

Witness Name: Kate Joseph

Statement No.: 2

Exhibits: KJ/001 – KJ/006

Dated: 21 October 2025

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF KATE JOSEPH

I, Kate Joseph, will say as follows: -

1. I make this statement in response to a request from the UK COVID-19 Inquiry (“the Inquiry”) dated 4 July 2025 made under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 asking for a witness statement for Module 9 of the Inquiry, which examines the economic interventions taken by the UK government and the Devolved Administrations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (“the Rule 9 Request”). This is the second statement that I have provided to the Inquiry.
2. From 9 November 2020 until 28 February 2022, I served as the Covid Response Director in HM Treasury (“the Treasury”), and co-director of the Strategy, Planning and Budget Directorate (“SPB”). My contemporaneous understanding of the virus within the context of my role begins in November 2020, when I took up post.
3. I have developed the below statement based on my personal recollection of events and the decisions that I took. I have exhibited key documents throughout this statement whenever they answer, support or illustrate matters addressed, or provide important context.
4. I am currently the Director General, Economic Security and Trade Relations (ESTR) at the Department for Business and Trade. I have held this position since March 2024. I took up this role following my position as an International Economic Security

Director in the Treasury. Prior to this, I coordinated the Treasury's involvement on work regarding Ukraine from February 2022. I am providing this statement in relation to the time I spent as the Director of the Treasury's Covid Response Team coordinating the Department's work on Covid from November 2020 to February 2022. In this role I supported the Chancellor and Executive Management Board on the Treasury's response to the pandemic.

5. Prior to those roles, I worked in a range of government departments on domestic and foreign policy, including the Cabinet Office, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), 10 Downing Street and the Department for International Development (DFID). Before joining the Civil Service, I worked for the United Nations and other international and non-governmental organisations.

PART A: Role and Responsibilities

6. As stated above, from November 2020 until February 2022 I was the Treasury's Director for Covid Response. I was brought into the Treasury specifically to coordinate its response to the pandemic. I led SPB's Covid-19 Response Team, and over time, joined Dan-York-Smith in co-leading SPB.
7. In my role, I was responsible for providing synthesised advice on Covid response to the Chancellor and other Treasury ministers. This advice included analysis on the economic impacts, business impacts, public services, costs, risks, distributional effects, international experience and other pertinent issues. I was also responsible for leading the department's relationship with, and the Treasury's input into, the central decision-making processes led by the Cabinet Office ("CO") and 10 Downing Street ("No10").
8. I provided central coordination of the Treasury's policy making on the response to the pandemic, including chairing the Covid Response Board and ensuring that the department's response was adequately resourced. I made sure that all relevant teams and groups in the Treasury fed into advice for ministers and senior officials. However, policy making on specific programmes of work was undertaken in relevant teams.
9. The focus of my role was to liaise with CO, the Department of Health and Social Care ("DHSC") and No10 on the Government's strategy on restrictions. Over time, my role

included more coordination of advice on economic support, primarily to ensure that decisions on continuation or closure were appropriately sequenced with wider Treasury and government strategy and decision-making.

PART B: Director of Strategy, Planning and Budget Group ('SPB')

10. I cannot comment on the extent to which the role of Director of the Covid Response Team may have changed relative to the pre-pandemic period as the role did not exist prior to the pandemic and was created in response to this specific event.
11. The Covid Response Team was responsible for synthesising Covid-related advice to the Chancellor and Treasury ministers. This brought together analysis on the economic impacts, business impacts, public services, costs, risks, distributional effects, international experience and other pertinent issues. I briefed the Chancellor on a frequent basis, starting from my first day in post. Meetings were more or less on a weekly basis. The frequency of contact would naturally vary based on the circumstances. For example, meetings would inevitably become more regular during periods when decisions were needed on the Government's strategy or future direction of the economic response. I consider that I had a good working relationship with the Chancellor.
12. I joined the Department in my role in November 2020. My line manager during this period was Beth Russell and I worked closely with all senior officials who comprised the Executive Management Board ("EMB"). I attended the morning EMB meetings and regularly provided advice for more formal meetings. I also chaired the cross-Treasury Covid Response Board and worked closely with senior officials across the department. My role also involved collaborative working with the CO, No10 and DHSC. I also worked with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Department for Education (DfE) on occasion. I often represented the Treasury at cross-Whitehall meetings on Covid response. I did not have significant regular contact with the Devolved Administrations, stakeholder groups or end-users as these would have been conducted by the relevant policy teams.
13. Overall I had positive and well-functioning relationships with colleagues in other government departments, and I believe this was true of the Treasury as a whole.

14. As previously noted, I commenced my role in the Department in November 2020. By this point in the pandemic, coordination among the departments was well established, particularly between CO, DHSC and the Treasury. My team had a close and collaborative relationship with the Cabinet Office. As structures and processes developed further, collaboration had become stronger and more effective in managing departmental concerns. As I discuss in Part B of this statement, the processes used to coordinate our response improved steadily from late 2020 and continued to improve into 2021 and onwards.
15. The Treasury was centrally involved in cross-government decision-making through the Chancellor's membership of the Quad, Covid Strategy Committee ("Covid(S)") and ("Covid(O)"). Daily communication by officials through a range of meetings was a feature of this period. During January and February 2021, the Treasury worked closely with the Covid-19 Taskforce and other government departments on developing what became the February 2021 *Roadmap* for exiting lockdown, including providing input on the economic impacts of different NPIs to inform the sequencing of easing restrictions **[KJ/001/ INQ000610848]**.
16. Sharing and developing the economic understanding across government in response to the pandemic was led by the Economics Group in the Treasury, but was supported by the C19 Response Team. I worked closely with the CO and DHSC on shared analysis, which included modelling the impact of potential restrictions and vaccines on both the pandemic and the economy. Over time this modelling was brought together in a shared methodology **[KJ/002/INQ000609883]**.
17. Decisions on how the analysis was shared with other government departments were taken by the Chancellor. However, economic analysis was used to inform government plans on managing the pandemic and the use of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) throughout my time in post, particularly the February 2021 Roadmap, the Social Distancing Review and the use of restrictions on international travel **[KJ/003/INQ000182182]**.
18. I have been asked to comment on what have been identified as the key economic objectives of the UK Government:
 - a) Prevent unemployment and support living standards;
 - b) Prevent viable businesses from failing;

- c) Protect the most vulnerable and avoid unfair impacts
 - d) Prevent unemployment and support living standards;
 - e) Ensuring economic activity was consistent with NPIs and enabling rapid recovery once restrictions were lifted;
 - f) Maintaining value for money and fiscal discipline.
19. These key economic objectives are discussed in detail in the Treasury's Module 9 corporate statement. Whilst I was loosely involved in helping to refine the economic objectives through my day-to-day work, I was not personally involved in agreeing them in the first place. These objectives were owned collectively by Ministers and the senior leadership team.
20. At the time of the pandemic, the Treasury's focus was on how clearly these objectives could be communicated and met. Since the pandemic these objectives have, in my view, seemed to stand the test of time and therefore I would argue they were the right ones to pursue. The Treasury was focused on ensuring that, consistent with the need to protect public health, the economic impact of restrictions was factored into decision-making, the use of NPIs was managed carefully, and the impact on individuals and businesses was mitigated as far as possible.
21. The Covid-19 Response Team was responsible for ensuring that these objectives were aligned and delivered in a coordinated way. The team was located in SPB, which sits at the heart of the Treasury and leads on the department's overall strategy, resourcing and prioritisation, and acts as the Treasury's central coordination function. SPB also supports the EMB in setting strategic direction for the Treasury, working with and alongside groups across the department to bring together the Treasury's departmental objectives into a coherent strategy. How this was achieved in relation to the pandemic response is discussed in the following section of my statement. These objectives, as with departmental initiatives or information were disseminated through management chains meetings and discussions within teams. I discussed them regularly with colleagues, line managers and counterparts across government.

Dedicated Covid-19 Team

22. As stated above, the Covid-19 Response Team led and coordinated the department's work on Covid. The team was established early in the pandemic and

situated in SPB. The volume of work required of the Covid Response Team had increased steadily between March and November 2020, which meant that Dan York-Smith's dual role as Director of both the SPB and the Covid Response Team was split, and a new Director role created. I then co-led the Directorate with Dan York-Smith from November until February 2022.

23. The Covid Response Team took overall responsibility for bringing the economic objectives referenced above together into a coherent strategy. The team commissioned inputs from other groups in the Treasury to feed into overarching advice for the Chancellor and worked with the Chancellor's office to ensure that advice was properly sequenced. The team also ensured that teams across the Treasury were informed about wider government strategy and potential milestones so this could be factored into decision-making and planning. So, for example, when the arrival of Omicron variant meant that some restrictions were reintroduced in late 2021, the Covid Response Team worked with teams across the Treasury to develop a package of support for affected businesses.
24. Work on the response to the pandemic was front and centre for the Treasury throughout this period but demands for resource varied over time. The Treasury already had a flexible cross-Treasury resource pool – the Strategic Projects Team – which was designed to provide rapid support to the highest priority areas of work across the department. This team also sits in SPB, and the allocation of this flexible resource is reviewed on a quarterly basis. Because it was co-located with the Covid Response team, the two teams were able to work closely together on the allocation of resource. The Covid Response Team advised the leadership of the projects team on resource pressures across the department and also made use of some project staff itself (although most team staff were permanent located in the team). The existence of the Strategic Projects team meant the Treasury could respond quickly and move people with crisis and project experience into key roles from March 2020 onwards, and this stood the department in good stead later.
25. The team was comprised of between 20-40 staff (the total varied over time) divided into three branches: Effective NPIs, Impact of NPIs and Economic Support. I was the director who oversaw the team's work and liaised with the rest of the Treasury's senior leadership.

26. By the time I arrived at the Department, the team had been set up and was well staffed, with good relationships across the whole of the Department. There was a focus on maintaining this through the peaks and troughs of the pandemic. One challenge that was experienced was the pace and pressure of the pandemic and government response. Prior to my arrival, two high performing deputy directors had been recruited to lead the team, and the right skills and expertise had been brought in, representing a good mix of people who understand Treasury processes and structures, could think creatively and who were comfortable with complex data – and gaps in data. Over time, there were some exceptionally busy periods and, later on in 2021, some periods when things were more stable. Double running the Deputy Director role, and the use of flexible project resource allowed us to manage this effectively. When one deputy director left in the summer of 2021, the leadership shifted to one deputy director only. However, in late autumn 2021 the situation deteriorated, so the additional deputy director role was reinstated on a temporary basis. This is a good example of how the team and the leadership were able to flex over time to meet new challenges.
27. Before I was recruited, the Covid Response Team worked for Dan York-Smith, the Director of SPB. With the volume of covid-related work ever increasing and Dan's capacity becoming stretched, it was decided that the Director role should be split. I assume this decision was taken by EMB. A competition was launched to recruit a new Director and I applied; following a competitive process I was appointed by Beth Russell in September 2020 and moved across from the Cabinet Office to take over the role in November 2020. Dan was then able to revert to his day to day work as Director of SPB, especially the preparation of fiscal events. Because of the close link between the economic support schemes and the fiscal events, however, Dan retained overall coordination of the schemes for around six months, after which it gradually moved over to me. We continued to work together on leadership, management and policy support.
28. Advice was provided to the Chancellor on a regular basis. Often this was weekly or even daily if the situation was changing rapidly. The team ensured that it was synthesising advice and providing an overall picture. Analysis was important here as the Chancellor had a strong focus on evidence. The Economics Group was an integral part of this, and we had a close working relationship with them in order to provide analysis as part of the advice.

29. It was important that the Chancellor was able to see the full implications of decisions he took on the government's Covid strategy, restrictions, pharmaceutical interventions, spending and economic support programmes. It was the responsibility of the Covid Response Team to avoid working in silos. All advice to the Chancellor on Covid or Covid response was coordinated by the Covid Response Team so that the Chancellor did not look at specific programmes in isolation. The foundations of this were ensuring that all advice considered the implications for economic support and the government's economic position.
30. The Chancellor was interested in international comparators from the beginning. The Covid Response Team coordinated inputs from the Treasury's International Group in order to provide him with these assessments. International comparisons were also included in Economics Group's analysis where relevant [KJ/004/INQ000656238].
31. By the time I arrived in post this system was working well. Teams across the Treasury understood the role of the central team and an account management approach in the Covid Response Team ensured that policy teams knew who their Covid Response Team lead was and were able to work effectively with them. Of course, it was important to maintain and nurture these relationships, and to provide regular feedback to the department so that lines of communication were maintained. The Covid Response Board, attended by relevant directors and deputy directors, helped ensure this was the case.
32. The Board was stood down in March 2021 following publication of the February 2021 Roadmap and Spring Budget 2021 as the pandemic was entering a different phase. It was replaced by Directors' meetings which were convened as required and ensured coordination across the department. Attendance at the Board had grown too big to be useful so it was decided a more focused group of Directors who remained closely involved in Covid response should form the core governance for the department. The wider Board was more appropriate for the early stages of the pandemic when all teams were involved, and information needed to be shared widely across the Treasury. As the pandemic progressed, and as the response became more structured, the wider group was less useful. Information sharing could be done through normal channels. A more focused decision-making body was needed, hence the creation of the Directors' Group.

33. Across Whitehall, we worked closely and on a daily basis with CO colleagues. This included the February 2021 Road Map for exiting lockdown, which was led by the CO Covid-19 Taskforce but was a joint piece of work with DHSC and the Treasury.
34. There was an important four-way relationship between the Treasury, CO, No10 and DHSC. Each would have individual and group discussions, with CO holding the ring on those conversations. CO colleagues tended to share proposals separately with the two relevant departments and then bring comments and inputs together to share with the group. This worked extremely effectively, and CO colleagues should be commended for creating a constructive and productive environment for this work.
35. A shared picture of the analysis was increasingly important in making this work. This was not always easy to secure and took sustained engagement from analysts across the departments, with CO's analytical team convening. A critical step was using the same modelling of the path of the virus; the roadmap steps were linked to changes in the health data which gave everyone confidence that the right approach was being followed.
36. My team and I also worked closely with DHSC on travel restrictions, which changed frequently throughout my time in post. Again, CO convened most of the work. Other relevant departments which with we worked closely on travel restrictions were the Department for Transport ("DfT") and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ("FCDO"). Building a shared understanding of the spread of variants across the world, and the impact of restrictions on the path of the virus in the UK, was an important part of this work.
37. The Treasury also maintained close links with other economic departments, especially BEIS and DCMS. Members of my team also spoke regularly to these departments but I had less personal interaction as this was mainly handled by the relevant spending director in the Treasury, who tended to have a fuller picture of the relationship including spending issues. The Treasury worked closely with HMRC colleagues on the design and implementation of the support schemes. Contacts with Devolved Administrations were largely handled by the Devolved Administrations team, with which we worked closely.

38. The Chancellor determined what was shared with other government departments, supported by advice from EMB and the Chief Economist. The Covid Response Team facilitated the sharing of information in accordance with his decisions.
39. I recall sharing more analysis with government departments as time went on during the pandemic. Economic analysis was also shared with the Office for Budget Responsibility ("OBR"), and they would then produce assessments in support of fiscal events. These were based on deliberate scenarios that had been agreed between the Treasury and the OBR, which ensured there was greater confidence in sharing this data. At the outset of the pandemic, there was inevitably limited data to inform any analysis, so there were risks associated with sharing analysis if it was to be relied upon by others. The availability of data naturally increased during the course of the pandemic and so it was possible and more useful to share the resulting analysis.
40. My strong view is that decision-making and advisory processes across government improved significantly over time and by early 2021 were handled in a structured and clear way. As someone watching from outside in the early phase of the pandemic it was clear that different approaches were tried; the pandemic was unlike anything the government had had to deal with before and existing crisis management structures were not sufficient. But over time this got a lot better. Two key areas that improved and which should be replicated if ever a similar situation were faced are:
- a) The role CO, and specially the Covid-19 Taskforce, played in convening a small group of departments to agree – and stick to – a clear strategic plan. All relevant departments contributed to the Roadmap and it was signed off at Cabinet minister level. It was then largely followed to the letter because there were clear steps, and a clear process to follow in deciding whether the conditions for those steps had been met. Not all situations will require a similar response but this worked effectively and we should learn from it.
 - b) In the early months of the pandemic it was difficult to develop a shared understanding of the data and what it was telling us. There was a perception that health experts and economic analysts had opposing objectives, but in reality this was not the case (economic wellbeing is closely tied to public health and vice versa). This fact that the data was patchy and confidence was low also made it more difficult to come to a shared view. Over time, CO,

DHSC and the Treasury developed a shared understanding of the data. This was supported by the establishment of the Joint Biosecurity Centre (“JBC”). As far as I can recall, the data dashboards produced by the JBC and CO helped with this, as did a shared model of the path of the virus which CO and others developed. The value of a shared data picture was absolutely critical and is a lesson already learnt (and re-used) within government.

PART C: Initial Response to the Pandemic

41. My contemporaneous understanding of the virus within the context of my role as Director of the Covid Response Team within the Treasury begins in November 2020, when I took up post. For this reason, I cannot provide any answers to the Inquiry’s questions relating to the department’s initial response to the pandemic.

Part D: Ensuring economic activity was consistent with NPIs

42. Overall, during my time in post, the Treasury received timely information about changes to NPIs. Obviously, there were times when decisions had to be made quickly but this was communicated as quickly as possible to the Treasury. In most cases, decisions about NPIs were taken together so the Treasury was involved in the decision-making. This was particularly the case once the Roadmap and subsequent similar documents were agreed.
43. Prior to this there were times when decisions were taken at short notice and the Treasury had to be updated later. Whilst this was not ideal, it was a function of the overall situation and the lag in useful data.
44. Decisions on overseas travel were sometimes taken at short notice without sufficient consultation with the Treasury, FCDO and DFT. Again, this improved over time once a more effective system was in place, and once CO were able to coordinate decision-making across government. Again, access to reliable data remained a challenge and sometimes drove short turnaround times.
45. As explained in the Treasury’s corporate statement for this Module, it was a priority for Treasury officials to have a detailed understanding of the health picture and the likely path of the virus, particularly given the speed with which the public health

position evolved and the interaction between that, the NPIs, and the need for economic policy to evolve alongside the government's public health strategy. Across government, epidemiological modelling was a vital tool to understand the range of possible outcomes for the path of the virus.

46. Treasury officials used the information shared at scientific committees such as the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) Gold meetings to inform briefing or advice for the Chancellor and other Treasury ministers ahead of the cross-government ministerial decision-making meetings. It also informed internal policy development, such as when to ramp up contingency work on economic support. Treasury officials from Economics Group attended SAGE meetings and I or a delegate attended JBC Gold meetings. Data from other committees such as the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling ("SPI-M") was also used, although the Treasury did not attend SPI-M. This was used in combination with the range of modelling and analytical approaches undertaken by the Treasury throughout this period, including epi-macro and supply-based modelling, to understand the evolution of the virus and economic behaviour, and the response to government policies to support the economy.
47. The pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge to the way in which the government used data and analysis to inform policy-making. It is not surprising that it took some time to find robust ways to bring public health and economic evidence and analysis together, and to integrate in ways that could be understood and interrogated by officials and ministers. Although I was not in post in the early months of the pandemic, it is clear from evidence presented to the Inquiry and from what was happening at the time that this was a challenge, but also that it improved over time. Initially, there were no structures in place for gathering data on Covid cases beyond those that were admitted to hospital. Data collection only improved with the availability of testing, and the test and trace systems. It also improved with the establishment of data collection initiatives such as the ONS programme. Before this, overall numbers of infected people were unclear, and it was certainly impossible to spot increases and decreases in infection rates in real time.
48. Scenario building was also a challenge as little was known about infectiousness, transmissibility and how it was affected by human behaviour. Even at the most basic level, medical colleagues did not know how it was transmitted. The path of the

virus also changed over time with the pharmaceutical interventions, particularly vaccines, so this required further change in the way evidence and analysis was conducted.

49. On the economic side, lockdowns and other restrictions on economic activity were new; we had no data about how the businesses and individuals might adapt, so the economic impact was unclear in the early months. Only as more experience was gathered was it possible to predict how the economy would react, although this also shifted and changed over time as adaptability increased.

50. By the time I arrived in post, the Treasury had already used a number of different tools and models to understand the impact on the economy, and over the summer had developed epi-macro modelling to look more closely at how virus scenarios would impact on the economy. Although I do not recall the exact timings, we refined this tool over time and in particular looked at ways in which in the rollout of the vaccine programme might impact on the path of the virus, the need for restrictions, and the impact on the economy – and then on economic support contingency planning. It relied on epidemiological input from the committees mentioned above, as well as experts at Warwick University and Imperial College (who also sat on those committees). This analysis was scenario based and therefore subject to limitations.

51. Following the emergence of the Alpha and Beta variants in late 2020, in 2021 the JBC developed a simple variants of concern model to help understand emerging variants and their interaction with vaccination and NPIs. Treasury officials provided input to quality assure this model, alongside others, and later had the ability to run the model. The model was also used to understand the path of the Omicron variant in late 2021.

52. This showed that the way in which public health and economic data was integrated and used improved significantly over time and was helpful in taking more informed, predictable and timely decisions about restrictions and economic support.

53. I have been asked how any tension between economic policy and public health policy changed between the first lockdown and the second and third. I was only in post from around the time of the second lockdown so I can't comment on how it changed prior to this. By the time I arrived in post, economic policy was reasonably

well integrated into decision-making in government, although across government we had to ensure that we worked closely together in order to maintain and strengthen this. It is also fair to say that the impact of the virus and of restrictions became better understood over time, and there was increasing recognition that lockdowns should be as limited as possible, and lifted as quickly as possible, in order to minimise economic impacts (not least because economic impacts also have public health effects), as well as wider impacts on mental and physical health. The covid pandemic was first and foremost a health emergency and the Treasury was always cognisant of and responsive to that fact.

54. Over time, the CO Taskforce also created a more robust framework for factoring in economic objectives. This was particularly the case with the 2021 Roadmap, which contained agreed indicators of public health and was based on the understanding that restrictions should have minimal impact on economic activity while protecting public health.
55. It was also the case that as businesses and consumers adapted and gained confidence from government support, subsequent lockdowns resulted in a less severe decline in economic activity. While the lockdowns inflicted significant direct economic damage, they limited the spread of the virus and Government policies to support businesses and workers helped mitigate the impact and reduced the potential for long-term economic scarring.

Part E: Data, Advice, Analysis and Modelling

56. My team was not responsible for gathering, analysing or interpreting data. Rather, the Covid Response Team was a central repository for information, such as findings from the Economics Group which were then provided alongside advice to ministers and officials as well as other departments, including the CO.
57. My role was predominantly to oversee the synthesis and effective coordination of information pertinent to the pandemic response from teams across the department to the relevant official, minister or other government department.
58. In this regard, I can only provide the Inquiry with limited insight as to the extent to which our data infrastructure was sufficiently robust, the adequacy of available data

and the suitability of the sources from which data was gathered. I have set out my views on this above. As a representative of the Treasury at meetings with the CO and in meetings with the Chancellor I did however have a reasonably high-level understanding of the advice produced and the methods used to inform this advice. I have therefore included some responses below to the Inquiry's questions relating to data, analysis and modelling, insofar as I can.

59. The Treasury undertook a range of analytical approaches, working with others across government and economic bodies inside and outside of the public sector, to understand the evolution of the virus, the evolution of economic behaviour, the response to government policies to support the economy, and how these changed over time. It drew on a variety of sources, including some that were better established, and a number that were external. This included the interpretation of increasing and more rapidly available data and a range of modelling and scenario-based approaches, such as epi-macro and supply-based modelling. These fed into cross-government and Treasury decision making. I have explained some of this above. Further details are set out in detail in the Treasury's corporate evidence and as such I do not have anything further to add.
60. As far as I know, it was the Chancellor who took decisions about whether to engage external support or advice, and requests for analysis were decided by him. I do not recall specific requests that were denied, but I do know that over time, the JBC brought together departments behind joint modelling of the path of the virus.
61. During the pandemic, SAGE's various sub-groups, including SPI-M, SPI-B and NERVTAG, as well as the JBC, also played a role in explaining public health data and producing associated modelling which Treasury officials often incorporated into briefings and advice. These groups drew on expertise which did not exist extensively within government, with SAGE meetings attended by experts from across the scientific spectrum, including those within academia and industry. As explained above, by the time I was in post as Director of the Covid Response Team, many of these meetings were attended by Treasury officials in an observer capacity to ensure the work of the department could remain informed by and aligned at all times with the latest thinking within the scientific and epidemiological community.
62. The Treasury also discussed economic analysis with the Bank of England and OBR, and routinely used modelling produced by other institutions to inform advice

to ministers. Internationally, the Treasury engaged with various organisations to our understanding of the virus and its impact, including for example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”) and the International Monetary Fund (“IMF”).

63. Overall, it is my recollection that the Treasury often drew on expertise from outside of the department and that engagement with external organisations was sufficiently regular to ensure it had a meaningful impact on the advice and briefings provided to ministers.
64. As stated above, the Chancellor was ultimately responsible for determining what information could be shared outside of the department. My role was to facilitate the sharing of such information in line with the Chancellor’s decisions. I cannot recall any concerns being raised to me in relation to a failure to share information with other government departments whilst I was in post.
65. Over time, and as the structures necessary for increased cross departmental collaboration evolved and became more sophisticated, the rate and regularity of information sharing certainly increased and became more automatic. The extent to which co-working across departments was possible at pace also increased, facilitated by increased access to various processes. This improvement came as a result of better relationships between departments, and having had the time and space to develop new structures and processes that worked. There was also closer alignment between the government’s public health objectives and economic objectives. The Chancellor always recognised the primacy of public health objectives and these always took precedence, but there was an increased recognition that the impact on the economy should be kept at a minimum consistent with public health outcomes.
66. For example, the Treasury worked alongside the JBC on a ‘toy model’ to help understand emerging variants and their interaction with vaccination and NPIs. This was produced to allow officials across government to understand how the characteristics of new variants (including transmissibility and severity) could change the path of the virus. Officials across government (including from the Treasury) provided some analytical input to quality assure the model, and feedback on which features would be most useful for policy makers. No concerns of this model were

raised with me at the time. This is one example of cross-departmental collaboration which resulted in the production of a widely usable and versatile modelling tool.

67. I understand questions have been raised by the Inquiry about the extent to which economic analysis can or should be published, but this is ultimately a decision for the Chancellor at the time. Sharing Treasury data and projections, including downside scenarios, create risks to the economy and have the potential to be self-fulfilling by generating financial instability and reducing jobs and investment. Decisions on sharing analysis are difficult and cannot be taken lightly.

Part F: Microeconomic Policy

68. Whilst I had some high-level involvement, I did not lead on the design or development of any of the policies identified to me by the Inquiry. I was not involved with policies such as the business loans schemes, CCFF, business rate relief, changes to the insolvency rules, Kickstart, Restart, JETS, support for the voluntary and community sector, or support for transport such as the Emergency Measures Agreements and Transport for London. I was not in post for the introduction of Eat Out To Help Out. In relation to the changes for Statutory Sick Pay, most of the debate on this policy happened before my involvement with the Treasury. On occasion it would come up as an issue in relation to test and trace payments to self-isolate, with which I did have some involvement, but I was not involved in policy design.
69. Where I was involved, my role was to coordinate the provision of advice to ministers and the Chancellor, to help to ensure timings were aligned with wider decision making on NPIs and to ensure the implementation of a specific scheme or change to its design was commissioned at the appropriate time.
70. I recall taking part in policy discussions around some of the more significant interventions, such as CJRS and SEISS, but my role was mainly to ensure that decisions remained informed and anchored by wider policy decision making on Covid and the expected lifespan of existing or future NPIs, and to ensure policy advice on CJRS, SEISS, Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit took account of the current public health situation and related restrictions, and the modelling of the

future path of the viruses. It also needed to respond to the latest cross-government plans, led by the CO Taskforce, to limit the path of the virus, for example through the February 2021 roadmap [KJ/001/INQ000610848]. It was crucial to ensure that support schemes provided the necessary support while restrictions were in place, but also that they tapered gradually as restrictions eased. I was therefore part of the discussions on the timing of the schemes, but did not play a role in decisions on coverage, scale and scope. I was present for some, but not all of the discussions on these aspects, and was not involved in the original decision or set up of the schemes as I was not in post then.

Part G: Inequalities and vulnerable groups

71. Covid-19 strategy, including policy concerning socially and economically vulnerable groups, was always led by the Chancellor. As discussed above, my role focused on synthesising and coordinating the Treasury's input into the overall Covid-19 response. This included ensuring that impacts on vulnerable groups were included in advice and taken into account in decision making on policy choices. However, this advice was largely drafted by relevant policy teams.
72. As set out in the Treasury's corporate statement, from the outset of the pandemic, officials within the Treasury had access to in-house guidance to support teams in fulfilling their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty ("PSED"). To ensure compliance with the PSED, the Treasury adjusted its own internal equality impact guidance for use in response to the pandemic, for equality impact assessments being conducted from March 2020 to June 2022. These adjustments were made to ensure the Treasury's guidance materials reflected updated central guidance.
73. Treasury policy work, equalities issues, and any differential impacts a policy may have on a person with one or more of the nine protected characteristics must be considered during the development process, and possible mitigating actions must also be identified and considered. The Treasury's Equalities Policy team provide advice and guidance to policy teams in the department to support this process, as set out in paragraph 435a [KJ/005/INQ000657980]. The team worked closely with

the Treasury's Equality & Living Standards Analysis team, which was formed during the pandemic with the aim of building departmental capability to assess impacts on individuals with protected characteristics. Separately, a Distributional Analysis team was (and still is) responsible for advising policy leads and ministers on the impact of tax, welfare, and public spending changes on households across the income distribution.

74. With regards to policy areas not owned by the Treasury, as is the case for health and social care, the relevant department is responsible for conducting equalities impact assessments pursuant to the PSED general duty.
75. The Treasury acknowledged from an early stage that less well-off households were "*particularly vulnerable to the economic shock*" and that under 25-year olds, women, people from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities would all be more greatly impacted by restrictions. In addition, sectors such as hospitality, manufacturing, construction and tourism would all be greatly affected. Consideration was given to 'at risk' and other vulnerable groups within economic decision making, resulting hospitality focused economic interventions as well as financial support for those self-isolating.

Part H: Long Covid

76. As far as I can recall Long Covid was considered in the ongoing refinement of the economic support schemes. However, the impacts of Long Covid only became apparent over time, and as such it is my assumption that it was covered by standing policy teams in the Treasury as part of their ongoing work on funding for the NHS and other public health bodies.
77. There were points at which teams would share analysis and thinking in relation to Long Covid, for example in March 2021, the Economic Risks group upon which I commented [KJ/006/INQ000657981]. The health spending team led on the interaction between Long Covid and the Treasury's responsibilities, and I was usually included in readouts and briefings. As previously stated, our role was to synthesis the provision of advice to the Chancellor and where this was provided by policy teams, we would include it.

Part I: Analysis and Reflections

78. Overall, it is my view that the Treasury played a critical role in ensuring that objectives around public health and economic support were balanced and reinforcing. Expert analysis and advice was used to prepare robust economic support programmes, and to refine and ultimately wind down those programmes at the appropriate time. Decisions and choices on how to do this were hard, and although we had an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the path of the virus over time, data remained imperfect. The Treasury also took its responsibilities around evidence and analysis seriously, ensuring that the best possible data was used, sharing analysis with other government departments when appropriate, but also ensuring that analysis based on imperfect information was treated sensitively and carefully.

79. I believe there is much to learn from what departments did well, not so well, and what improved over time. As I have explained above and in my earlier corporate statement, this was particularly the case with the February 2021 Roadmap. It is also true of the economic support schemes, which were set up in difficult circumstances but refined, changed and scrutinised over time to ensure that they were as responsive as possible to the economic needs of the population.

80. Aside from oral communication in meetings, and written communication through email and submissions, I often used Microsoft Teams to communicate with team members and other colleagues in the Treasury. This did not extend to decision-making, which was done through formal channels. Teams messages are not retained. Occasionally I used WhatsApp to communicate with cross-government colleagues, but this focused on logistics, and out of hours communication on how and when we would complete work.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Personal Data

Signed: _____

Dated: 21 October 2025