

What the UK Covid-19 Inquiry means for schools

12 September 2024

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry was set up to examine the UK's response to and the impact arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest module relates to children and young people and will have implications for staff working in [schools and trusts](#).

Here's what you need to know.

What is the UK Covid-19 Inquiry all about?

The Inquiry is made up of 12 modules. Module 8 – Children and Young People, has just opened and it will examine the impact of the pandemic on children and young people in the UK, including those with [special educational needs and/or disabilities](#).

The Chair, Baroness Hallett, has designated Core Participant (CP) status to a number of organisations who made decisions about in the pandemic that affected young people.

“...decisions disproportionately impacted children”

This includes the decisions made on whether schools/colleges/universities should close and subsequently whether they should reopen, whether exams could take place and whether any of those decisions disproportionately impacted children and young people, made their lives harder, or exposed them to a greater risk of harm.

The Inquiry also wants to know if the consequences of the pandemic are that young people are still being affected by it. The CPs will assist the Inquiry by providing the Chair with information on the decision-making process, who made those decisions and why they were made.

The Inquiry will also set out the lessons to be learnt for the future.

What does this mean for staff in schools and trusts?

Your school, or MAT could be asked to provide a statement because they might have assisted the DfE or the wider government with the country's response, both going into and easing out of the pandemic.

Rule 9 Requests and having your say

You do not have to be a CP to assist the Inquiry. The Chair can compel anyone to provide documents or a statement via a Rule 9 Request – they do not even have to be a CP.

You may have relevant information to give in relation to matters being examined in the Inquiry and the Inquiry has already started to approach a range of individuals, organisations and bodies to seek information, to gain their perspective on the issues raised in the modules and, where appropriate, to ask for witness statements and documents.

Support for school staff contributing to the Covid-19 Inquiry

If you think you have valuable information which the Inquiry need to know, or, if you are approached by the Inquiry in relation to a request for documents or a witness statement, we can assist you with providing that information to the Chair of the Inquiry.

We're able to assist you in collating and reviewing documents which you think may be relevant to the Inquiry's request, we can advise on the preservation of the documents, draft witness statements and if required, we can assist you in preparing to provide oral evidence at the hearings.

We have a team of specialist Inquiry solicitors who have vast experience on working with both education clients and in a public inquiry practice. Our team have been the Recognised Legal Representatives for clients on many major public inquiries, such as the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, Manchester Arena Inquests and the Hillsborough inquests. We've assisted those clients in fulfilling their obligations to the Inquiry getting their story across.

Key contacts

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