



## Message from Samantha Edwards, Director of Communications and Engagement



Welcome to our March newsletter, which reaches you following the [Covid-19 National Day of Reflection](#) earlier this month. On Sunday 9 March people across the UK remembered those who have lost their lives since the pandemic began and honoured the tireless work and acts of kindness shown during this unprecedented time.

Throughout the Inquiry we have been listening to those who were most impacted by the pandemic and next month will start dedicated listening events for people who lost loved ones during the pandemic. The information shared by attendees of these events will help us to further understand the impact of the pandemic on those who were bereaved as a result of Covid-19. More information about these events is below.

Hearings for our [Module 5 investigation into procurement during the pandemic](#) will conclude this week. We share information about some of the key subjects heard by our Chair, Baroness Hallett, during hearings for Module 5 over the past few weeks in this newsletter. Our public hearings will resume for [Module 7 \(Test, Trace and Isolate\)](#) on 12 May, followed by those for [Module 6 \(the care sector\)](#) on 30 June.

While work on Inquiry investigations is continuing, we are approaching the end of an important part of the Inquiry: [Every Story Matters](#). This has been our way of listening to the pandemic experiences of people across the UK and has given as many people as possible the opportunity to share their pandemic story with the Inquiry. So far, we have heard from more than 56,000 people and I would like to thank each and every one of you who have taken the time to share your story with us, whether online, via a paper form or at events in your town or city. Our [online form](#) is open until Friday 23 May so please share your story by then and get in contact with us at [contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk) if you would like us to send you a paper form to fill in.

Although Every Story Matters is coming to an end, organisations can tell us about the ways in which the pandemic affected those that they represent through our roundtable discussions, [which we announced in the previous newsletter](#). So far we have held roundtables with religious leaders and organisations representing a range of key workers. Information shared during these discussions will combine with the experiences we hear at our bereaved listening events to inform our [Module 10 investigation into the impact of the pandemic on society](#).

Thank you for your continued interest in the Inquiry. My colleagues and I hope to see some of you at our upcoming hearings in London in May and at our bereaved listening events across the UK.



## What we heard during Module 5 hearings

This month we have been hearing evidence in relation to procurement during the pandemic. By examining the challenges in procuring vital equipment, our aim is to improve the UK's response to future health emergencies.

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:

- Processes for procuring healthcare equipment and UK supplies of key equipment before and during the pandemic.
- The impact of the pandemic on supply chains.
- Coordination between the UK and devolved governments regarding procurement of key equipment.
- Alternative procurement routes including the "high priority lane".
- Challenges encountered with healthcare equipment specifications and quality control.
- The development of guidance and oversight for emergency procurement, including how safety concerns were identified and addressed while balancing the urgent need for supplies.



*Above (left to right): Dr Dame Emily Lawson (Interim Chief Operating Officer of NHS England), Professor John Manners-Bell (Expert on supply chains) and The Rt Hon Michael Gove (Former MP and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster)*

On Thursday 20 March the Chair of the Inquiry, Baroness Hallett, held a 'closed hearing' to hear evidence from the Cabinet Office and the Department of Health and Social Care witnesses about a company called PPE Medpro. This meant that the public could not attend for these proceedings and there was not the usual broadcast on YouTube and publication of a transcript. Core Participants and some journalists were able to attend.

The restrictions were imposed at the request of the National Crime Agency so the Inquiry can consider evidence without any danger of affecting future criminal prosecutions. The restrictions will be lifted as soon as the prospect of any prosecutions is resolved or prosecutions that are brought are concluded. Open hearings resumed on the afternoon of Thursday 20 March.

In the public hearings we screened an impact film featuring people from a variety of backgrounds who were impacted by the pandemic, many of whom experienced specific difficulties relating to procurement, such as obtaining PPE during the pandemic. All impact



films, including the one shown before Module 5 hearings, can be accessed via our [commemoration page](#). Please note that the films contain material you may find distressing.

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

## **Listening events for those who lost a loved one during the pandemic taking place across the UK**

We will be holding 10 listening events for bereaved people across the UK. We have worked with people who lost a loved one during the pandemic to plan these events, ensuring that they provide a suitable environment for bereaved people to share their experiences with the Inquiry.

The experiences we hear across all events will be read by our team of researchers and then summarised into an [Every Story Matters Record](#) about bereavement. This will then be used as evidence to the Inquiry to inform the [Module 10 investigation](#). This investigation looks at the impact of the pandemic on people across society, including people who lost a loved one.

### How can people sign up?

If you would like to attend an event, [please sign-up via our events form](#) to let us know which event you would like to attend.

We are particularly keen to reach people from a range of backgrounds, who have not shared their experience with us before.

There will be two listening events held online as well as in-person listening events in the locations listed below. Please note **the events marked with an asterisk do not currently have enough people signed up to go ahead** and we will need to cancel them if we do not have enough people wishing to attend. The Inquiry can pay reasonable travel and expenses for individuals who wish to attend an in-person bereaved listening event. There are spaces available at all events.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Exeter*	Monday 14 April	4.30pm-8.00pm
Northampton*	Tuesday 22 April	4.30pm-8.00pm
Sheffield*	Wednesday 30 April	4.30pm-8.00pm
Online	Thursday 1 May	4.30pm-8.00pm



Online	Thursday 8 May	4.30pm-8.00pm
Cardiff	Friday 16 May	2.00pm-5.30pm
Newcastle*	Wednesday 21 May	4.30pm-8.00pm
Brighton*	Thursday 29 May	4.30pm-8.00pm
Belfast*	Saturday 31 May	1.00pm-4.30pm
Glasgow	Wednesday 11 June	4.30pm-8.00pm

Places will be provided on a first come, first served basis so we cannot guarantee that every person who signs up will be given a place on each event.

### **Every Story Matters online form closing soon but there is still time to share your story**

We have been listening to people from all walks of life across the UK about how the pandemic has impacted their lives through our listening exercise, [Every Story Matters](#). People have shared their story through our online form, by post or at one of our events across the UK over the past 18 months. It has been the largest listening exercise of any UK public inquiry.

We will soon reach the stage where we need to stop collecting more stories so we can make sure they can be taken into account in our remaining investigations. Every Story Matters will close for new submissions on **Friday 23 May**. If you would like to share your story and have not yet done so, [you can do this online](#) or by requesting a paper form by [contacting the Inquiry](#).

Each story shared with the Inquiry helps us to understand how the pandemic affected different people and communities across the UK. These stories are looked at together, so we can identify any common themes in people's experiences, as well as any differences. All stories contribute to [Every Story Matters Records](#), which are important legal documents that assist Baroness Hallett and legal teams in the investigations.

### **Update following our roundtable discussion with key workers**

This month we have held the second of our roundtable discussions to support our [Module 10 investigation \(impact of the pandemic on society\)](#). This roundtable focused on the impact of the pandemic on key workers and we had a number of trade unions and professional bodies in attendance. A report that summarises each of our nine roundtable discussions will be published on our website when Module 10 hearings begin in early 2026.



*Above: one of the discussions taking place during our roundtable for Key Workers*

Our next roundtable discussion will be with organisations that support victims and survivors of domestic abuse to understand how pandemic restrictions impacted access to support services. You can [read more about our roundtables in the summary on our website](#).