



NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 10 - SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

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 17 September 2024 the Inquiry opened Module 10 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 15 October 2024.
2. On 11 October 2024 the Inquiry received an application from the Secretary of State for the Home Department ('the Applicant') for Core Participant status in Module 10. I made a provisional decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 10, thereby declining the application ('the Provisional Decline'), on 12 November 2024.
3. The Applicant was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 4pm on 19 November 2024. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.
4. The Inquiry has published the [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 10, which states that this Module will examine the impact of Covid-19 on the population of the United Kingdom with a particular focus on key workers, the most vulnerable, the bereaved, mental health and wellbeing.

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 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 10.

Summary of Application

7. The Applicant is a member of the Cabinet and responsible for the Home Office. The Applicant has wide ranging responsibilities including those related to national security, border security and immigration control, visa and passport services, crime reduction and prevention, policing and fire prevention and rescue.
8. The application states that the Applicant's officials were designated as key workers during the pandemic and needed to continue the delivery of critical national services during this period. The application explains that in carrying out their role, the Applicant considered the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable as well as the bereaved, and that the Home Office worked in partnership with others to provide support to groups that will likely be considered in Module 10 such as victims and survivors of domestic abuse. On this basis, the Applicant says that it played a "direct

and significant role" in the matters to be addressed by Module 10 and has a "significant interest" in the matters to which Module 10 relates, and so satisfies both Rule 5(2)(a) and 5(2)(b) of the Inquiry Rules 2006.

9. The application further states that the Applicant's role and interest also means that Rule 5(2)(c) is applicable.

Decision for the Applicant

10. Module 10 of the Inquiry is focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society with a particular focus on key workers, the most vulnerable, the bereaved and mental health and wellbeing. It will investigate the impact of the pandemic and the measures put in place to combat Covid-19.
11. I have considered the application in full and with great care against the criteria set out in Rule 5(2) of the Inquiry Rules 2006. Having done so, I have decided, in my discretion, not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 10.
12. I consider that for an Applicant to satisfy the criteria of playing a "direct and significant role", they must be able to demonstrate not only that they themselves were impacted by the pandemic or decisions made in response to it, but that they played an active role, such as engaging with decision makers on behalf of individuals or specific groups to address the extent of the impact at the relevant time. As a government department making and implementing decisions rather than being directly impacted by them, the Applicant does not appear to have played a "direct and significant" role in relation to Module 10 matters for the purposes of Rule 5.
13. I am also required to consider whether the Applicant has a "significant interest" in an important aspect of the matters to which the Inquiry relates. In exercising my discretion, I have in mind the broad scope of Module 10 and that a very large number of organisations and individuals could be said to be impacted in a way that would give rise to an interest in this investigation. I recognise that it could be said that the Applicant falls into this category.

14. However, while I am bound to consider the factors set out in Rule 5, it is also open to me to take into account other relevant factors. I am mindful of the need to run this Module effectively and efficiently in light of the number of organisations and individuals who could be said to have a "significant interest" in the Module. I am not obliged to designate any particular person or organisation as a Core Participant and I have carefully considered who would be able to provide most assistance to me in my investigation of these matters by being so designated. The focus of Module 10 is the impact of the pandemic and any measures put in place, rather than government decision-making itself, which has been the focus of earlier modules.
15. Given the focus of the Module as outlined above, I have not granted Core Participant status to the Applicant on the ground that they may be subject to "explicit or significant criticism".
16. While I have not designated the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 10, the Inquiry remains committed to engaging with those – such as the Applicant – who may have relevant evidence to contribute. I will instruct the Module 10 team to consider whether there are different ways in which the Applicant could contribute to the Module's investigation.
17. I will keep the scope of Module 10 and the designation of Core Participants under review.

Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE
Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry
04 December 2024