
IN THE MATTER OF THE UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

**WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF
THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (“DfE”)
FOR THE PRELIMINARY HEARING IN MODULE 8
ON 11 JUNE 2025**

1. As it made clear in its submissions to the first preliminary hearing, DfE welcomes the focus in Module 8 on children and young people and the impact of the pandemic on them. It is grateful for its designation as a Core Participant in Module 8, and the opportunity to participate and assist the Inquiry in its examination of the important issues raised in the Provisional Outline of Scope, as refined in the note provided by Counsel to the Inquiry (“CTI”) on 16 May 2025.
2. DfE is grateful to CTI and to the Solicitor to the Inquiry for their notes circulated in advance of the preliminary hearing, and in particular the list of issues set out by CTI, which it agrees will provide a helpful framework for the oral evidence. It welcomes the indication that the oral evidence will be structured in a way that enables consideration of how decisions were made, and will work with the Inquiry to help to facilitate this to the greatest extent possible.
3. DfE is committed to assisting the Inquiry in every way that it can and to taking an active role as a Core Participant in Module 8. It has to date provided 8 draft corporate witness statements, totalling 810 pages, responding to 2 rule 9 requests and disclosed over 3,000 documents in Module 8. It continues to work on the preparation of further corporate witness statements and to assist 8 individual recipients of rule 9 requests relating to work carried out in DfE, including the ministers referred to at paragraph 19 of CTI’s note.
4. DfE continues to be acutely conscious of the impacts that the pandemic and associated measures had, and continue to have, on children and young people. These are relevant to all areas of its work. It has provided the Inquiry with detailed analysis conducted by its own analysts, and looks forward to contributing to the Inquiry’s consideration of these issues,

and to considering any further insight provided by the expert reports that the Inquiry has commissioned.

5. Following the indication given at the first preliminary hearing, DfE accepts that the shorthand of “closing” schools to most children is in common use, and does not press the Inquiry to adopt different terminology. It does however reiterate that it is important to recognise the enormous contribution and dedication of staff in education settings, children’s social care services and elsewhere who worked throughout the pandemic to support, educate and otherwise mitigate the impacts on children and young people, including by keeping settings open throughout for the most vulnerable children. It also looks forward to working with the Inquiry and other Core Participants to understand whether and how such work might be made more effective in the event of a future pandemic.
6. DfE does not intend to make oral submissions at the preliminary hearing, as it does not take any issue with the content of the notes that have been circulated. It will however attend the preliminary hearing through leading counsel and will seek to provide any assistance or clarification that may be helpful.