



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

**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. 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. This will include 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.
3. On 16 June 2024, the Inquiry received an application from Us for Them (the Applicant) for Core Participant status in Module 8.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate Us for Them as a Core Participant in Module 8 on 9 July 2024 (the "Provisional Decision"). The Applicant was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 16 July 2024 at 4pm.

5. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.

## **Application**

6. 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.*

7. 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 8.

## **Summary of Application**

8. In making this determination, the fact that I have not referred to every matter or detail which is set out in the application does not mean that I have not considered it. The points addressed below are intended to capture what appear to be the most important points made in support of the application.

9. The Applicant is a volunteer parent-led organisation originally formed during the pandemic in response to parental concern at the measures being imposed by the UK government and their impact on children.
10. The Applicant's original application sets out its interests in the matters to be examined during Module 8. These principally relate to the level of consideration given to children and young people in the preparedness and planning for a pandemic and in the application of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), the impact of the pandemic response upon children and young people's education, the impact of remote learning on children and its use as an educational tool in a public health emergency, and the decision-making process relating to children and young people. The Applicant also expresses their interest in examining what they term as members of its Executive team being "*subject to a three-year-long 'monitoring' exercise by the Government's Counter Disinformation Unit.*"
11. The Applicant submits that it holds unique experience, insight, data and knowledge relevant to Module 8 of this Inquiry, given its prominent advocacy for children's interests during and since the pandemic, its research efforts including a number of publications and books relevant to children and young people during the pandemic, and the insight collected from its supporters during the pandemic. The Applicant states that it played a central role throughout the pandemic in collating evidence from parents and carers whose children were directly impacted by the pandemic response.
12. The Applicant also highlights a number of relevant materials and publications that it has already provided to Module 8 of the Inquiry.

### **Decision for the Applicant**

13. I have considered with great care everything that is said in Us for Them's application. 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 8 and, therefore, I have decided not to designate Us for Them as a Core Participant in Module 8.

14. Module 8 will examine the impact of the pandemic on children and young people across society. It will include an examination of those decisions which most impacted the lives of children during the pandemic; the extent to which those decisions took into account the interests of children and young people and the impact of those decisions in the areas set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope. I accept that the Applicant's work during and since the pandemic is of relevance to a number of the matters which Module 8 will consider and which are set out in the Provisional Scope for Module 8. I have noted that the Applicant has a particular and strong interest in questions which include whether it was necessary to close schools at all (and the basis upon which the decisions to close schools were made); the impact on children of much of their lives being online because of school closures and those measures which restricted their freedoms (for example by requiring children to wear masks). I have also noted the interest of this Applicant in the ethics of vaccinating children.
15. The Inquiry will seek to examine the approach which the government took to making decisions which affected children's lives. It intends to call a number of witnesses who were central to the making of those decisions. The Inquiry understands that the Applicant contends that those decisions which restricted children's freedoms (and in particular which restricted their ability to attend school) were wrong and unjustified, having regard to the harm caused. In summary, the Applicant is an organisation which seeks to deploy medical, scientific and other evidence about children's wellbeing in order to argue that the decisions which restricted children's lives were wrong (insofar as they applied to children).
16. However, Module 8 anticipates calling evidence from medical experts, educationalists and experts about the effects of children's access to technology, to speak to the effects of lockdowns and school closures on children. The Inquiry will scrutinise carefully the issue of whether schools had to close and the extent to which decision making at the time took into account and balanced the harms that would follow. The Applicant's application does not refer to the Inquiry Rules 2006 or under which limb of Rule 5 the application is made. I do not consider that the Applicant played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates (Rule 5(2)(a)). Rather, it appears to have played some part in lobbying politicians and/or Ministers. I accept that the Applicant has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates, but I do not accept that

this requires me to exercise my discretion to grant the Applicant Core Participant status for the reasons I have set out above.

17. While I am bound to consider the factors in Rule 5(2), it is also open to me to take into account other relevant matters. I am not obliged to designate any particular person or organisation as a Core Participant. I am determined to run the Inquiry as effectively and 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 and organisations who were involved with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many organisations in this country could potentially have an interest in the Inquiry. Not everyone can be granted Core Participant status for the purposes of this Inquiry.
18. In light of the focus of the Applicant's work (which is primarily concerned with whether the decisions to restrict children's freedoms ought to have been taken at all) and the broad scope of this Module, I do not consider that it would be proportionate for the Applicant to be granted Core Participant status on its own. I would also add that it is unclear whether this organisation has a membership which is capable of being quantified or the extent to which it does in fact represent the interests of a large number of families or children. The assertion in its application that it has "*tens of thousands*" of supporting members is not supported by reference to any underlying information. I also note that it does not identify any experts which form part of its membership.
19. It is not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The Applicant may have relevant information to give in relation to the matters being examined in the Inquiry and the Inquiry is currently engaging with a range of individuals, organisations and bodies to seek information, to gain their perspectives on the issues raised in the modules and, where appropriate, to ask for witness statements and documents.
20. I have granted Core Participant status to the Coram Group of charities and to a group of charities consisting of 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. I

am satisfied they are well placed to assist the Inquiry in exploring the issues the Applicant wishes the Inquiry to explore.

21. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by the Applicant in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 8, I have therefore decided that Us for Them should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 8 and I confirm that this is my final decision.

22. I will keep the scope of Module 8 under review. In my Opening Statement, I said that I will publish more information about the issues intended to be covered by later modules in the coming months. My decision not to designate the Applicant as Core Participants in Module 8 does not preclude it from making any further applications in respect of any later modules. I will consider any future applications Us for Them may wish to make on their merits at the time that they are made.

**Rt Hon Baroness (Heather) Hallett DBE**

**Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

**30 July 2024**