



## UK Covid-19 Inquiry February 2026 newsletter

### Message from Ben Connah, Secretary to the Inquiry



Welcome to the February newsletter. Today is the first day of hearings for our [Module 10 investigation into the impact of the pandemic on society](#), which will run until Thursday 5 March. This investigation will explore the impact of the pandemic on the population of the UK, with particular focus on key workers, the most vulnerable and the bereaved. It will also examine the pandemic's impact on places of worship, community-level sport and leisure, and on the hospitality, retail, travel and tourism sectors.

As you will know, we have spent the last three years listening - this Module draws on the most extensive public engagement the Inquiry has undertaken. We have heard from tens of thousands of people about their pandemic experiences which have formed the basis of our Every Story Matters records. We have also gathered insights from over 100 organisations, to fully understand the impact of the pandemic on society. By doing this, the Inquiry has been able to hear from a wider range of people and sectors who were impacted by the pandemic than would have been possible if relying on witness testimony in hearings alone.

Today, in addition to [three new Every Story Matters records](#), [we publish nine reports drawing together what we've heard through the series of roundtables that we held last year](#). These documents have all been entered into evidence by the Inquiry and will help to inform our Chair, Baroness Hallett, as she writes her report following this investigation.

I would like to thank everyone who shared their experience with us. Some of the stories and themes in the records contain distressing content including descriptions of domestic violence, bereavement, suicidal ideation and significant physical and psychological harm. For anyone who may be struggling when reading our evidence you can [find access to emotional support services on our website](#).

### Impact of the pandemic on society (Module 10) public hearings

The Inquiry's Module 10 investigation considers a range of issues relating to the pandemic, including people's mental health and wellbeing, key workers, the most vulnerable and the bereaved. The full [outline of scope for Module 10](#) is available on our website. [Inquiry Secretary Ben Connah introduces Module 10 hearings in this YouTube video](#).

[We opened today's hearings with an impact film](#). This features the experiences of the pandemic on people, including key workers, voluntary and charity sector workers, the

bereaved and those who work in the arts sector. The film plays an important role in setting the context for hearings by illustrating the human impact of the pandemic. Please note that the film contains references to suicide, mental health, racism, arrests, death, domestic violence, hospital admission and funerals.

Hearings are taking place at [Dorland House, Paddington, London](#) and are open to the public to attend - there are 41 seats available in the public gallery in the hearing room, in addition to a number of seating options available throughout the Inquiry's London hearing centre. [Information about how to reserve seats can be found on our website.](#)

Hearings will be livestreamed on the [Inquiry's YouTube channel](#), subject to a three minute delay. All livestreams are available to watch later.

[The Module 10 hearings timetable will be published on our website on each Thursday for the week ahead.](#) Please note timings are provisional and subject to change.

We send out weekly updates via email during our public hearings, summarising key topics and who appeared as witnesses. You can sign up for these from the [newsletter page of the website](#) if you have not already done so.







*Above: Module 10 Impact film participants. From top to bottom are Mac, Rupinder, Carl and Su*

### **Inquiry publishes three Every Story Matters records on mental health and wellbeing, key workers and bereavement**

The Inquiry has listened to the stories of thousands of people across the UK on a huge variety of subjects. Stories relating to three topics of the Inquiry's Module 10 investigation have been published today in separate Every Story Matters records. Of the 58,000 stories shared with the Inquiry, around 34,000 have contributed to these three records.

Members of the public shared their experiences with the Inquiry online, on paper, and at events in 43 towns and cities across the UK. The Inquiry also held six Bereaved Listening Events, which were co-designed with people who lost a loved one during the pandemic to enable them to share their stories in a safe and supportive environment. A number of organisations also helped us to listen to people's experiences and are acknowledged in each Every Story Matters record. The Inquiry would like to thank everyone who supported us as we gathered experiences from across the UK.

The records have now been formally entered as evidence into Module 10. They will be drawn upon by Counsel to the Inquiry during hearings and will inform the report written by Baroness Hallett following the hearings. During hearings, witnesses and Core Participants are also likely to reference these Every Story Matters records.

Experiences we heard include:

#### Mental health and wellbeing

- Anxiety during the pandemic was widespread, caused by both the fear of contributors and their loved ones of catching Covid-19 but also the frequency of news updates

and televised government briefings. Many contributors said that the pandemic had led to a long-term decline in their mental health.

- Victims and survivors of domestic abuse faced extremely frightening and stressful circumstances as they were confined to their homes and were unable to access support.
- Some experienced increased alcohol and drug use and changes in eating patterns to cope with the stress of the pandemic.
- Parents felt overwhelmed as they struggled to balance work and home-school with their children. Some new mothers and fathers also faced postnatal depression due to being isolated from their support network.

### Key Workers

- Key workers felt fear when they went out to work, both from the risk of catching Covid-19 themselves and the worry of passing it to their loved ones. Some, such as those in education settings who were supervising young children, felt it was impossible to adhere to social distancing guidance.
- Many key workers spoke about being under intense stress due to staff shortages. Some young workers in retail settings reported being pressured to work additional hours. They said employers asked them to work more because they were perceived to be at reduced risk from Covid-19.
- Many key workers faced mental health issues that continue to this day.
- Lots of key workers felt unrecognised and want greater recognition and practical support in a future pandemic, such as access to priority services like shopping and vaccines.

### Bereavement

- Many bereaved people found it extremely difficult to process their grief, prevented by restrictions from saying a final goodbye to their loved ones and from seeing family and friends. This has led to feelings of anger and guilt, exacerbated by the conduct of politicians and other public figures during the pandemic.
- Family members and friends often had to compromise on their own and loved ones' wishes when arranging funerals. Numbers of those attending were restricted, as were the kind of ceremonies allowed. Many from religious communities were unable to hold funerals in accordance with their beliefs.
- Peer support and social networks were even more important at a time when professional bereavement support services were overwhelmed. However, many bereaved people were left to grieve in isolation while social distancing measures were in effect.
- Some people who were bereaved during the pandemic faced financial hardship or were left without vital care after their main support provider died. On top of this many told us about administrative delays in obtaining death certificates, as well as challenges in closing bank accounts and settling utility bills after a loved one died.

All three records are now available to view on our website in both webpage and PDF format:

[Mental health and wellbeing](#)

[Key Workers](#)

[Bereavement](#)

We will soon be publishing the Final Every Story Matters Record. Open for two and a half years, the Every Story Matters listening exercise enabled everyone in the UK to share their story, if they wanted to. Unlike previous module specific records, this final record encompasses all stories shared with us online, on paper and at our listening events around the country. It reflects the Inquiry's commitment to analysing the full breadth of experiences, views and opinions shared.

### **Inquiry publishes reports summarising discussions with over 100 organisations about the impact of the pandemic**

The Inquiry has today published nine roundtable reports summarising discussions with the following sectors throughout 2025:

- Religious leaders
- Trade unions and other organisations representing key workers
- Safeguarding and support for victims of domestic abuse
- Bereavement support
- Prisons, immigration and asylum and those affected by the operation of the justice system
- Business leaders from the hospitality, retail, travel and tourism industries
- Community level sport and leisure
- Cultural institutions
- Housing and homelessness

Each roundtable discussion was attended by organisations in the sector who told us about the impact of the pandemic on society and their sector. The reports help Baroness Hallett to gain a fuller understanding of the impact of the pandemic on society at large.

[The reports can be viewed on our website.](#)

More information about both the roundtable reports and Every Story Matters records [can be viewed in the news story on our website.](#)

### **Baroness Hallett to publish findings and recommendations about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the healthcare systems of the United Kingdom (Module 3)**

On Thursday 19 March the Inquiry will publish Baroness Hallett's next report detailing her findings and recommendations in relation to the [impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems in the UK \(Module 3\)](#). This module investigated the impact of the pandemic on the healthcare systems of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. [More information about the Inquiry's reporting schedule is on our website.](#)