



NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 8 - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
NATIONAL NETWORK OF DESIGNATED HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS FOR CHILDREN
(NNDHP)

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 17 June 2024, the Inquiry received an application from the National Network of Designated Healthcare Professionals for Children ("the NNDHP" or "the Applicant") for Core Participant status in Module 8.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate the NNDHP as a Core Participant in Module 8 on 8 July 2024 v. The NNDHP was provided with an opportunity to renew

the application in writing by 4pm on 15 July 2024. This deadline was subsequently extended to 16 July 2024.

5. On 16 July 2024, the NNDHP submitted a renewed application for Core Participant status in Module 8. This notice sets out my determination of the NNDHP's application for Core Participant status in Module 8.

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 NNDHP's original application stated that the NNDHP is an autonomous network comprising NHS doctors and nurses who hold senior statutory roles in respect of child safeguarding, looked after children and child death review. The NNDHP does not represent the NHS and its role is to use its collective voice to advocate for all children, to protect them from harm and to promote their wellbeing.
10. The original application was made on the basis of Rule 5(2)(a) and (b) of the Inquiry Rules 2006. It stated that the NNDHP held daily online meetings during the pandemic to share experiences and provide support. Further, the NNDHP witnessed the destructive consequences of the pandemic on all children and its disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable; it has insights into the experiences of children of different ages and the harm suffered by children in care; and it can assist with lines of questioning for witnesses. It submits that it has a significant interest in the consequences of the pandemic for all babies, children and young people.
11. In its renewed application, the NNDHP provides further information. It states that other organisations which had been designated as Core Participants would not have the senior statutory status which its members hold. It states that its work is not narrow in focus and lists its members' responsibilities including protecting children from maltreatment and preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development. It states that its statutory functions are direct and significant in the lives of children and sets out, by reference to each issue in Module 8's Provisional Outline of Scope, how its membership may be able to assist the Inquiry's work.

Decision for the Applicant

12. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the Applicant's original application and in its renewed application. I have assessed the merits of the

application for Core Participant status in its totality. Having done so, I remain of the view that the Applicant does not meet the criteria set out in Rule 5(2). I have therefore decided not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 8.

13. As I have noted above, an important part of Module 8 is the extent to which some children in society were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic or by the response to it (or both). As one part of this work, Module 8 will consider the extent to which the decisions made during the pandemic may have exposed children to the risk of physical, sexual and other forms of abuse. These are therefore issues in which the Applicant may well have an interest.
14. I accept that the Applicant's members carry out important work in the area of child protection, in conjunction with other relevant agencies and that they did so during the pandemic. However, I am not satisfied that they had a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates. I consider that they had an important role in respect of an aspect of the child protection system, but this does not equate to meeting the criterion in Rule 5(2)(a). Even if I am wrong about that, I would nonetheless exercise my discretion and decline the application for the reasons I set out below.
15. I further accept that NNDHP has a significant interest in the issue of children's health and again, in relation to child protection and safeguarding, for the purposes of Rule 5(2)(b). I do not consider that the Applicant's interest in these matters is sufficiently significant as to grant it Core Participant status in this Module.
16. Even if I were wrong about whether NNDHP has a sufficiently significant interest, in relation to the matters to which Module 8 relates, I would still decline to exercise my discretion to make it a Core Participant. Whilst I am bound to consider the factors set out in Rule 5(2), it is also open to me to take into account other relevant factors. I am not obliged to designate any particular person or organisation as a Core Participant. There are other organisations which are better placed to represent the interests of children and young people in relation to the matters to be examined in Module 8 and who will be Core Participants.

17. Because Module 8 is concerned with the experiences of all children across society, it is necessarily broad in its compass. Just as almost every adult in society was impacted by Covid-19 so too were almost every parent (or carer) and every child. Any parent (or carer) or child could be said to have an interest in this Module 8. The same may be said of very many organisations which work with children or with their families.
18. There are also many different groups of children across the United Kingdom whose lives were made extremely difficult by the decisions made in response to the pandemic. They include those living in poor standards of accommodation; those exposed to violence and abuse and those children who suffered mental ill health.
19. It is because of this need to consider the experiences of a broad range of children and groups of children that I have designated the Children's Commissioners and also a number of large and leading children's charities as Core Participants. I intend to call evidence from a range of witnesses with expertise or front line experience to speak to the impact on children of a number of key decisions which affected children's lives as set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 8.
20. I have also commissioned a research project in order to understand the perspective of children on the issues raised by Module 8 and this includes the experiences of vulnerable children and those who stood to suffer particular disadvantage because of the decisions made in response to the pandemic. I additionally have regard to my duty to act with fairness and with regard to the need to avoid cost to public funds which is not justified.
21. 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 matters being examined in the Inquiry and the Inquiry will be contacting 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.
22. I am determined to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as 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 who were involved

with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many people or organisations in this country could potentially have an interest in it and not all can be granted Core Participant status for the purpose of the Inquiry hearings. I am satisfied that the interests of children, their families and carers will be well served by the approach that I intend to take to Module 8.

23. I have therefore decided that the Applicant should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 8 and I confirm that this is my final decision.

24. I will keep the scope of Module 8 under review. My decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 8 does not preclude it from making any further applications in respect of any later modules. I will consider any future applications the Applicant may wish to make on their merits at the time they are made.

Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE

Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry

7 August 2024