SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE SCOTTISH COVID BEREAVED

1. The Scottish Covid Bereaved welcome the opportunity to provide further written submissions following the evidence of Dr Simon Case. The Bereaved are grateful to the Inquiry, and to Dr Case, for the efforts which were made to secure Dr Case's evidence. It is submitted that the Chair would not be able to properly consider the core political and administrative governance and decision-making for the United Kingdom without Dr Case's evidence.
2. It is not the intention of the Scottish Bereaved in these submissions to rehearse Dr Case's evidence. Rather, the focus of the Bereaved is on assisting the Chair in considering what recommendations can be made to assist those in roles of political and administrative power when the next pandemic comes to achieve better outcomes for the people of the United Kingdom than those which occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Dr Case's evidence reinforced the Scottish Covid Bereaved's view that personality and politics played a part in the pandemic response. This was not just internally within the UK Government but also as between the UK and Scottish Governments. It is submitted that there was a particularly unhelpful dynamic at play between the UK and Scottish Governments. While it may have

been hoped that the Scotland Office would have assisted in this regard, it suffered from the same frictions and problems.

4. In an attempt to identify what can be done to minimise such friction when the next pandemic strikes, the Scottish Covid Bereaved asked Dr Case whether there were any structures he would have liked to have had in place to ensure co-operation between the UK Government and the devolved administrations. Dr Case replied that it would be valuable to have, not just in a pandemic but in emergencies, a set structure about senior official engagement. While this tended to happen around the COBR table, it was the chronic phase that was the really difficult one and having a set structure around the engagement between the different administrations would have been valuable¹.
5. Dr Case was asked who he thought it would be important to have at those meetings. He stated that he would want permanent secretary colleagues from the devolved administrations and perhaps other key senior officials and, depending on the nature of the crisis, the Cabinet Secretary or National Security Adviser, any task force lead and potentially the most relevant departments. Dr Case identified that a blend of experience and viewpoints would be desirable².
6. When asked what benefits such a body may bring, Dr Case acknowledged the political reality that there will always be issues of politics and personalities, and that there may be personalities at senior official level who were not so-called shrinking violets. He considered, however, that such a formal structure would allow for discussions which were slightly freer of politics, which would be of value³.

¹ Transcript 36/172/7 – 36/173/7

² Transcript 36/173/8-21

³ Transcript 36/173/22 – 36/174/6

RECOMMENDATION

7. In the foregoing circumstances, the Scottish Covid Bereaved invite the Chair to recommend that a body be set up to provide an additional, formal structure to allow senior civil servants and politicians to liaise with the personnel suggested by Dr Case. If this body was established and used during “*peacetime*”, it would normalise and facilitate contact between the differing administrations, their politicians and their staff, so that when the next pandemic comes there will be a culture of dialogue and cooperative working which will allow for a more positive pandemic response from both governments.

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