



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION**  
**CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION**  
**MODULE 8 - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**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 21 May 2024, the Inquiry opened Module 8 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 17 June 2024.
2. On 17 June 2024, the Inquiry received an application from the Coram Group of charities (Coram Group) for Core Participant status in Module 8. This Notice sets out my determination of the application.
3. The Inquiry has published the [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 8, which states that this module will examine the impact of the pandemic on children and young people across society in the UK, including in education, health and social care, the criminal justice system, and the immigration system. Module 8 will also examine the extent to which children and young people were considered as part of decision-making in response to the pandemic, and the wider and long term impact of those decisions on children and young people. Further modules will be announced and opened in due course, to address other aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
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## Application

5. 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.*

6. 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 8.

## Summary of Application

7. The Coram Group is a children's charity which works directly with children and young people, conducts extensive research, and advocates for the rights and interests of children and young people with local and national government. It comprises 13 separate organisations, each with their own particular focus and expertise. Its work includes the provision of free legal information, advice and representation to children and families in the areas of family, education, community care, housing and immigration law; adoption, fostering, kinship and therapy services at national and regional levels; advocacy for children and young people in and leaving care including England's largest; conducting surveys of children in care and young people leaving

care; the provision of best practice advice and support for children's services professionals, teachers and families, engaging every local authority in the UK; life skills, and reading programmes in schools; the conducting of research to support frontline professionals and decision-makers.

8. The Coram Group in its application sets out that in the previous year, 588,000 children took part in its life skills and cultural education programme, 46,000 teachers subscribed to its online school resources, and around 9,000 children in care and care leavers used Coram's helpline and peer support serves, and that every local authority in the UK has used corams' training and best practice resources.
9. The Coram Group submits that through its direct work with children and young people during the pandemic it has experience and knowledge about the impact of the pandemic on 's impact on them, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and from a diverse range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Decision for the Applicant**

10. In several aspects of its work the Coram Group has a significant interest in the matters to which the Provisional Scope of Module 8 relates. I note for example that Coram Children's Legal Centre is a specialist organisation in the provision of legal advice and representation to a large number of children, young people and families, particularly in child and education law, immigration, asylum and nationality law. It has considerable knowledge and expertise about best practice, influences the UK's legal framework and works with local and national governments on these issues.
11. Similarly, Coram Voice is specialised in engaging children and young people in decision making and did so during the pandemic through its helpline. I note that this work extends particularly to several groups of children who are within the Provision Scope, such as care and care leavers, those involved in child protection processes; in secure children's homes; in residential children's homes and therapeutic communities; in in-patient and secure mental health settings; and in specialist schools and residential placements for children with disabilities. I note that this work is complemented by the Voices in Action group.

12. Through these and other examples of the Coram Group's work, knowledge and expertise, I am satisfied that the Applicants have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates, namely the following aspects of the Provisional Scope of Module 8:

- a. 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).
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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;
- e. The impact of the pandemic on children and young people in contact with the immigration system.

13. Having regard to the provisions of Rule 5(2), I am satisfied that the Applicant has played a direct or significant role and has a significant interest in the matters under investigation, and should be granted Core Participant status in Module 8.

### **Legal Representation**

14. 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.*

15. I am satisfied that Coram has appointed Steph Davies of Leverets as its qualified lawyer in relation to this Module. I therefore designate Steph Davies as Coram's recognised legal representative in accordance with Rule 6(1).

16. 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**

**8 July 2024**