

Update on COVID-19 public inquiry

This briefing provides our latest update on the UK Covid-19 inquiry. It includes an update on the planned approach and timetable, dates for the first procedural and public hearings, and details of the modular structure of the inquiry. It also includes information about our next webinar on what to expect from the inquiry which will be presented by a panel of NHS Providers' legal commercial partners on 3 October.

Inquiry launch

Today Baroness Hallett, chair of the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry, officially launched the inquiry. She set out her [approach](#) and an ambitious timetable, with the first procedural hearing due to take place on 20 September. Her approach is designed to fulfil the [terms of reference](#) (ToR), agreed by the Prime Minister.

The inquiry will be broken down into three modules (as set out below), with teams set up across the UK to investigate and report on each module, followed by public hearings chaired by Baroness Hallett. The third and last module will examine the impact on the health sector and more information on timings for this module will be available in the coming weeks.

A listening exercise will be conducted this autumn to hear from those impacted by the pandemic, including the bereaved. This will allow people to provide evidence outside the formality of the public hearings. This evidence will be analysed and emerging themes highlighted to inform the inquiry's ongoing investigations.

The inquiry will produce regular reports and recommendations, and it will expect prompt responses from relevant organisation. Baroness Hallett intends to make her views clear about any organisation which impedes progress. The implementation of recommendations will be monitored throughout the lifetime of the inquiry.

The chair made it clear that the process will be vigorous and fair but that it will be impossible to call all those who have been affected. The inquiry will use other sources to compile evidence such as

research and the listening exercise. Baroness Hallett's focus will be on the key issues and she wants to conclude the inquiry as speedily as possible.

Module 1

This module will investigate government planning and preparedness, including resourcing, risk management, pandemic readiness and lessons learned from previous pandemics, and simulations and modelling.

Applications for core participant status are open from today and close on 16 August. A core participant is a person or an organisation with a significant interest in the inquiry. The chair will encourage applicants with common interests to group together. We would not expect trusts, or representative organisations such as NHS Providers to be core participants within the inquiry.

The first preliminary hearing will be on 20 September 2022 with substantive public hearings commencing in spring 2023.

Module 2

This will cover central government decision making, government communications, maintaining confidence, devolved matters, parliamentary oversight, regulatory control, use of scientific expertise, and use of non-pharmaceutical measures (such as lockdowns).

This module will commence in August 2022, with preliminary hearings in autumn and substantive hearings in summer 2023.

Module 3

This will examine the impact of COVID, and of the governmental and societal responses to it, on healthcare systems generally and on patients, hospital and other healthcare workers and staff. Among other issues, it will investigate healthcare systems and governance, hospitals, primary care (including GPs and dentists), the impact on NHS backlogs and non-COVID treatment, the effects on healthcare provision of vaccination programmes, and long COVID diagnosis and support.

NHS Providers next webinar

In partnership with a panel of legal firms drawn from NHS Providers' commercial partners, we are hosting a free one-hour webinar on **October 3, 3pm to 4pm** on the inquiry. This will examine the implications of today's announcements, followed by a Q&A for attendees with our three legal panel firms: Browne Jacobson, Capsticks and Hempsons. I do hope you will be able to join us on the day on what has proved to have been a very popular and informative series.

If you have any queries about our COVID survey which is currently open to give us a better sense of how much you plan to resource preparation for the inquiry, and what you would most value from NHS Providers please contact Luis.CostadaSilva@nhsproviders.org, senior research analyst, or Finola.Kelly@nhsproviders.org senior inquiry and legislation manager. The survey closes on 29th July. Others members resources on the COVID inquiry can be found [here](#).

NHS Providers view

Responding to the official start of the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry by chair Baroness Hallett, the interim deputy chief executive and director of policy and strategy of NHS Providers, Miriam Deakin said:

"We welcome the start of the public inquiry into the UK's preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic has had a deep and lasting impact on the health and care sector. The NHS went above and beyond during the pandemic, but it also faced many challenges at different points in the pandemic such as infection prevention and control, access to personal protective equipment, testing and robust epidemiological modelling. There is now a need to tackle significant care backlogs and staff burnout exacerbated by the pandemic.

"It is important that actionable lessons can be learned from the process as they emerge, and we are therefore pleased to see Baroness Hallett confirm that the inquiry will produce regular reports and recommendations. This will help ensure the inquiry can play a key role in preparing the UK to respond to future pressures in a timely manner.

"We look forward to supporting trusts appropriately as this inquiry progresses."