



Final determination on attendance of a witness at the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 8 Hearings

Introduction

1. On 17 September 2025, I received medical evidence indicating that Ms Kirsty Williams, Former Minister for Education, Welsh Government, should be excused from participation in the work of the Inquiry due to ill health.
2. Having considered this evidence carefully, I indicated I was minded to excuse Ms Williams from attending the Inquiry to give oral evidence during the forthcoming Module 8 hearing or at a later stage in this Inquiry. In my provisional determination, I invited Core Participants to make any submissions by 4pm on Monday 22 September 2025.

Final decision

3. The Inquiry received written submissions from the Children's Commissioner for Wales who, while sympathetic to Ms Williams' personal circumstances, noted she had not seen the medical evidence or any other information regarding Ms Williams' health. She said that in the absence of such evidence or information, she could not form a full view of the request or make alternative suggestions to secure Ms Williams' oral evidence.
4. She also emphasised the importance of Ms Williams' oral evidence in relation to the impact of the pandemic on children in Wales. Consequently, she was minded to object to Ms Williams' non-attendance.
5. Having considered these representations carefully together with the medical evidence relating to Ms Williams' health, I am satisfied that there are no measures the Inquiry could put in place to enable her to give oral evidence before the end of the Module 8 hearing and the Inquiry's programme of hearings more generally.
6. I understand the importance of Ms Williams' evidence to the issues being investigated in Module 8, and note that Ms Williams has provided a written statement which will be adduced in evidence during the Module 8 hearing. While I would wish to hear from her orally in addition if this were possible, it is not. I will therefore hear oral testimony from Mark Drakeford (former First Minister for Wales) on 22 October 2025. He will give evidence on some of the matters which would have been put to Ms Williams and while this does not diminish the importance of Ms Williams' evidence, he is "the next best" witness, as the Children's Commissioner for Wales has agreed.
7. Accordingly, I confirm my decision to excuse Ms Williams from giving oral evidence to this Inquiry.

The Right Honourable Baroness Hallett

Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry

24 September 2025