



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 14 June 2024, the Inquiry received an application from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (**NICCY**) 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 Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (the Applicant) is a statutory office established by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003. The post is currently held by Mr Chris Quinn, who took up office on 1 September 2023. The Commissioner in post during the pandemic was Ms Koulla Yiasouma.
8. The application states that the Applicant's principal aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people. Pursuant to this, the Applicant has a number of duties and powers, which are summarised in the

application. These include promoting an understanding of the rights of children and young people, keeping under review the adequacy and efficacy of law and practice relating to the rights and welfare of children and young people, advising the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and other relevant authorities on the rights or best interests of children and young people, undertaking research, issuing guidance and conducting investigations.

9. The application is made on the basis of Rule 5(2)(a) and (b) of the Inquiry Rules 2006. The application states that the pandemic impacted almost all aspects of the Applicant's work and continues to impact its current work. The application states that the Applicant played a direct and significant role in respect of the matters to which Module 8 of the Inquiry relates, as it: provided advice to government; advised, engaged with and assisted children and young people; produced a report analysing the impact of the response to the pandemic on children's rights; and monitored the response to that report's recommendations. The application further states that the Applicant has a significant interest in all of the matters listed in the Provisional Outline of Scope given its responsibility for safeguarding and protecting the rights of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Decision for the Applicant

10. 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 8. With regard to the provisions of Rule 5(2), I am satisfied that the Applicant played a direct and significant role and has a significant interest in the matters under investigation. The application states that the Applicant provided advice to the Northern Ireland government and advised, assisted, and engaged with children and young people during the pandemic. The Applicant produced a report analysing the impact of the response to the pandemic on the rights of children in Northern Ireland.
11. The Applicant therefore meets the criteria in Rule 5(2)(a) and (b) of the Inquiry Rules, that is (a) it played a direct and significant role in the matters under consideration in this Module and (b) it has a significant interest in those matters.

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 the Applicant has appointed Joanne McGurk of the Commissioner's office as its qualified lawyer in relation to this Module. I therefore designate Joanne McGurk as the Applicant'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

8 July 2024