
Counsel to the Inquiry’s Note for the First Preliminary Hearing in Module 8 of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry on Friday 6 September 2024

Introduction

1. The first preliminary hearing for Module 8 of this Inquiry will take place on **Friday 6 September 2024 at 10:00am**. This will be a hybrid hearing with Core Participants either appearing virtually or in person at Dorland House, located at 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington W2 6BU. Counsel to the Inquiry will address the Chair in person at Dorland House.
2. The purpose of this note is to provide the background to, agenda for, and introduce the matters to be addressed at the first Module 8 preliminary hearing.
3. Should any Core Participant wish to file brief written submissions on any of the issues contained in this note, these must be received by the Inquiry **by no later than 4pm on Thursday 22 August 2024**. Please note that if a Core Participant wishes to make any oral submissions at the preliminary hearing, they must first provide the Inquiry with written submissions. Core Participants may file written submissions without making oral submissions.

Agenda

4. The first preliminary hearing for Module 8 will include:
 - a. Introductory remarks from the Chair;
 - b. An update from Counsel to the Inquiry including:
 - i. Practicalities regarding the first preliminary hearing
 - ii. The background to the Inquiry and Module 8;
 - iii. The provisional scope of Module 8;
 - iv. The designation of Core Participants in Module 8;
 - v. Evidence gathering, including Rule 9 requests; and
 - vi. Expert evidence;
 - vii. Disclosure;
 - viii. Listening to children and young people: Every Story Matters and Children and Young People’s Voices;
 - ix. Commemoration; and
 - x. Directions and future hearing dates for Module 8.
 - c. Submissions from Core Participants.

Commencement of the Inquiry and Module 8

5. On 12 May 2021, the then Prime Minister made a statement in the House of Commons in which he announced that there would be a public inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005. He stated that it would examine the UK's preparedness and response to the Covid-19 pandemic and learn lessons for the future.
6. Following the appointment of the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE as Chair of the Covid-19 Inquiry on 15 December 2021, and consultation with Ministers from the devolved administrations (as is required by section 27 of the Inquiries Act 2005 for this Inquiry), draft terms of reference were drawn up. The draft terms were consulted upon and amendments suggested, including by Baroness Hallett. In particular, Baroness Hallett sought an express mandate to publish interim reports so as to ensure that any urgent recommendations could be published and considered in a timely manner. In addition, given her view that the Inquiry would gain greater public confidence and help the UK to come to terms with the pandemic if it was open to the accounts that many people - including those who have been bereaved - would wish to give, she suggested adding explicit acknowledgement of the need to hear about people's experiences and to consider any disparities in the impact of the pandemic.
7. On 21 July 2022 the Inquiry was formally opened. Baroness Hallett announced the decision to conduct the Inquiry in modules, which would be announced and opened in sequence. Those wishing to take a formal role in the Inquiry were invited to apply to become Core Participants, within the meaning of Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, for each module, rather than throughout the Inquiry as a whole.
8. The Inquiry has already held public hearings in respect of:
 - a. Module 1 (resilience and preparedness);
 - b. Modules 2, 2A, 2B and 2C (core decision making and political governance by the UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Governments respectively).
9. In addition, the Inquiry has opened Module 3 (impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems in the four nations of the UK), Module 4 (vaccines and therapeutics), Module 5 (procurement), Module 6 (care sector) and Module 7 (test, trace and isolate).
10. Module 8 opened on 21 May 2024. The provisional outline of scope was published on the same day.
11. This Inquiry is obliged under section 27 of the Inquiries Act 2005 and its Terms of Reference to consider both reserved and devolved matters in respect of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Module 8 will therefore consider the whole of the United Kingdom. This will enable an understanding of how the pandemic impacted children and young people across the United Kingdom. It will enable the Inquiry to consider the overall impact of the pandemic on children and young people, but also to take into

account the different structures which exist across the four nations for the provision of education, children's social care and child protection (amongst other areas of government work which are important in children and young people's lives) and which were of significance during the pandemic.¹

12. This Module will examine the structures and the decisions made that affected children and young people's lives during the pandemic; the reality of children's lives during the pandemic and the impact which it has had on them. It will consider, where appropriate, the impact of the pandemic and decisions which were made during the pandemic on particular groups of children which may have disproportionately impacted on them, made their lives harder or which may have exposed them to greater risk of harm.
13. The Inquiry will investigate what was understood about the impact that the pandemic, or the measures taken to counter it, were having on children at the time and how that affected decision making in addition to what is now understood about the impact that the pandemic has had and continues to have on children.
14. The public hearings in Module 8 will take place in London in Autumn 2025.
15. In order to inform its work, Module 8 will use data from 18- to 25-year-olds, as well as parents, carers and adults working with children from the Inquiry's national listening exercise, Every Story Matters (**ESM**). In addition, the Inquiry has commissioned a special research project in order that it may gather evidence about the lives of a broad range of children during this pandemic. Specifically, it will hear from 600 children and young people (now aged 9-22 years old) about their experiences during the pandemic. This is an ESM targeted research project conducted by independent research specialists, Verian. Further details about this project can be found [here](#). The information gathered from these children and young people will help to inform the Inquiry's findings and recommendations.

Designation of Core Participants

16. The applications for Core Participant status in Module 8 have been considered by the Chair 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—

¹ The Inquiry's intention, in relation to Scottish matters, is to minimise the duplication of investigation, evidence gathering, and reporting with the Scottish Inquiry which has been established to look at matters devolved to the Scottish government.

- (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.”*

17. In making her determinations, the Chair has considered whether, in each case, the application fulfilled the criteria set out in Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 8.
18. The Chair exercised her wide discretion and took into account a number of factors. First, there is an obligation to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as efficiently as possible in light of 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 may have an interest in the Inquiry. As Module 8 is concerned with the experiences of all children across society, it is necessarily broad in its scope. Just as almost every adult in society was impacted by Covid-19 so too was almost every parent (or carer) and every child. Any parent (or carer) or child could be said to have an interest in this module. The same may be said of very many organisations which work with children or with their families. That, however, is not the relevant test, and the Chair was obliged to assess very carefully whether, in reality, applicants could assist the Inquiry in Module 8 as a Core Participant. Second, it is not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. Third, the Inquiry will also be listening to and considering carefully the experiences of those who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic, through the Inquiry’s listening exercise, Every Story Matters, and through the Children and Young People’s Voices research project the inquiry has commissioned into children’s lives.
19. By way of overview, the Inquiry received 44 applications for Core Participant status in Module 8. Of these 44 applications, 23 applicants have been designated as Core Participants in Module 8. They are:
- a. Article 39 Children's Rights;
 - b. British Association of Social Workers (BASW);
 - c. Cabinet Office;
 - d. Office of the Children's Commissioner (England);
 - e. Children’s Commissioner for Wales;
 - f. Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA);
 - g. Coram Group of Charities (Coram Group);

- h. Department for Education (DfE);
 - i. Department for Education (Northern Ireland) (DE);
 - j. Department of Health (NI) (DoH NI);
 - k. Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC);
 - l. Disabled People's Organisations (DPO);
 - m. Local Government Association (LGA) and Welsh Local Government Association (LGA);
 - n. Long Covid Kids/Long Covid Kids Scotland;
 - o. Ministry of Justice (MOJ);
 - p. Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY);
 - q. Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual);
 - r. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH);
 - s. Save the Children UK, Just for Kids Law, the Children's Rights Alliance for England, the Centre for Young Lives and the Child Poverty Action Group;
 - t. Scottish Ministers;
 - u. The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Home Office);
 - v. Trade Unions Congress (TUC); and
 - w. Welsh Government.
20. For the avoidance of doubt, the determinations which have been made by the Chair in relation to Module 8 in no way prejudice the ability of any applicant to apply in another, later, module which may in any event be more suited to the application.
21. It is also, of course, unnecessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. Applicants may have relevant information to give in relation to matters being examined in the Inquiry and the Inquiry has started to approach a range of individuals, organisations and bodies to seek information, to gain their perspective on the issues raised in the modules and, where appropriate, to ask for witness statements and documents. This process is ongoing.

Scope of Module 8

22. Module 8 examines the impact of the pandemic on children and young people in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 8 states:

“This module will examine the impact of the pandemic on children and young people in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.² The module will consider the impact of the pandemic on children across society including

² For the purposes of this module, a “child” will be defined as an individual aged between 0 to 18. A “young person” will be defined as follows:

The individual was a) a care leaver between the ages of 18 and 25; or b) had special educational needs and/or disabilities (up to 25 years old); or c) was 18 to 25 and attended further and/or higher education and/or training; or d) was between the ages of 18 and 25 and in the custody of the state.

those with special educational needs and/or disabilities³ and from a diverse range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. It will include an examination of the decision-making in the areas set out below so far as it relates to children and young people, the impact of those decisions on children and young people and the wider and long term impact of the pandemic on children and young people including in relation to early years provision and education (including further and/or higher education, apprenticeships or training), health and social care.

Areas to be covered in this module will include:

- 1. The extent to which children and young people were considered as part of any preparedness and planning for a pandemic.*
- 2. The extent to which children and young people were considered by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in respect of the application of non-pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) and the impact of those decisions.*
- 3. The impact of the pandemic on the education of, and the early years provision for, children and young people (including further and/or higher education, apprenticeships).*
- 4. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's physical and mental health, wellbeing, development, family lives and on their access to healthcare services.*
- 5. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in relation to access to and engagement with social care services and other agencies with a role in supporting the safety of children. This will include children at risk, children whose families receive support from social services, young carers, those in the care of local authorities, care and care leavers.*
- 6. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system including those in the youth custody estate, youth defendants and offenders and those whose parents or primary carers were in custody during the pandemic;*
- 7. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in contact with the immigration system.*
- 8. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in relation to their access to and use of the internet, social media and online resources."*

23. This scope is ambitious. As already stated it encompasses the broad range of impact on all children but also the impact upon those children who stood to suffer disproportionate impact. It is necessarily provisional. It refers to the impact of the

³ The term "special educational needs and/or disabilities" is used broadly and is intended to encompass children with SEND (England and Northern Ireland), additional support needs (Scotland) and/or additional learning needs (Wales).

pandemic on children and young people; the most vulnerable of those children and those children who have suffered disadvantage because of their background.

24. It is neither practical nor advisable to identify at this stage all the issues and questions that will be addressed at the Module 8 public hearing. The process of evidence gathering and the expertise of CPs will inform this. The Rule 9 process is intended to elicit the evidence from which the issues can be further distilled. The Inquiry's research project, Children and Young People's Voices, and the Inquiry's listening exercise, Every Story Matters, will also provide information and may generate further investigations relevant to the issues and questions to be addressed at the Module 8 public hearing.
25. The Inquiry believes that the provisional scope provides a flexible framework for the consideration of the issues and matters that the Inquiry is likely to inquire into. It provides a clear indication for individuals and organisations which have relevant information and evidence, as to what the Inquiry seeks answers about and expects disclosure of (although the Inquiry's disclosure requests will provide further specific information in relation to any such request). It will also assist Core Participants to commence their preparations. The issues will, however, be further developed or refined once the responses to the mainstay of the Rule 9 requests for evidence have been received and analysed.
26. Nevertheless, if there are broad matters or areas of inquiry relating to the impact of the pandemic on children and young people that the Core Participants would additionally wish the Inquiry to consider, as part of the provisional scope, these will be considered.

Rule 9 requests

27. Prior to the Module opening, the Inquiry Legal Team met with representatives from a range of government departments, children's rights organisations and the Children's Commissioners from across the UK, as part of its preparatory process for sending Rule 9 requests. Most of these organisations will be asked to provide statements to the Inquiry (if they have not been asked already).
28. The Inquiry has issued formal requests for evidence pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 to a number of persons and organisations in Module 8. It has prioritised sending those rule 9 requests which will be foundational to the Module's investigations.
29. The rule 9 requests are being issued on an iterative basis. Further requests may be made of recipients, focusing on particular issues or topics. Their purpose is to enable the Inquiry to examine those matters which the Inquiry has, at this stage, identified as being of specific interest to the matters set out in the Provisional Scope for Module 8. There is likely to be some replication in witness statements from individuals who have

previously provided a witness statement to the Inquiry for the purpose of an earlier module, but each witness statement should be read as a stand-alone document and should contain only the information relevant to Module 8.

30. Further rule 9 requests will be issued, on a rolling basis, to other relevant individuals, organisations, professional bodies and other entities who hold information relevant to Module 8's investigation. It goes without saying that anyone who holds relevant information or documents that they wish to provide to the Inquiry relevant to the Module 8 Provisional Outline of Scope may do so, without awaiting a rule 9 request.
31. On 17 October 2022, the Chair made a ruling in Module 1 on a number of general matters including position statements, disclosure and experts (<https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022-10-17-Ruling-following-M1-Preliminary-Hearing.pdf>). The Chair declined, for the purposes of Module 1, to order that position statements be made by state and organisational Core Participants and material providers. Following the Preliminary Hearings in Module 2 and Modules 2A-C, the Chair directed that if the monthly updates and the provision of disclosure did not provide Core Participants with necessary information then the issue would be revisited. The issue was not revisited in those modules. The Inquiry now has well established ways of working and both individuals and institutional providers of evidence know what they can expect and what the Inquiry expects of them in responding to requests for evidence.

Disclosure to Core Participants

32. The purpose of disclosure is to enable the Core Participants to participate effectively in the public hearings. This Inquiry will be as transparent as possible with the Core Participants and with the public in relation to the disclosure of documents. Disclosure will be specific to Module 8 such that the information and documents received through the Rule 9 process will be reviewed and, if considered relevant for disclosure, redacted in line with a Redactions Protocol that has been prepared and published [here](#) so as to remove sensitive material. Where the Inquiry has any queries or concerns about a provider's processes for locating relevant documents, it will raise and pursue them and, of course, as documents are reviewed and gaps identified, further documents will be sought.
33. In line with a determination made in Module 1, Core Participants will not be provided with copies of the Rule 9 requests made by the Inquiry in relation to Module 8. Disclosure to the Core Participants of the Rule 9 requests themselves (as opposed to the relevant documents and material generated by them) is neither required by the Rules nor generally established by past practice. Furthermore, it would serve little practical purpose given the wide scope and detailed nature of the Rule 9 requests that are being made.
34. However, to ensure that Core Participants are kept properly informed, the Inquiry will

ensure that the Module 8 lead solicitor provides monthly updates to Core Participants on the progress of Rule 9 work. Such updates will include a summary of who has received Rule 9 requests, the topics those requests cover, what categories of documents have been requested, when the request was made and by when a response is expected. The Inquiry Legal Team confirm that, for the purposes of Module 8, Core Participants will receive monthly updates commencing in November 2024.

35. Disclosure of relevant, redacted documentation will take place in tranches. All Core Participants in the same module will receive all the disclosable documents for that module. The electronic disclosure system which will be used to provide documents to Core Participants will be Relativity. Details of how to access the system and use it will be provided to Core Participants shortly before disclosure commences. Only those who have provided a signed undertaking to the Chair will be permitted access to the material that the Inquiry discloses to Core Participants.
36. It is neither necessary nor proportionate for the Inquiry to disclose every document that it receives, or every request that it makes, or every piece of correspondence it conducts.
37. The Inquiry has already identified material potentially relevant to Module 8 that has been provided to other modules. This material will be reviewed for disclosure. Module 8 hopes to start making disclosure in Spring 2025.

Expert material and the instruction of expert witnesses

38. The Inquiry has reviewed and will continue to review existing national and international research material relating to the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, and will make relevant material available to Core Participants. A significant number of witnesses who have expertise in specific subjects related to children are likely to be called to give evidence at the public hearing in relation to issues of fact. For example witnesses who will be called to give evidence about how child protection practice changed during the pandemic or witnesses who can give evidence about how education was delivered during the pandemic. We are also aware that the children's organisations who are CPs will have witnesses who are able to speak to, and give factual evidence about, the practical implications and the impact on children that a number of decisions made during the pandemic had. The Inquiry will be in touch about this in the coming months.
39. The Inquiry will also appoint qualified experts in particular fields of expertise as experts to the Inquiry. They will assist the Inquiry, either individually or as part of a group of such persons, by way of the provision of written reports and opinions (including the answering of specific questions asked of them by, or through, the Inquiry) and, where appropriate, the giving of oral evidence at the public hearing.

40. Such reports and evidence will inform and support the Inquiry's work during the public hearings, as well as the Chair's recommendations, by ensuring that its factual conclusions are soundly based and supported by the weight of the best expert opinion.
41. Such experts will have the appropriate expertise and experience for the particular instruction. They will be independent and objective and subject to an overriding duty to assist the Inquiry on matters within their expertise (whether or not they may also be considered as witnesses of fact in relation to matters falling within the scope of the Inquiry).
42. Written reports will, as evidence, be shared with Core Participants and published on the Inquiry's website. Where there are significant differences of view or emphasis among the members of a group, these will be made clear on the face of the reports and, of course, these can be tested during oral hearings.
43. The appointment of experts to the Inquiry, and their assignment to a group, are matters exclusively for Baroness Hallett, although she will consider suggestions from Core Participants as to who should be appointed.
44. The Inquiry has provisionally identified a number of topics concerning children and young people on which the assistance of expert witnesses may be sought in Module 8. The Inquiry Legal Team have spoken with a number of experts already in each of the below areas, and any additional suggestions from Core Participants are welcome. These areas are:
 - a. Whether or to what extent the provision of education (especially that provided remotely) during the pandemic was effective.
 - b. Whether or to what extent children were exposed to higher levels of physical, sexual (including exploitation) and psychological abuse during the pandemic.
 - c. The impact that the pandemic had on the mental and physical health of children;
 - d. The impact that the pandemic had on child development;
 - e. The experience of children with special educational needs and disabilities during the pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on them.
 - f. The experience of the pandemic of children in custody or in the youth justice system and the impact of the pandemic on them.
 - g. The experience of child migrants and asylum seekers and the impact of the pandemic on them.
 - h. The extent to which the pandemic changed children's access to and use of technology but particularly the internet and social media and what the impact of this has been.

Listening to children and young people: Every Story Matters and Children and Young People's Voices

Every Story Matters

45. For the purposes of Module 8, Every Story Matters will be listening to young adults who were u18 at the time of the pandemic. They will also be engaging with adults who were working with children and young people during the pandemic to learn about the impact they observed the pandemic had on the children and young people in their care. Every Story Matters will also be hearing about children and young people's experiences from their parents, carers and guardians.
46. In common with other modules in this inquiry, Every Story Matters themed records will be submitted into each relevant investigation. These records will be anonymised, disclosed to the Inquiry's Core Participants and used in evidence, so that they can form part of the Inquiry's written record. The reports will identify trends and themes and may include illustrative case studies.
47. The Inquiry Legal Team has been working with its research specialists to identify research questions and audiences in relation to the following proposed Key Lines of Enquiry (**KLOEs**) which will be addressed:
 1. **The impact of education⁴ closures and disruption as a result of the pandemic on children and young people (CYP).** This line of inquiry will explore what it was like for children and young people when their place of learning was closed down and/or when other Covid measures (e.g. social distancing and masks) were introduced in education and early years settings. This could include experiences of:
 - a. Remote learning (including access to online learning, devices, connectivity; online safety; hard copy resources/remote teaching in the event of not being online);
 - b. Attendance/engagement (e.g. attendance by children who had the option to attend in-person classes, engagement with remote education);
 - c. Participation in pre-school, community and Sure Start activities (where applicable);
 - d. Education transitions (e.g. between EY and school, primary and post-primary/secondary school, post-primary/secondary school and further/higher education);
 - e. Teacher-assessed exam grades;
 - f. Covid measures (e.g. social distancing, masks, testing) in education/EY settings (including the experiences of CYP who attended settings while they were closed as well as when CYP returned to in-person

⁴ To include: early years (EY) settings, primary schools, post-primary/secondary schools, further education including apprenticeships and higher education.

- education);
- g. SEN assessment, diagnosis and support;
- h. Identification of risk/safeguarding;
- i. Access to on-the-job training;
- j. Access to meals provided in education and early years settings (to include breakfast clubs and free school meals);
- k. Returning to school post pandemic including adjustments made for children's learning and mental health (if applicable), catch-up support and any other issues they may identify;
- l. Any positive experiences of education and changes during the pandemic and whether those have continued.

2. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's physical, social and emotional wellbeing and development. This line of Inquiry could include their experiences of:

- a. Access to healthcare services, including mental health services, dentists, occupational health services and any other healthcare services CYP had to access during and since the pandemic;
- b. Access to afterschool and community-based clubs;
- c. Access to community-based groups such as Parent & Toddler for babies/toddlers;
- d. Access to postnatal support and advice regarding baby and child development;
- e. Changes to CYP's family life (e.g. relationships, stresses, job loss, domestic violence);
- f. Long Covid and/or other covid related conditions in CYP;
- g. Shielding for CYP with underlying health conditions, disabilities and other health vulnerabilities;
- h. Bereavement;
- i. Poverty including homelessness and/or living in unsuitable/temporary accommodation; changes to financial support for the family; decline in CYP's/parental mental health due to financial distress; food insecurity/poverty;
- j. Educational attainment;
- k. School readiness among the relevant age groups;
- l. Social isolation;
- m. Any positive impact the pandemic might have had on CYP's physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

3. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in relation to their access to and engagement with social care services and other agencies with a role in supporting the safety of children. This will include children at risk, children whose families receive support from social services, young carers, those in the care of local authorities, care and care leavers. This could include experiences of:

- a. Covid-related restrictions and containment measures, such as
 - Increase in stressors to caregivers;
 - Increased caring responsibility/decrease in support for young carers;
 - Reduction in safeguards and identification of risk;
 - Heightened vulnerability to harm (e.g. DV, online abuse);
 - Contact between children and young people and their families;
 - Access to support and services;
 - Social isolation.

- b. Covid-related changes to social work practices, such as
 - Decrease in face-to-face contact and home visits;
 - Impact on early intervention and therapeutic services;
 - Staff absences;
 - Participation of children and young people and their families in proceedings.

- c. Children accommodated by Local Authorities/Health and Social Care (NI):
 - Deprivation of liberty in children's homes;
 - Visiting children in children's homes;
 - Access to PPE and Covid-19 tests;
 - Placement breakdowns.

- d. Any positive experiences CYP might have had.

4. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's access to and use of the internet, social media and online resources. This could include experiences of:

- a. Increased use of social media and online resources;
- b. Relationships and social skills;
- c. Mental health and wellbeing;
- d. Heightened exposure to harm, including child sexual exploitation and abuse, grooming, bullying, self harm, eating disorders, exposure to pornographic materials;
- e. Any positive experiences CYP might have had regarding their online lives.

5. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system including those in the youth custody estate, youth defendants and offenders and those whose parents or primary carers were in custody during the pandemic. This could include experiences of:

- a. Defendants in the youth justice system;
- b. Child witnesses;
- c. Children in Young Offender Institutions, Secure Training Centres or Secure Children's Homes (and equivalents across the nations, where

- appropriate);
 - d. Children under the supervision of Youth Offending Teams (and equivalents across the nations, where appropriate); and
 - e. Children with parents/primary carers in custody.
48. The Inquiry is also interested to hear any experiences of children and young people during the pandemic in contact with the immigration system as a line of enquiry.
49. Core Participants are invited to provide written submissions **by 4pm on Wednesday 29 August 2024** if they wish to make suggestions in relation to the KLOEs for targeted qualitative research, in particular, on:
- a. Whether there are any specific areas listed in the paragraphs above that Core Participants consider to be of particular importance for ESM targeted research.
 - b. Whether there are any further topics that Core Participants consider important for ESM targeted research and why (including whether or not this evidence could otherwise be obtained through the Rule 9 process or by another method); and
 - c. Any views on the proposed target populations for the ESM targeted research, either in relation to the above three topics or further proposed topics.

Children and Young People's Voices

50. In addition to the evidence from Every Story Matters, the Inquiry will deliver, through research specialists Verian, the large-scale, UK wide and targeted research project which has been referred to above. As noted it will hear from around 600 children and young people affected by the pandemic, to inform its findings and recommendations. This research is now underway and is a unique opportunity to collect directly and, where possible, in their own words, the experiences of hundreds of children and young people. This research will be combined with existing evidence as to the impacts of the pandemic on children and young people. The information from the research will be considered in combination with other evidence in the Inquiry to inform the questioning of witnesses and recommendations for the future.
51. The Inquiry Legal Team considered it important that the research encompassed both the experiences of children in general and more targeted research into the lives of specific groups of children. The research sample of children and young people will include a range of characteristics in terms of children and young people's
- a. Socio-economic background;
 - b. Ethnicity;
 - c. Age;
 - d. Gender;
 - e. Nation;
 - f. Type of local environment (rural / urban);
 - g. School provision (e.g., mainstream, special, alternative provision, independent and equivalents across the nations).

52. In addition, the sample for the targeted research will include children and young people:
- a. With special educational needs and/or disabilities (England and Northern Ireland), additional support needs (Scotland), additional learning needs (Wales);
 - b. From clinically vulnerable families;
 - c. With post-viral conditions (e.g., Long Covid, PIMs, Kawasaki);
 - d. In contact with children’s social care;
 - e. Who experienced bereavement due to Covid-19;
 - f. Whose parent/carer/guardian was an essential worker during the pandemic;
 - g. Who were in contact with the justice system and/or immigration during the pandemic.

Commemoration

53. Given the scale of the tragedy brought about by the pandemic, and the grief and loss suffered by the bereaved, the Inquiry wishes to provide opportunities for those who were lost to be commemorated as part of the Inquiry’s process. The Chair wishes to recognise the human suffering arising from the pandemic, including the loss of loved ones, by ensuring that it is reflected throughout the Inquiry’s work. The Inquiry has produced Impact Films that are shown at the start of module hearings. There will be an Impact Film aired at the Module 8 public hearings next year.

Future hearings

54. A further preliminary hearing for Module 8 will be held on 10 June 2025 in London at Dorland House.

7 August 2024

Counsel to the Inquiry

Clair Dobbin KC

Susannah Johnson KC

Zoe Nield

Marlene Cayoun

Jessica Ward