

Covid Public Inquiry - Terms of Reference

PURPOSE

To inquire into the UK's:

- a. Preparedness for, and
- b. Response to the pandemic

AIM

With respect to both preparedness and response the inquiry shall:

- a. Determine a definitive, factual narrative of what happened,
- b. Examine both the success and failure of measures which were taken and consider what alternative measures should have been taken
- c. Make recommendations to ensure that the UK learns from this pandemic and is in the best possible position to face future such challenges.

SCOPE

A. Preparedness - Prior to the first known case in the UK:

1. What was the state of the official knowledge regarding the probability of an epidemic/pandemic affecting the health, wellbeing and economy of the nation?
2. Were the legal, regulatory and policy frameworks to deal with an epidemic/pandemic fit for purpose?
3. Where was responsibility vested, and what was the source and extent of that responsibility for:
 - a. Monitoring the emergence of diseases across the world that might be transmitted to the UK
 - b. Collaborating with international bodies and other states in identifying and preventing the transmission of emerging disease threats
 - c. Preventing the transmission of emerging diseases to the UK, and from the UK to elsewhere

d. Identifying and preventing onward transmission of such diseases once in the UK

e. Ensuring a sufficiency of resources to deal with a pandemic, including medicines and medical equipment, hospital provision including intensive care and isolation facilities, medical and support staff, laboratories, testing and research facilities, and PPE stockpiling

f. Ensuring that the baseline provision of healthcare, social care and other congregate facilities and services did not leave them vulnerable to the effects of a pandemic

g. Contingency plans to ensure that any shortfall in resources could be mitigated urgently, including by establishing lines of procurement and requisitioning

h. Policies to deal effectively with all consequent issues, including the development, manufacture, procurement, and roll-out of vaccines

i. Policies to identify and protect vulnerable persons, and vulnerable communities

j. National and local resilience

k. Dealing with negative and economic effects

l. Recovery?

4. To what extent were each of those responsibilities discharged through:

a. Effective planning, monitoring and assessment

b. Sufficient resourcing

c. Transparent and appropriate emergency procurement and requisitioning provisions

d. Training

e. Exercising

f. Publication of results?

5. To what extent was there proper and effective central coordination of preparedness, both scientific and technical, and by government?

B. Response – Once cases emerged in the UK:

1. What was the timeline of:

a. Progress of the epidemic/pandemic across the UK

b. Scientific knowledge, research and advice given to Government

c. Official information, messaging, advice and guidance given to:

- i. The public**
- ii. The Healthcare sector**
- iii. The Social Care sector**
- iv. The Education sector**
- v. Vulnerable persons, including older persons and those with relevant physical or mental health issues, developmental disorders, dementia, learning disabilities and difficulties and their carers**
- vi. Key workers and vulnerable sectors of the workforce**
- vii. Potentially vulnerable communities**
- viii. Persons in detention**
- d. Statutory and Regulatory measures introduced in reaction to the pandemic**
- e. Actions taken by Government and other responsible bodies to prevent and mitigate the health and economic effects of the pandemic?**

2. Was the response by Government and other responsible bodies sufficiently swift? Did it have sufficient regard to the situation emerging in other countries, and early lessons that could have been learned?

3. Were border controls and other measures, including quarantine, deployed to prevent or mitigate the entry of the virus or its variants to the UK, appropriate, effective, and undertaken at the right time, both initially and through the pandemic?

4. Were the following measures deployed to identify, prevent or mitigate the spread of the virus within the UK, either individually or in combination, appropriate, effective, sufficient, prioritised to the right places, and undertaken at the right time, both initially and through the pandemic:

- a. Test and Trace**
- b. Lockdown**
- c. Travel restrictions**
- d. Restrictions on group meetings**
- e. Social Distancing**
- f. Requirements and facilities to report system failures in particular within the NHS?**

5. Did Government and other responsible bodies act swiftly and effectively enough both initially and throughout the pandemic to ensure sufficient development, procurement and provision of:

- a. Appropriate PPE to the healthcare, social care sectors, other congregate facilities, key industries, public services, and transport sectors**
- b. Tests and laboratory capacity**
- c. Medical equipment, for example ventilators**
- d. Medicines and oxygen supplies**
- e. Vaccines?**

5A. Were sufficient measures taken by the Government to ensure that the equipment mentioned at 5 above was adequate and fit for purpose and to deal with any inadequacies and if not, how could they have been improved?

6. Did Government and other responsible bodies act swiftly enough and make sufficient provision to identify, advise and support those shielding and isolating, and was the advice lifted too soon?

7. Did Government, the NHS, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and through the pandemic, that hospitals had sufficient:

- a. Beds to deal with their normal workload and increased admissions of those with the virus**
- b. Intensive care and isolation facilities to deal with the increased demand**
- c. Medical and support staff**
- d. Equipment, medicines and oxygen,**
- e. Virus testing provision to identify and isolate those infected**
- f. PPE and systems to maximise the safety of staff and patients**
- g. Systems, policies and equipment to prevent hospital transmission of infections, or transmission on admission or discharge**
- h. Provision to maintain a full service and normal standard of care without compromise to any individual patient**
- i. Appropriate policies to regulate visits to patients?**

8. Did Government, the NHS, other providers, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and throughout the pandemic, that GP surgeries, health centres and other healthcare facilities (including dentists and opticians) had sufficient:

- a. PPE and systems to maximise the safety of staff and patients/users**

b. Systems, including virus testing systems, policies and equipment to prevent transmission of infections?

9. Did Government, the NHS, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and through the pandemic, that the 111 and 999 services had sufficient:

a. Provision for phone lines and trained staff to deal appropriately with increased demand

b. Systems and policies to ensure effective and appropriate advice was given, and swift medical attention provided where necessary?

10. Did Government, the NHS, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and throughout the pandemic, that the ambulance services had sufficient:

a. Provision to effectively and swiftly deploy to all those requiring immediate assessment, paramedic care, transportation and hospitalisation

b. PPE to maximise the safety of paramedics, technicians and patients?

11. Did Government, Care providers, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and throughout the pandemic, that nursing homes, hospices, supported living accommodation and other congregate facilities, and domiciliary care settings had sufficient:

a. Systems, policies and equipment to prevent transmission into and within the home or facility

b. PPE to maximise the safety of staff and residents

c. Virus testing provision to identify and isolate those infected

d. Healthcare provision for those affected?

12. Did Government, NHS, Care provider, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and through the pandemic, that:

a. The dying and seriously ill were treated with dignity and respect

b. Relatives were treated with dignity and respect and given the maximum possible contact, consistent with the imperative to keep them and others safe from infection

c. 'End of life' and 'Do not resuscitate' (or DNACPR) protocols were adhered to rigorously and without discrimination?

13. Did Government, Local Authorities, the NHS, Care providers, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and throughout the pandemic, that sufficient regard was paid, and provision made to:

- a. Identify communities – including some Black, Asian or other minority ethnic communities – who were particularly vulnerable to the risk of contracting the virus and the effects of the virus, for economic, deprivation, physiological, cultural, demographic, discrimination or other reasons
- b. Address and mitigate those effects?

14. Did Government, Local Authorities, the NHS, GP practices, Care Providers, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and throughout the pandemic, that sufficient regard was paid, and provision made to:

- a. Identify persons with physical disabilities or health conditions which made them particularly vulnerable to the effects of the virus or made it more difficult for them to avoid infection
- b. Identify those with mental health problems, developmental disorders, learning disabilities or difficulties which made them particularly vulnerable to the effects of the virus or made it more difficult for them to take preventative measures
- c. Address and mitigate those effects
- d. Ensure that local authorities ensured best interests decisions were made for people who lacked capacity and were deprived of their liberty in care homes and hospitals?

15. Did Government, the NHS, HM Prison Service and individual prisons, secure mental health hospitals, and immigration detention services, regulators and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and through the pandemic, that places of detention had sufficient:

- a. Systems, policies and equipment to prevent transmission into and within their facilities
- b. PPE to maximise the safety of staff and those detained
- c. Virus testing provision to identify and isolate those infected
- d. Continued monitoring of the wellbeing and rights of detainees?

16. Did Government, Local Authorities, relevant employers and other responsible bodies ensure, both initially and throughout the pandemic, that frontline, key workers – including those on the transport and food production and distribution networks – and others required to work, were sufficiently protected by:

- a. Systems, policies and equipment to prevent transmission into and within their workplaces, or to protect them so far as possible when going about their work
- b. PPE to maximise the safety of staff and those with whom they came into contact

- c. Measures to protect those on zero hours contracts and others in the grey economy from being economically pressured to work
- d. Virus testing provision to identify and isolate those infected?

17. To what extent was the Government's messaging to the public:

- a. Appropriate
- b. Reinforced or undermined by the actions of the Government and their advisers
- c. Undermined by the actions of others in particular the 'anti-vax' campaign and where this was the case what steps were or could have been taken by the Government to address this?

18. What were the mechanics of decision making in the Government and in particular:

- a. Who made decisions on lockdowns, vaccine development, test and trace and other major issues
- b. Whose advice was taken into consideration?

19. To what extent did the Government supervisory bodies responsible for ensuring Health and Safety at work, proper provision of education, healthcare and care restrict their activities as a result of the epidemic and with what consequences

20. Was the Government approach to:

- a. Overseas supply of vaccines testing kits and medication
- b. Patent waivers for vaccines and medication

Proportionate and appropriate?

21. What was the divergence of approaches and the different steps taken by the devolved administrations and to what extent did they affect the effectiveness of the UK response to the pandemic?