



NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 8 - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
TRAVELLER MOVEMENT (TM)

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 11 June 2024, the Inquiry received an application from Traveller Movement (TM) (the "Applicant") for Core Participant status in Module 8.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 8 on 8 July 2024 (the "Provisional Decision"). The Applicant was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 15 July 2024 at 4pm.

5. On 15 July 2024, the Applicant submitted a renewed application for Core Participant status in Module 8. This notice sets out my determination of the Applicant'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. Traveller Movement's original application stated that it is the largest representative body engaging with national and local government for and on behalf of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities in the UK. The application was put on the basis that it has a significant interest in the matters to which Module 8 relates for the purpose of Rule 5(2)(b) of the Inquiry Rules 2006. The application further submitted that the concerns of the GRT communities in relation to the matters covered by Module 8 cannot be satisfactorily addressed through the Applicant attending to give evidence as witnesses only.
10. The original application set out that the Applicant has a significant interest in issue 1 (the consideration of children and young people in pandemic preparedness and planning), issue 2 (the impact of decisions relating to NPIs), issue 3 (the impact of the pandemic on education, particularly in relation to those with special educational needs), issues 4 and 5 (in relation to the low uptake in vaccinations by GRT children and young people) and issue 8 (on the basis that GRT children are often digitally excluded).
11. The Applicant's renewed application provides further submissions and information all of which are helpful and which I have considered with care. In making this determination, the fact that I have not referred to every matter and 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.
12. In its renewed application, the Applicant explains that the pandemic significantly impacted children and young people from the GRT communities in a way which was different from the general population of children. Children from GRT backgrounds faced challenges including digital exclusion, disruption to education and exclusion from the National Tutoring Programme.
13. Further, the Applicant "*respectfully disagrees*" with the reasoning in my provisional determination that the application did not establish that the interests and needs of GRT children and young people during the pandemic were specific only to that community or differed from other children and young people. The renewed application provides submissions in relation to a number of areas in which children

from the GRT community suffered a range of disadvantages which were specific to them. It states that a government-funded initiative, Open Doors Education and Training (ODET), was developed to address the particular interests and needs of GRT children and young people during the pandemic and provides some details about this.

14. The renewed application also contains a statement of support from Mary Foy MP, the co-chair of the Parliamentary All Party Parliamentary Working Group on Gypsies Travellers and Roma. She reinforces the point that children from a GRT background faced particular disadvantages (specific to their circumstances) during the pandemic and because of the decisions made which affected children's lives. The renewed application submits that the Traveller Movement meets the criteria of Rule 5(2)(b), because it has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 8 of this Inquiry relates.

15. As part of its renewed application, the Traveller Movement also provided a covering letter from Pauline Melvin Anderson which sets out some of the ways in which the experiences of GRT children and young people differed from the experiences of other children during the pandemic. The application and the covering letter set out that GRT children and young people were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic for a number of reasons, including that this community were more likely to be living in poverty, to be young carers and to experience digital exclusion, health inequalities and poor and or over-crowded housing in multi-generational households. The application further notes that many GRT children are not enrolled in schools and that there may be safeguarding issues for these children due to a lack of visibility to professionals.

Decision for the Applicant

16. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the Traveller Movement's renewed application and its covering letter. I have reminded myself of what was said in the original application and reconsidered the overall merits of the application for Core Participant status. I have nonetheless concluded that the Applicant organisation has not met the criteria in Rule 5(2)(b). Whilst I recognise that the GTR community (and its children) may well have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (or suffered particular disadvantage by comparison to other groups) and the

Applicant undoubtedly has an interest in some of the matters to be examined in Module 8, the application has not demonstrated that the interest is “*significant*” to satisfy Rule 5(2)(b) and grant Core Participant status.

17. Even if this were not the case, I have reconsidered whether I would exercise my discretion to make the Applicant a Core Participant. I have concluded that I would not, and that I would decline to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 8.
18. The disproportionate impact upon GRT children and young people and the reasons for this, such as living in poverty, poor housing conditions and a lack of access to technology were explained at length in the original application. Unfortunately these issues are not unique to GRT children and young people and were also experienced by children outside the GRT community. I am very aware of this and intend to ensure that Module 8 considers all those children who, in common with GRT children, suffered disproportionately because they lived in poor housing, lived in poverty, did not have devices to access online education or did not have the internet or who may have otherwise been put at risk because of their circumstances at home and because (for example) of changes to social work practice. I also accept that children from this community may have comprised a body of children who were ‘hidden’ from official view during the pandemic. Again, there are a number of groups of children about whom this can be said.
19. As noted above, the module will seek evidence addressing the extent to which the interests of children generally *and* those children who were already vulnerable or who would suffer particular disadvantage were taken into account in the decisions which were made about children (or which affected them) and the extent to which the impact upon these children were understood and assessed by Government and, where applicable, the Devolved Nations.
20. I therefore wish to repeat my ongoing commitment, as set out in the Terms of Reference and repeated in my Opening Statement, that inequalities will be at the forefront of the Inquiry’s investigations. The investigation will consider the disproportionate impact that Covid 19 had upon different groups of children and young people across society. However, I am not required to make organisations

which support each of those groups and/or representatives of those groups Core Participants in Module 8.

21. Further, 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 matters. I am not obliged to designate any particular person or organisation as a Core Participant. I have regard to the need to manage the Inquiry effectively, my duty to act with fairness and to avoid any unnecessary cost to public funds. I am satisfied that those currently designated as Core Participants in Module 8 will enable the Inquiry to consider the impact of the pandemic both on children across society *and* on those children who were most vulnerable or who stood to suffer particular disadvantage because of the decisions made to respond to the pandemic.
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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. I would very much welcome receiving evidence from representatives of the GRT community (or on their behalf) about the impact of the pandemic on their children.

26. 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. I am therefore satisfied that the interests of children, their families and carers, including GRT children will be well served by the approach that I intend to take to Module 8.

27. For those reasons, having considered all the information provided by the Applicant, in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 8, I remain of the view that the Applicant did not play a direct and significant role in relation to the matters sought to be investigated in Module 8, nor does it have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 8 relates. Even if I was wrong about that, I would still decline to exercise my discretion to make it a Core Participant. I have therefore decided that the Traveller Movement should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 8 and I confirm that this is my final decision.

28. 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