

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY
DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE – MARCH 2022

The inquiry will examine, consider and report on preparations and the response to the pandemic in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, up to and including the inquiry's formal setting-up date. In doing so, it will consider reserved and devolved matters across the United Kingdom, as necessary, but will seek to minimise duplication of investigation, evidence gathering and reporting with any other public inquiry established by the devolved administrations.

The aims of the inquiry are to:

1. Examine the COVID-19 response and the impact of the pandemic in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and produce a factual narrative account. Including:

- In relation to central, devolved and local public health decision-making and its consequences:
 - preparedness and resilience;
 - how decisions were made, communicated and implemented;
 - intergovernmental decision-making;
 - the availability and use of data and evidence;
 - legislative and regulatory control;
 - shielding and the protection of the clinically vulnerable;
 - the use of lockdowns and other 'non-pharmaceutical' interventions such as social distancing and the use of face coverings;
 - testing and contact tracing, and isolation;
 - restrictions on attendance at places of education;
 - the closure and reopening of the hospitality, retail, sport and leisure sectors, and cultural institutions;
 - housing and homelessness;
 - prisons and other places of detention;
 - the justice system;
 - immigration and asylum;
 - travel and borders; and
 - the safeguarding of public funds and management of financial risk.

- The response of the health and care sector across the UK, including:
 - preparedness, initial capacity and the ability to increase capacity, and resilience;
 - the management of the pandemic in hospitals, including infection prevention and control, triage, critical care capacity, the discharge of patients, the use of '*Do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation*' (DNACPR) decisions, the approach to palliative care, workforce testing, changes to inspections, and the impact on staff and staffing levels;
 - the management of the pandemic in care homes and other care settings, including infection prevention and control, the transfer of residents to or from homes, treatment and care of residents, restrictions on visiting, and changes to inspections;

- the procurement and distribution of key equipment and supplies, including PPE and ventilators;
 - the development and delivery of therapeutics and vaccines;
 - the consequences of the pandemic on provision for non-COVID related conditions and needs; and
 - provision for those experiencing long-COVID.
- The economic response to the pandemic and its impact, including government interventions by way of:
 - support for businesses and jobs, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, loans schemes, business rates relief and grants;
 - additional funding for relevant public services; and
 - benefits and sick pay, and support for vulnerable people.

2. Identify the lessons to be learned from the above, thereby to inform the UK's preparations for future pandemics.

In meeting these aims, the inquiry will:

- listen to the experiences of bereaved families and others who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic. Although the inquiry will not investigate individual cases of harm or death in detail, listening to these accounts will inform its understanding of the impact of the pandemic and the response, and of the lessons to be learned;
- highlight where lessons identified from preparedness and the response to the pandemic may be applicable to other civil emergencies;
- consider the experiences of and impact on health and care sector workers, and other key workers, during the pandemic;
- consider any disparities evident in the impact of the pandemic and the state's response, including those relating to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and equality categories under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as applicable;
- have reasonable regard to relevant international comparisons; and
- produce its reports (including interim reports) and any recommendations in a timely manner.