



Message from Kate Eisenstein, Deputy Secretary to the Inquiry and Director of Policy, Research and Legal



Welcome to our February newsletter. Next week we will start public hearings for our [Module 5 investigation into Procurement during the pandemic](#). This follows on quickly from hearings for our [Module 4 investigation into Vaccines and Therapeutics](#) last month. We provide information about watching the upcoming hearings and a summary of what we heard from witnesses during Module 4 hearings later in this newsletter.

Earlier this month we held our final [Every Story Matters](#) public events in Manchester, Bristol and Swansea. I joined colleagues in Manchester to listen to people's experiences of the pandemic and, as with the other listening events I have attended, found it to be an important and incredibly moving experience.

Thank you to all those who spoke to us in the 25 towns and cities we have visited across the UK since autumn 2023. If you did not manage to speak to us at an event, then you still have the opportunity to share your story through our [online form](#) and join more than 56,000 people who have already done so.

While our Every Story Matters public events have come to an end, the Inquiry is introducing new ways of hearing from a range of people and communities affected by the pandemic through roundtables that will inform the [Module 10 investigation](#) into the impact of the pandemic on society. Please read on for more details.

Thank you for your interest in the Inquiry and I look forward to seeing some of you at upcoming hearings in London in March.

What we heard during the Module 4 hearings

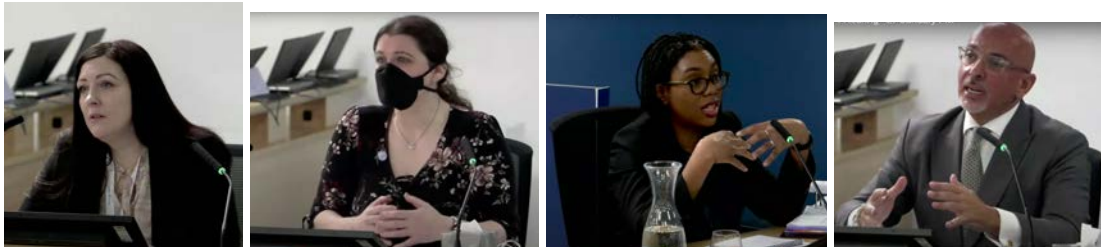
Hearings for our [Module 4 investigation into Vaccines and Therapeutics](#) have now ended. Therapeutics refer to medicines to treat Covid-19. We heard from over 40 witnesses, whose names can be found in the [hearings timetable published on our website](#).

Topics covered during these hearings included:

- The development, procurement, manufacture and approval of vaccines during the pandemic
- The development and approval of Covid-19 therapeutics during the pandemic
- Vaccine deployment across the UK
- Barriers to vaccine uptake, including access issues and inequalities
- The role of misinformation and disinformation in influencing vaccine uptake



- Vaccine safety
- The Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS)



Left to right: Charlet Chrichton (vaccine bereaved founder of UKCVFamily, an organisation supporting people who have been injured or bereaved by Covid-19 vaccines), Lara Wong (co-founder of Clinically Vulnerable Families), the Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP (former Minister for Equalities) and the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi (former Minister for Covid-19 Vaccine Deployment) providing evidence to the Inquiry during Module 4 hearings

In the public hearings we screened an impact film showing personal accounts from people who were affected by the use of Covid-19 vaccines and therapeutics in the UK. All impact films, including the one shown before Module 4 hearings, can be accessed via our [commemoration page](#). Please note that the films contain material you may find distressing.

On the first day of Module 4 hearings, the [Every Story Matters: Vaccines and Therapeutics record](#) was published. This details the experiences of vaccines and therapeutics that people across the UK shared with us through Every Story Matters. The record is an important piece of evidence in the Inquiry's investigation.

You can watch all hearings for this module on our [YouTube channel](#).

Expert evidence during our hearings

The Inquiry instructed a number of independent experts to produce reports on the topics under investigation. These reports are used as evidence. During [Module 4 hearings](#) we heard from six different experts:

- Professor Heidi Larson presented evidence on the reasons why certain groups may not want to have a Covid-19 vaccine.
- Professor Dani Prieto-Alhambra and Professor Stephen Evans presented evidence on the vaccine development process and safety issues.
- Dr Ben Kasstan-Dabush and Dr Tracey Chantler presented evidence about how disparities and inequalities influence barriers to vaccine uptake.
- Professor Nicholas White provided evidence about therapeutics - the medicines to treat Covid-19.

The [expert reports by all of these witnesses can be viewed on our website](#).



Experts appointed by the Inquiry have previously provided reports on a range of topics. These include reports on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on some groups. This helped us to fulfil our commitment to “consider any disparities evident in the impact of the pandemic on different categories of people”.

The Inquiry continues to instruct independent experts to provide evidence on topics that will be investigated at upcoming hearings. For example, two experts in mental healthcare (Professors Jayati Das-Munshi and David Osborn) will be asked to consider mental health inequalities during the pandemic for use in [Module 10: Impact on society](#).

Watching our Module 5 hearings

Public hearings for the [Inquiry’s investigation into procurement during the pandemic \(Module 5\)](#) will run from Monday 3 March to Thursday 27 March at our [London hearing centre, Dorland House](#).

These hearings will investigate:

- Processes, procedures and/or contractual provisions in place for the procurement and distribution of key healthcare equipment and supplies before and during the pandemic.
- The suitability and resilience of the supply chains and what, if any, changes were made to procurement processes.
- The operation and effectiveness of any regulatory regimes and/or oversight for key medical equipment or supplies.

As with all our public hearings, there is a seating reservation system in place. More information can be found in the [guidance document](#) and [public hearings page of our website](#). The booking form will go live every Monday at 12pm for the following week’s hearings.

Hearings will be streamed live on the [Inquiry’s YouTube channel](#), subject to a three minute delay. All livestreams are available to watch later.

Our hearings timetable will be published on our website on each Thursday for the week ahead. A link to the timetable will be available on Thursday 27 February from the [Module 5 hearings page](#).

We send out weekly hearing updates following each week of hearings, summarising the key topics and witnesses who appeared. You can sign up for these from the [newsletter page of the website](#) if you have not already done so.

UK and devolved governments respond to Inquiry recommendations on pandemic resilience and preparedness



Last July the Inquiry published Baroness Hallett's findings and recommendations following the [Module 1 investigation into resilience and preparedness](#). You can [read her report in full on our website](#).

The governments of the UK, Scotland and Wales and the Northern Ireland Executive were asked to respond to the recommendations of the report. All have now published their responses:

- [Response by the UK government](#)
- [Response by the Scottish government](#)
- [Response by the Welsh government](#)
- [Response by the Northern Ireland Executive](#)

You can watch a [recording of Baroness Hallett's statement when these responses were received on the Module 1 page of the website](#).

Update on Inquiry investigation into the impact of the pandemic on society

The [Inquiry's final investigation, Module 10](#), will look at the impact of the pandemic on society. The topics it will cover include the impact on:

- Bereaved people, including restrictions on arrangements for funerals and burials and post-bereavement support.
- The mental health and wellbeing of the general UK population, including sport, leisure and cultural institutions.
- The societal impact of restrictions on the hospitality, retail, travel and tourism industries
- The impact of restrictions on the closure and reopening of places of worship.
- Key workers, including the police service, fire and rescue workers, teachers, cleaners, transport workers, taxi and delivery drivers, funeral workers, security guards and public facing sales and retail workers.
- Groups of people whose circumstances made them vulnerable, including:
 - Those facing housing difficulties or who were homeless during the pandemic
 - Victims of domestic abuse
 - Those within the immigration or asylum system during the pandemic
 - Those within prisons or other places of detention
 - Those affected by the operation of the justice system.

In addition to hearings, the Inquiry is holding roundtable discussion events with organisations who represent some of the people and communities listed in the scope of Module 10. During roundtable discussions attendees will be asked questions about the impact of the pandemic on the groups that they represent and/or support. Reports will summarise each roundtable discussion and be entered into evidence in the Module 10 investigation. The legal teams will then be able to refer to these reports in the hearings as they question witnesses.



Each roundtable report will be published on our website after it has been formally entered into evidence and will include a list of the organisations who attended as well as the discussion points. [You can read more about our roundtables on our website.](#)

We held our first roundtable with representatives from a number of religious organisations in the UK on Thursday 20 February.



Above: our roundtable discussion with representatives of religious organisations in progress

Module 10 hearings will begin in early 2026.

Update following our final Every Story Matters public events

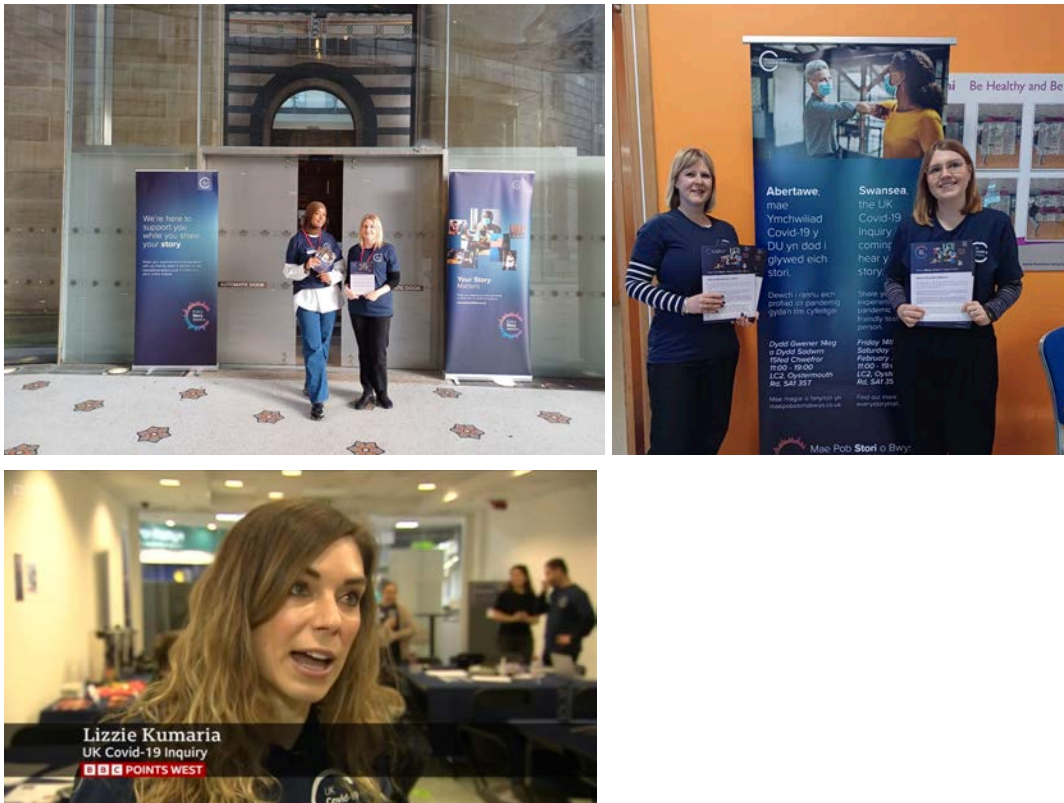
The Inquiry's listening exercise, [Every Story Matters](#), is our way of listening to the pandemic experiences of people across the UK. This gives as many people as possible the opportunity to share their pandemic story with the Inquiry and we have received over 56,000 stories to date.

Since late 2023 we have held 25 [Every Story Matters events](#) in towns and cities across the four nations of the UK. These have provided people with the opportunity to tell members of the Inquiry about their experiences of the pandemic in person, and in the communities where they live. These stories will contribute to [Every Story Matters records](#), which are important legal documents that assist Baroness Hallett and legal teams over the course of the Inquiry.



In February we visited Manchester, Bristol and Swansea for our final events and spoke to over 1200 people. We are very grateful to all those who took the time to speak with us.

If you didn't manage to attend one of our events and would like to share your story then [you can do so online](#) or by requesting a paper form by [contacting the Inquiry](#).



Clockwise from top left: the Inquiry team at our Every Story Matters event in Manchester; at the event in Swansea; our Head of Every Story Matters, Lizzie Kumaria, appearing at BBC Points West from our Bristol event