

Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry Newsletter

Spring 2023

Chair's introduction

Welcome to the spring 2023 edition of the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry newsletter.

Since the winter newsletter, the Inquiry team has been busy continuing its investigations, updating core participants on the Inquiry's progress, and launching Let's Be Heard, which is one of the largest public consultation projects ever seen in Scotland.

Last week, Stuart Gale KC, one of our Senior Counsel, met bereaved families and care home relatives to discuss plans for our first health and social care impact hearings, which will be held in the autumn, and to update them on the launch of our listening project, Let's Be Heard.

Let's Be Heard invites people to share their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Scotland and tell us how it impacted them, as well as any lessons they believe should be learned so that Scotland is better prepared in future.

The responses we receive between now and 31 October, when the first phase of Let's Be Heard ends, will be analysed by a team of Inquiry researchers, and used to guide our investigations and inform our reports.

Whether you have already shared your experience with us or are planning to do so, thank you for contributing to the Inquiry's work.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Brailsford', with three dots below it.

Lord Brailsford
Chair to the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry

Hearing structure and sequence

The Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry has announced it is adopting a thematic approach to its investigations and hearings.

The three themes around which the Inquiry will structure its investigations are:

- health and social care;
- education and young people; and
- finance, business and welfare.

The Inquiry will then separate each of these themes into three parts, which cover:

- the **impact** of the pandemic;
- the **implementation** of measures; and
- key **decision-making**.

Ultimately, the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry can only investigate the areas laid out in its [Terms of Reference](#).

More information about which term of reference will be covered under each theme will be made available as investigations progress and engagement with core participants and other interested parties continue.

The thematic approach seeks to bring the experiences of people across Scotland to the forefront of our investigations, ensuring the human impact of the pandemic is captured before memories fade.

In advance of the hearings, the Inquiry will hold a presentation in the summer on the **epidemiology of COVID-19** to provide a factual background that will support all further investigations and hearings.

Health and social care core participant applications

In March 2023, the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry invited parties with an interest in health and social care to apply for core participant status and funding by 11.59pm on 14 April.

The Chair to the Inquiry considered all applications and applicants were notified of the outcome. Those who were successful were invited to participate in a virtual planning meeting with other core participants in the health and social care investigatory theme, as well as the Chair and senior legal team.

The core participant and funding application process will be reopened later this year to invite applications from parties with an interest in the Inquiry's work relating to education and young people, and then again for those with an interest in business and welfare.

Organisations, groups and individuals designated by the Inquiry as core participants have some additional rights. These include:

- making statements when the Inquiry holds public hearings, unless the Chair directs otherwise;
- proposing questions for Counsel to the Inquiry to ask witnesses;
- with the Chair's permission, asking questions of witnesses at a public hearing; and
- being provided with advance copies of the Inquiry's reports relating to their interest in the Inquiry.

Let's Be Heard

The independent Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry is inviting everyone in Scotland to share their experiences of the pandemic and the lessons they believe should be learned through its listening project, Let's Be Heard.

[Let's Be Heard](#), which launched on 23 May, is the main channel for people in Scotland who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022 to participate in the Inquiry's investigations.

Members of the public are being asked three core questions and being given the opportunity to share their experiences of the pandemic, tell the



Inquiry about the impact these experiences had on them, and highlight lessons they believe should be learned so Scotland is better prepared in future.

An internal team of Inquiry researchers and analysts will examine the experiences shared through Let's Be Heard to identify themes and help guide the Inquiry's investigations and inform its reports. This will include identifying any disproportionate or unequal impacts on particular groups or communities.

The three core questions those who participate in Let's Be Heard are being asked are:

1. **What were your experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic?**
2. **What impact did these experiences have on you or people you know?**
3. **What lessons do you think should be learned from your experiences?**

People are able to share their experiences with the Inquiry by:

- completing the online form on the Let's Be Heard website (lbh.covid19inquiry.scot) or by attaching an audio file;
- printing off the online form on the Let's Be Heard website and returning it to the Inquiry at Freepost SCOTTISH COVID-19 INQUIRY; or
- completing a paper form and returning it to our Freepost address. Forms have been distributed to GP practices, care homes, community pharmacies, public libraries, and community centres throughout Scotland.

Forms can also be requested in writing at LetsBeHeard@covid19inquiry.scot.

The Let's Be Heard team will also work with organisations across Scotland to facilitate participation.

For more information, please visit lbh.covid19inquiry.scot.

Sign up for news updates

You can now receive Inquiry news and/or Let's Be Heard updates direct to your inbox by signing up at covid19inquiry.scot/newsletter-signup.