



contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk

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Scottish Government
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By email only

19 March 2025

Dear Deputy First Minister,

UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry (“the Inquiry”) Module 1 Report on Resilience and Preparedness (Ref: 2500011690)

Thank you for your letter of 16 January and for publishing the Scottish Government’s response to my Module 1 report on Resilience and Preparedness within six months of my findings, as requested.

In my first report I found that the civil contingency structures within the UK government and devolved administrations and civil services failed to prepare the UK adequately for the Covid-19 pandemic. I set out ten recommendations that, when implemented together, would significantly reform how the UK government and devolved administrations prepare for whole-system civil emergencies.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government has accepted the principle of the majority of my recommendations and that work has begun to improve resilience and preparedness. It is encouraging to see that progress has been made in the simplification of structures and the use of data for informing future pandemics. I welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to take part in and contribute to the planning of future UK-wide pandemic response exercises, as well as its commitment to improved transparency and reporting.

I note that the Scottish Government finds value in external scrutiny and will review how scrutiny and challenge can be utilised as part of an improved approach to risk assessment. I look forward to the development of the Centre of Pandemic Preparedness and Scottish Sciences partnership and to the ‘scoping’ of additional use of red teaming and wider peer review of core plans for Scotland. However, reviews, plans and ‘scoping’ do not always


translate into meaningful action and I hope the Scottish government will implement my recommendations for external challenge when the results of the reviews and 'scoping' exercise are available.

As you know, Recommendation 10 proposes a UK-wide independent statutory body for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience. I note that the Scottish Government agrees with the necessity of independent strategic advice to support preparation for whole system civil emergencies, and welcome your commitment to working with the UK Government and other devolved governments to identify an appropriate mechanism which provides advice and challenge across the whole of the UK.

I have written to the UK Government outlining my expectation that the upcoming publication of the Resilience Review and updated Central Government Concept of Operations for Emergency Response and Recovery (HMG CONOPS) will set out firm progress towards meeting the aims of my recommendations, including recommendation 10.

Finally, I trust that all four nations of the UK will continue to work together to ensure the 'joined up' approach which will be necessary to deliver the radical reform required in the areas of planning and resilience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heather Hallett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Rt Hon Baroness (Heather) Hallett DBE