



# Covid 19 - Inquiry



The Inquiry is to *'examine the UK's preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to learn lessons for the future'*

# Timeline

- Module 1 preparation began in late July.
- The first procedural hearing for Module 1 was held on 4 October 2022.
- Module 2 opened on 31 August 2022
- The first procedural hearing for Module 2 will be in October 2022
- A Listening Exercise will begin Autumn 2022
- Public hearings will begin in spring 2023 for Module 1 and summer 2023 for Module 2
- No dates have been announced for Module 3
- The Chair has stated “the Inquiry will not be completed as quickly as some might like. I make no apology for that. “



# Modules

- To address the many different aspects of the pandemic that are covered by the Terms of Reference the Chair decided to group them into three modules.
- There will be teams, based across the UK, to investigate each module.
- The teams will obtain and analyse evidence, making sure the Inquiry's core participants are provided with documents and are able to prepare for the public hearings.
- They will work broadly in parallel.
- The Chair will then conduct the public hearings for each module, one after the other.



# Modules

The three modules for the Inquiry are:

- **Module 1** will examine the resilience and preparedness of the UK for the coronavirus pandemic. This will therefore analyse the state of play prior to the outbreak, and what steps the authorities had taken to equip themselves to cope with a pandemic such as Covid.
- **Module 2** will be split into parts and will examine core political and administrative governance and decision-making by the UK government. Modules 2A, 2B and 2C will address the same overarching and strategic issues from the perspective of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and hearings will take place in each nation/jurisdiction.
- **Module 3** will investigate the impact of Covid, and governmental and societal responses to it, on healthcare systems, including on patients, hospitals and other healthcare workers and staff.
- **Modules 2A, 2B and 2C** will address the same overarching and strategic issues from the perspective of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



# Module 1

- Module 1 initial preparation started in late July.
- “examine the resilience and preparedness of the United Kingdom”
- was the risk of a Coronavirus pandemic properly identified and planned for? Was the UK ready for such an eventuality?
- UK’s preparedness for whole-system civil emergencies, including resourcing, the system of risk management and pandemic readiness.
- It will scrutinise government decision-making and seek to identify whether lessons were learned from earlier incidents and simulations and from international practices and procedures.
- Expecting it to be at a national level rather than have local involvement.
- LGA has applied for Core Participant status for Module 1.



# Module 2

- Opened on 31 August.
- Will examine political and administrative decision-making of the UK and devolved governments, what information was available and why decisions were made. There will be particular focus on early 2020.
- Will examine decisions taken by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, as advised by the Civil Service, senior political, scientific and medical advisers, and relevant Cabinet sub-committees.
- The application process to become a Core Participant for Module 2 has closed and we are waiting for a decision.
- Module 2A, B and C will consider decisions of the devolved governments.
- Information from Local Authorities may be required.



# Listening Exercise

- The Terms of Reference require the Inquiry to listen to, and consider carefully, the experiences of bereaved families and others who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic
- This is seen as a significant and important task and the Chair has introduced a Listening Exercise.
- It will provide an opportunity for people to tell the Inquiry about their experience without the formality of giving evidence or attending a public hearing, so that everyone feels able to contribute to the Inquiry, if they wish, and to be heard.
- The Listening Exercise will be both on line and also in person at locations throughout the United Kingdom
- Begins Autumn 2022



# Core Participant – Local Government Association (LGA)

- The LGA has applied for Core Participant status for the first Module, jointly with the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).
- The LGA will work with Solace as the representative body for Chief Executives, the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers.
- The Association of Directors of Public Health UK will be applying for Core participant status separately. The LGA will work together to share information as much as possible.
- The Inquiry team are supportive of the LGA requesting CP status.
- CP status has closed for Module 1 and an announcement of the Core Participants for Module 1 is expected during September.





# What does this mean for LCC?

- It is what we expected.
- The LGA will carry real weight as a representative organisation.
- It is unusual for all members of a representative organisation to agree entirely on a matter and therefore a majority view will be presented to the Inquiry.
- As Core Participants the LGA can provide support and advice to Local Authorities.
- We will submit evidence to the LGA who will liaise direct with the Inquiry.
- LCC can also submit evidence direct to the Inquiry if we feel it is of significant importance.



# LGA Advice

- Review the terms of reference (ToR) to determine whether input from your organisation will be required, whether you have relevant evidence that the Inquiry will request.
- Consider appointing a team to deal with the inquiry, including a lead officer who could be the Lead Contact for the Inquiry.
- Identify where documents likely to be relevant to the inquiry are kept and how they will be reviewed.
- Guidance for staff on document preservation, ensuring documents are properly identified, filed, securely saved and easily retrievable.
- Establishing a process for dealing quickly with requests for documentation.
- [The Inquiry has published a protocol for the transfer and handling of documents.](#)



# LGA Advice Continued

- Identifying those staff who may be required to provide evidence or be witnesses and establishing a mechanism for preparing and supporting them.
- Keep track of any senior staff/key individuals who are leaving/have left the organisation – maintaining contact details and ensuring records are transferred before they leave.
- Conducting a review of existing processes and identifying the appropriate persons within the authority to speak to the current position.
- Identifying and preserving other physical material which, although not directly relevant, may inform responses to the Inquiry team.



# LGA Advice Continued

- The Inquiry have said they will move around the country to give people the opportunity to take part and will also hold “listening exercises” around the country.
- Understanding the purpose powers and scope of inquiry to identify the relevant context and what it means for your Authority.
- Establishing a secure portal for all information relating to the Inquiry having regard to the strict obligations relating to sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Developing a communications strategy particularly if likely to be criticised.



# Inquiry Protocol for the Transfer and Handling of Documents

- Established under the Inquiry Act 2005 – therefore we are legally bound to provide information when requested.
- Data must not be redacted.
- If special category personal data is included in the document please alert the Covid 19 Inquiry team who will liaise with IG.
- Everything to be electronic.
- Scanning protocols have been specified.
- Documents must have their original filenames and be in their native format.
- We are currently finalising a process for LCC



# Inquiry Protocol for the Transfer and Handling of Documents

“Document” means anything in which information of any description is recorded, whether in paper or electronic form, and includes, but is not limited to, reports, reviews, board/committee minutes, meeting/attendance notes, manuscript notes, memoranda, circulars, governing/constitutional documents, contract documents, legislation, letters/emails (internal and external), WhatsApp messages, information from websites, guides/codes of conduct, policy documents/statements, articles, photographs,



# Preparation

- Identify a lead, or leads, for your service.
- Consider the Terms of Reference and whether your service is likely to be asked for information.
- Review and assess documents which may be relevant to the Inquiry.
- Ensure documents are findable and accessible.
- Given the definition of documents please review where all your relevant information may be ie WhatsApp
- Contact us for any specific advice

