



**IN THE UK COVID-19 PUBLIC INQUIRY**

**MODULE 3**

**OPENING SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE SCOTTISH COVID  
BEREAVED**

1. Scottish Covid Bereaved originally started out as part of the Facebook Group *Covid Bereaved Families for Justice* (CBFFJ), which was formed in June 2020. Following a meeting with the then First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, it became clear to the Scottish members of CBFFJ that they required to become an autonomous grouping within the CBFFJ group. At that stage, the Scottish bereaved became a sub-group of CBFFJ but arranged their lobbying and press activity themselves. In September 2022, the Scottish Bereaved formally left CBFFJ and became a completely separate group, Scottish Covid Bereaved.
2. Since July 2020 and a first press article on Care Homes with the BBC, Scottish Covid Bereaved have been a consistent and positive presence on TV Radio, Newspapers and Social Media. Scottish Covid Bereaved's political campaign began in September 2020 with the then Scottish Labour leader asking a question on behalf of the bereaved at First Minister's Questions. Since then, various questions have been asked on behalf of the bereaved by politicians from all political parties.
3. Scottish Covid Bereaved are a group of like-minded bereaved individuals with a common goal of not wanting their loved ones deaths to have been in vain, and for lessons to be learned to stop others having to suffer in the same way as they have. Scottish Covid Bereaved consider

that in sharing their experiences, both good and bad, they will be of assistance to the Inquiry in fulfilling its Terms of Reference.

4. While the group first came together because of the shared experience of losing loved ones as a result of Covid, the group has members who have experience of dealing with other consequences of the pandemic. These include, but are not limited to, traumatised healthcare workers; teachers who had to buy their own disinfectant to keep classrooms safe and use their own money to feed pupils; those dealing with Long Covid; and those dealing with the financial consequences of the pandemic.
5. As well as the political and media activity outlined above, Scottish Covid Bereaved have carried out a number of other activities to support their members and campaign for those no longer able to raise their voices. Groups have been set up to support members who were bereaved as a result of Covid in Care Homes and through Nosocomial Infection. Mutual support is offered to members through the closed Facebook Group. The group also hold online meetings which not only allow for members to be kept up to date in relation to the ongoing inquiries but allow them to share their stories and ask for help if they need it.
6. The Bereaved have identified consistent areas of concern amongst their members and have shared these concerns with senior politicians and both this Inquiry and its Scottish counterpart. Scottish Covid Bereaved have repeatedly raised the issue of the deaths of patients with hospital acquired Covid-19 infections. They have raised issues around NHS services and testing criteria focusing on the three cardinal symptoms: temperature, persistent cough, and loss of sense of taste or smell. The group also proposed that the COPFS' investigation into Care Home deaths should also consider the issue of Nosocomial deaths.

### Module 3

7. In Module 1, the bereaved learned that despite the existence of pandemic planning exercises and various expert groups, neither Scotland nor the wider UK were in any way prepared for the pandemic which struck the UK. SARS and MERS outbreaks had not been properly studied, recommendations were not implemented, and Brexit preparations were prioritised over

pandemic planning. In Modules 2 and 2A, the Inquiry examined the core political and administrative decision-making in Scotland and Westminster. A spotlight was turned on our politicians, civil servants and advisors. Without wishing to cover old ground, those we trusted with our health and our lives were often found lacking. It is hoped that the Inquiry's light will be the disinfectant required to place Scotland and the United Kingdom in a far better position when the next pandemic arrives than they were when the last one struck.

8. In Module 3, the Inquiry will consider the impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. As the Bereaved have previously submitted to this Inquiry, the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition. This quote, from the Constitution of the World Health Organisation.
9. While the SCB's focus is on Scotland, the Bereaved are aware that this module is important for everyone in the United Kingdom. Each and every one of us was affected in some way by the decisions taken in relation to healthcare: whether that be those, like the bereaved who lost loved ones; those who risked their own health to staff hospitals and care homes; those who watched family and friends struggle through treatment; or those whose care for non-Covid related conditions was affected by the pandemic.
10. SCB hope to assist the Inquiry in any way that they can in this Module. The Inquiry will hear from members of SCB at the beginning and end of the hearings. It is hoped that their experiences, and the experiences of the Bereaved throughout the UK will provide a very real reminder of pandemic's devastating impact.
11. In the course of this hearing, the Bereaved hope that they can find the answers to questions, some of which have been asked since those devastating days of 2020. As well as the broad issue of the impact of the pandemic on people's experience of healthcare, the Bereaved are looking forward to the Inquiry's examination of issues including:
  - (i) Healthcare provision and treatment for patients with Covid-19

- (ii) Decision making about the nature of healthcare to be provided for patients with Covid-19
- (iii) The impact of those requiring care for reasons other than Covid-19
- (iv) The quality of treatment for patients
- (v) Issues impacting upon palliative care
- (vi) The discharge of patients from hospital
- (vii) Infection prevention and control measures
- (viii) The adequacy or otherwise of PPE
- (ix) Nosocomial infections
- (x) Communication with patients with Covid-19 and their loved ones about patients' conditions and treatments, including discussions about DNACPRs
- (xi) Restrictions on visiting patients
- (xii) Shielding and the impact on the clinically vulnerable.

12. While the Bereaved do have other questions and concerns in relation to this Module, including questions for the former Scottish CMO Dr Catherine Calderwood, the purpose of these submissions is not to list every such area of concern. Rather, it is hoped that these examples can provide the Inquiry with an understanding of both the breadth and depth of the issues which the Bereaved hope can be covered in the forthcoming weeks. While it has been clear from the previous two Modules that Scotland's healthcare system was not ready for what lay before it, the Bereaved look forward to hearing and examining how and why decisions were taken during the course of the pandemic. Inadequate preparation cannot be an excuse for poor contemporaneous decision making.

13. It has been clear to the SCB that the political machinations and decision making processes highlighted in previous Modules attracted a great deal of media attention. It is hoped that those in the press can maintain their interest in the Inquiry as it moves to looking at the sometimes technical and complex health care decisions that were made during the course of the pandemic. While perhaps of a lesser profile, the decisions made had an unprecedented impact on the health and lives of the nation. It is hoped that the evidence which will be heard during this Module will attract the same level of press attention as the

evidence of Prime Ministers and First Ministers. SCB consider the evidence which will be heard in the coming weeks, while perhaps of a lesser profile, will be of great public interest.

14. The Bereaved appreciate that this Module and this Inquiry cannot change their experiences, and the experiences of their loved ones. It cannot undo that which has already been done. The Bereaved hope that the evidence that they will hear over the coming weeks will, as well as giving them the answers they seek, help to ensure that our vital healthcare system, and those who risked so much to staff it, are in the best possible position when the next pandemic comes.

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