

Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE
Chair
UK COVID-19 Inquiry

01 April 2022

Dear Baroness Hallett

UK COVID-19 Inquiry draft terms of reference

The Welsh Parliament Health and Social Care Committee considered the draft terms of reference for the UK COVID-19 Inquiry at our meeting on 24 March 2022. We offer the following observations:

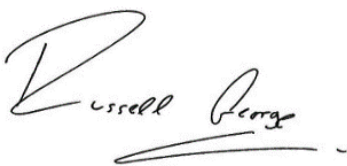
- The Inquiry will provide a vital opportunity to examine the UK's preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic and learn lessons for the future. As many of the issues relating to these matters are devolved, it will be important to ensure that your work includes a sufficient focus on each of the four nations independently, as well as looking at the broader picture across the UK and how the nations worked together. **We suggest that achieving this will require the Inquiry to have among its members—or otherwise have access to—expertise and advice in respect of the specific legal, policy and governance arrangements and context in Wales.**
- We particularly welcome the inclusion in the draft terms of reference a focus on the impact of the pandemic, and the response to it, on different groups of people, including the health and social care workforce. Our work, and that of our predecessor Committee in the Fifth Senedd, has identified unpaid carers as a group who have been, and continue to be, particularly affected. This includes people who may have become carers for the first time during the pandemic, including as a result of the withdrawal or reduction of social care or health services. **We suggest that the Inquiry looks specifically at the impact on unpaid carers, including hearing directly from unpaid carers about their lived experience.**



- We also welcome the Inquiry's intention to consider disparities in people's experience of the pandemic and the response to it, including those relating to protected characteristics and equality categories. **We suggest that consideration is given to taking an intersectional approach that takes account of the cumulative impact of the disparities people who have a number of different protected characteristics may have experienced, and to disparities in experience relating to socioeconomic status.**
- Throughout the pandemic, parliamentary scrutiny has been a key mechanism for oversight of policy, spending, legislation, and intergovernmental working. **We suggest that the Inquiry may wish to take account of the work done by the Welsh Parliament during the pandemic, including the evidence gathered and reports published by Senedd committees, and information published by Senedd Research such as the Coronavirus timeline.**
- The pandemic, and the response to it, have affected people and communities across the UK, and we support the inclusion in the draft terms of reference of a commitment to listen to the experiences of bereaved families and others who have suffered hardship or loss. We also welcome your commitment to provide both formal and informal ways for people to share their experiences with you. **We suggest that the Inquiry's approach to evidence gathering should include formal and informal activity all across the UK, including across different parts of Wales. This should include ensuring that people are able to engage with the inquiry, contribute to its work, provide evidence and share their experiences in Welsh or English.**

We hope that these observations are helpful as you finalise your terms of reference and the approach to the Inquiry's work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russell George". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath.

Russell George MS
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

cc Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister, Welsh Government

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.