

# UK COVID-19 Inquiry: Monitoring report

Pwyllgor Diben Arbenning Ymchwiliad Covid-19 | 26 Medi 2023  
Wales Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee | 26 September 2023

Reference: SR6848-1

## Introduction

On 16 May 2023 the Senedd voted to create a [Wales Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee](#). The Committee met for the first time on 11 July to discuss its work programme. Last week, Members of the Committee heard from Sam Hartley, Director of Policy, Research and Analysis, and Deputy Secretary, UK Covid-19 Inquiry. This research briefing provides an update on the work of the UK Covid-19 inquiry so far.

### Useful information:

Senedd research, [Coronavirus timeline: the response in Wales](#)

UK Covid-19 Inquiry [Newsletters](#)



# 1. UK Covid-19 Inquiry

## 1.1 Background

The UK Covid-19 inquiry, led by Baroness Hallett officially started its work on 28 June 2022 when it published its [terms of reference](#). The UK Covid-19 Inquiry will look at the handling of the pandemic in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and this includes reserved and devolved matters. [First Minister Mark Drakeford responded](#) at the time:

I am satisfied that the terms of reference now ensure that the Inquiry will cover the actions taken in Wales and the interrelationship between decisions made across the UK.

A separate inquiry is taking place in Scotland, which will evaluate areas where policy is devolved to the Scottish Government, as set out in its [Terms of Reference](#).

## 1.2 Structure of the Inquiry

The Inquiry's investigation has been divided into modules to examine different parts of the UK's pandemic response. Each module will investigate issues across the UK as a whole, including in the devolved administrations. Each module has a corresponding preliminary hearing and full hearing. Four modules are currently active:

- [Resilience and preparedness](#) (opened on 21 July 2022)
- [Core UK decision-making and political governance](#) (opened on 31 August 2022)
- [Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in the 4 nations of the UK](#) (opened on 8 August 2022)
- [Vaccines and therapeutics](#) (opened on 5 June 2023)

Future modules will include [Government procurement](#) and [Care sector](#). Further modules will be announced which are likely to cover testing and tracing, the Government's business and financial responses, health inequalities and the

impact of Covid-19, education, children and young persons, and other public services, including frontline delivery by key workers.

## Core participants

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**Core Participants** play an active part during the Inquiry process. A core participant can be an individual or group that has a specific interest in the inquiry's work. They are distinguishable from a witness, who is not permitted to ask questions. Core Participants (or their legal representatives) can make opening and closing statements at any hearing, ask questions of witnesses at public hearings (if permitted to do so by the Chair), can see any evidence that relates to their interest in the Inquiry and the relevant draft report before it is published. Core Participants are designated on a module by module basis, meaning they may vary for each module.

## Listening Exercise

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The UK Covid-19 inquiry is hearing from the public about their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. **Every Story Matters** is an online platform that gives the public the opportunity to share what happened to them. Themed reports will be published. It will remain open throughout the inquiry. Individuals must be aged 18 or over to use the form. The inquiry is currently designing an effective way of engaging with children and young people alongside this.

## Preliminary hearings

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A preliminary hearing is a **procedural hearing** at which decisions about the procedure for the conduct of public hearings will be made. A livestream of the preliminary hearings is available. At **public hearings** the Inquiry will formally hear evidence, including from witnesses under oath.

## Rule 9 Requests

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A rule 9 Request is a **request for information** made under the powers set out in rule 9 of **the Inquiry Rules 2006**. It can be a request for documents and/or a witness statement and is intended to help the inquiry understand the decision-making process and the narrative of how and why key decisions were made. Failure to comply with a rule 9 request can lead to a requirement to produce the evidence in question, under the powers set out in section 21 of the Inquiries Act 2005. Although core participants are most likely to receive a rule 9 request, the

chair can make a request to anyone who the Inquiry considers has information relevant to the matters under consideration.

### 1.3 Hearings timetable

The public Inquiry has completed its public hearings on Module 1 and has committed to publishing its **report by early summer of 2024**.

The inquiry is now looking at Module 2, with public hearings due to begin on 3 October. The public hearings for **Module 2B Wales** are expected to start in January 2024.

The inquiry team are also preparing for Modules 3 and 4 with public hearings planned for 2024.

Module	Scope	Opened	Preliminary hearing	Public hearings
1	Preparedness for the pandemic	21 July 2022	4 October 2022	13 June – 19 July 2023
2	Political and administrative decision-making in relation to the pandemic.  <b>Module 2B</b> addresses the strategic and overarching issues from the perspectives of Wales	31 August 2022	31 October 2022  1 November 2022	Public hearings will commence on <b>3 October 2023</b>  <b>January 2024</b> (tbc)
3	Impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems	8 November 2022	*28 February 2023	Expected to begin in the autumn of 2024
4	Vaccines and therapeutics	5 June 2023	13 September 2023	**Expected to begin in the summer 2024

\* The second preliminary hearing for Module 3 will take place on **Wednesday 27 September**

\*\* Public hearings for Module 4 are planned to take place in the summer of 2024, prior to those for Module 3 (healthcare systems) , which are expected to begin in autumn 2024.

## 2. First Public Hearings – Resilience and preparedness

### Module 1 - Resilience and preparedness

Module 1 on resilience and preparedness opened on 21 July 2022. The Module is designated to look into the preparedness for the pandemic. To assess if the pandemic was properly planned for and whether the UK was adequately ready for that eventuality. The Module touches on **the whole system of civil emergencies** including resourcing, risk management and pandemic readiness.

A list of **Core Participants** in Module 1 was published on 12 June 2023. These include Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, Welsh Local Government Association, Public Health Wales and Welsh Government.

Module 1 will examine the **resilience and preparedness** of the UK and consider whether the pandemic was properly identified and planned for. The Module will examine:

1. The **basic characteristics and epidemiology** of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and Coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
2. The Government **structures and specialist bodies concerned with risk management and civil emergency planning**, including devolved administrations and their structures, local authorities and private sector bodies, historical changes to such structures and bodies as well as the structures in place as at January 2020, inter-organisational processes and cooperation.
3. The **planning for a pandemic**, including forecasting, resources, and the learning from past simulation exercises (including coronavirus, new and emerging high-consequence infectious diseases and influenza pandemic/epidemic exercises), the emergency plans that were in place, biosecurity issues relevant to the risk of pandemics/epidemics,

international comparisons and the history of, and learning from, past policy-related investigations.

4. **Public health services**, including the structure of public health bodies, their development over time and readiness and preparation in practice; public health capacity, resources and levels of funding, any impact arising from the UK's departure from the European Union, and the way in which relevant bodies monitored and communicated about emerging disease.
5. **Economic planning** by relevant Government bodies, including capacity and spending commitments and efficiency and anti-fraud controls, in the context of emergency planning.
6. **Planning for future pandemics**, including (in outline) the state of international preparedness; the risks of new variants of Covid-19, other viruses of concern, and diseases from human contact/viral transmission with animals.

#### Preliminary hearings – Module 1

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The preliminary hearing for Module 1 was held on **4 October 2022**. At the hearing, Ms Heaven representing Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Group Cymru told the inquiry:

There are still concerns in Wales, and indeed in all of the other devolved administrations, that the preliminary scope of Module 1 does not set out in any detail the issues specific to Wales that ought to be investigated by this public Inquiry. It is vitally important that the people of Wales can have full confidence that this public Inquiry will scrutinise decision-making in Wales in respect to the pandemic.

In relation to **preparedness**, Ms Heaven set out:

Whilst the UK influenza pandemic preparedness strategy 2011 concerned a UK-wide strategic approach to planning for and responding to the demands of an influenza pandemic, the Cabinet Office Guidance of November 2017 on pandemic flu planning made absolutely clear that devolved administrations are responsible for the major areas of pandemic influenza planning and response in their respective countries. It also made clear that it was the Wales resilience forum chaired by the First Minister for Wales that provides the mechanism for a national multi-agency overview of pandemic

preparedness in Wales. There can therefore be no doubt that responsibility for pandemic planning in Wales was largely, if not entirely, in the hands of the Welsh Government.

Ms Heaven highlighted **key areas** the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru Group said they want to see the inquiry scrutinise in relation to Wales in Module 1:

- The **level of funding** provided to Wales by the UK Government and whether that had an impact on the planning, and preparedness in Wales for the pandemic, and the political relations between Wales and the UK Government.
- **Co-ordination** between the UK Government and all the devolved governments and the variation in standards in the approach to preparedness for a pandemic.
- The **preparedness in NHS Wales** in the Welsh hospital estate and in Welsh care homes in respect of infection control measures including segregation, resourcing PPE, stockpiling and distribution, and whether there was adequate or, indeed, any planning in relation to post death procedures to protect dignity and to support the Welsh bereaved in the event of a pandemic.

## Public Hearings - Evidence in relation to Wales

Over the course of the Module 1 hearings the Inquiry collected thousands of documents as well as written witness statements. The evidence used during Module 1 can be viewed on [the documents page of the Covid-19 Public Inquiry website](#). It also published [a timetable for Module 1 public hearings](#), and [transcripts of the public hearings](#) are available online.

The first public hearing of **Module 1 on resilience and preparedness** was held on 13 June 2023 and ran until 19 July 2023. In relation to Wales specifically, the inquiry heard from:

- **3 July:** Sir Frank Atherton (Chief Medical Officer for Wales), and Dr Andrew Goodall (former Director General for Health and Social Services and Chief Executive of NHS Wales)
- **4 July:** Dr Andrew Goodall; Dr. Quentin Sandifer (Consultant Adviser at Public Health Wales); Vaughan Gething (former Minister for Health and

Social Services 2016-2021 and Deputy Minister for Health 2014-2016), and; Mark Drakeford (First Minister of Wales since 2018)

- **6 July:** Reg Kilpatrick (Director of Local Government Department 2011-2020 and now Director General Covid Recovery and Local Government in Welsh Government)
- **12 July:** Chris Llewellyn (Chief Executive of Welsh Local Government Association).
- **18 & 19 July:** Closing statements were provided by Anna-Louise Marsh-Rees (Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru), MS Heaven on behalf of Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru and Mr Allen KC on behalf of the Local Government Association and Welsh Local Government Association

A **separate research briefing** will be provided for Members at a future meeting, which will summarise the key issues from the public hearings on Module 1 specific to Wales.

### 3. Future public hearings

#### Module 2 – Core UK decision making and political governance

Module 2 on core UK decision making and political governance opened on 31 August 2022 and is split into parts. A list of **Core Participants** in Module 2 was published on 28 October 2022. They include Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, Disability Wales, Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government.

Module 2 will look into **core political and administrative governance and decision-making for the UK**. It will include the initial response, central government decision making, political and civil service performance as well as the effectiveness of relationships with governments in the devolved administrations and local and voluntary sectors. Module 2 will also assess decision-making about non-pharmaceutical measures and the factors that contributed to their implementation.

An outline of the scope of Module 2 has been published. It refers to Modules 2A, B and C, which will address the strategic and overarching issues from the perspective of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These Modules will be



treated as **individually separate Modules** and public hearings for them **will be held in the nations** they concern.

## Preliminary hearings – Module 2

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Module 2 held its **first preliminary hearing** on 31 October 2022. A further two preliminary hearings on this Module were held on 1 March and 6 June 2023.

At the first preliminary hearing, Mr Williams KC on behalf of Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru highlighted “some of the areas of concern that this public inquiry must scrutinise in respect of Wales”. These were:

- the extent to which there was a **sharing of knowledge** between Wales and the UK Government, in particular on scientific and medical matters.
- the actions taken or not taken by the Welsh Government, whether they were influenced by and **why they differed from decisions taken by the UK Government**.
- whether the actions taken or not taken by the Welsh Government were **justifiable in the light of the state of knowledge**, whether expert, medical or otherwise.
- what extent were the decisions of the Welsh Government supported or not supported **by expert opinion**.
- the extent to which the actions of the Welsh Government were **influenced by political considerations**.

Mr Williams KC also referred to “**superspreader**” events in Wales in 2020. He noted the rugby international between Wales and Scotland was cancelled the day before it was due to take place, after very large numbers of Welsh and Scottish supporters had descended on Cardiff.

A key issue from the evidence so far has been **the need to focus on inequalities**. At the preliminary hearing on 31 October 2022, Ms Sivakumaran representing disabled people's organisations emphasised the disproportionate impact the pandemic had on vulnerable groups. On 1 March 2023, Ms Twite on behalf of several children rights organisations suggested the inquiry **to consider inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage** in addition to the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act, noting whilst there is no legal duty to do so in England, there is in Wales and Scotland.

The public hearings for Modules 2 will commence on **3 October 2023**.

## Scope - Module 2B (Wales)

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**Module 2B** covers Wales. The scope hasn't been finalised but it is expected that the module will look at, and make recommendations about, **the Welsh Government's core political and administrative decision-making** in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic **between early January 2020 and May 2022** (when the then remaining Covid-19 restrictions were lifted in Wales).

The reason why there is a separate Module 2B is because, alongside the UK decision-making, there was also relevant decision-making in relation to Wales. Module 2 B will **examine the decision-making of key groups and individuals within the government in Wales** including the First Minister and other Welsh Ministers, in particular between early January and late March 2020 when the first national lockdown was imposed.

Module 2B will examine:

1. The **structures of the Welsh Government and the key bodies within it** involved in Wales' response to the pandemic and their relationships and communications with the UK Government, other devolved administrations and local authorities within Wales.
2. The Welsh Government's **initial understanding of, and response to**, the nature and spread of Covid-19 in Wales in the period between January and March 2020 in light of information and advice received from the UK Government and other relevant international and national bodies, advice from scientific, medical and other advisers and the response of other countries.
3. Decision-making by the Welsh Government relating to the imposition or non-imposition of **non-pharmaceutical interventions** (NPIs) including:
  - a. lockdowns, local restrictions, working from home, reduction of person to person contact, social distancing, the use of face coverings and border controls in Wales;
  - b. the degree of and rationale behind **differences in approach** between the Welsh Government and other governments in the UK;

- c. the **timeliness and reasonableness** of such NPIs, including the likely effects had decisions to intervene been taken earlier or differently;
  - d. the development of the approach to NPIs in light of the Welsh Government's understanding of their **impact on transmission, infection and death**;
  - e. the identification of **at risk and other vulnerable groups** in Wales and the assessment of the likely impact of the contemplated NPIs on such groups in light of existing inequalities; and
  - f. the impact, if any, of the **funding** of the Welsh pandemic response on such decision-making, including funding received from the UK Government.
4. **Access to and use in decision-making of medical and scientific expertise, data collection and modelling** relating to the spread of the virus in Wales; the measuring and understanding of transmission, infection, mutation, re-infection and death rates in Wales; and the relationship between and operation of relevant systems for the collection, modelling and dissemination of data.
  5. **Public health communications** in Wales in relation to the steps being taken to control the spread of the virus; transparency of messaging; the use of behavioural management and the maintenance of public confidence in the Welsh Government, including the impact of any alleged breaches of rules and standards by Ministers, officials and advisers.
  6. The **public health and coronavirus legislation and regulations** that were proposed and enacted: their proportionality and enforcement across Wales.

The **Core Participants for Module 2B** include the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association, National Police Chiefs Council, Public Health Wales, Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, Relatives and Residents Association and John's Campaign, Children's Commissioner for WALES, Trade Union Congress, Disability Rights UK and Disability Wales.

#### Preliminary hearing – Module 2B

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Module 2B had its **preliminary hearing on 1 November 2022**. The first public hearings for Module 2B are likely to take place in January 2024.

At the **preliminary hearing**, the inquiry heard from the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the Children's Commissioner for Wales, the Relatives & Residents Association and John's Campaign and Welsh Government.

The TUC pointed out that **core participant status varies across the devolved modules**. They gave the example of the Commissioner for Older People, who is a core participant in Module 2C (Northern Ireland) but not in the other devolved nations. The TUC made the point that hearing from these organisations is key to comparing and contrasting differing approaches across the UK. However Lady Hallett explained "I could only appoint core participants from those who applied".

Mr Rhodri Williams KC, representing the Children's Commissioner for Wales set out some initial concerns as to whether there will be **sufficient focus on children and young people** in relation to the decision-making by the Welsh Government in respect of non-pharmaceutical interventions (given that the impact on young people was undoubtedly significant in terms both of their education and their mental health and wellbeing). Lady Hallett assured the Children's Commissioner that there will be a **later module** which will focus specifically on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people. Lady Hallett also confirmed the inquiry is designing ways to gather the views of children and young people directly.

### Module 3 - Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in the 4 nations of the UK

Module 3 on [the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in the 4 nations of the UK](#) opened on Tuesday 8 November 2022. A list of **Core Participants** in Module 3 was published on 23 February 2023 . They include Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, Welsh NHS bodies and Welsh Government

Module 3 will look into the **governmental and societal response to Covid-19**. It will consider the impact that the pandemic had on **healthcare systems** in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This will include consideration of the **healthcare consequences** of how the governments and the public responded to the pandemic. It will examine the **capacity of healthcare systems** to respond to a pandemic and how this evolved during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will consider the primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare sectors and services and people's experience of healthcare during the pandemic. It will also examine healthcare-related inequalities (such as in relation to death rates, PPE and oximeters).

In particular, the module will examine:

1. The impact of Covid-19 on **people's experience** of healthcare.
2. **Core decision-making and leadership** within healthcare systems during the pandemic.
3. **Staffing levels** and critical care **capacity**, the establishment and use of Nightingale hospitals and the use of private hospitals.
4. The 111, 999 and ambulance services, GP surgeries and hospitals and **cross-sectional co-operation** between services.
5. Healthcare **provision and treatment** for patients with Covid-19, healthcare systems' response to **clinical trials and research** during the pandemic. The allocation of staff and resources. The impact on those requiring care for reasons other than Covid-19. Quality of treatment for Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 patients, delays in treatment, waiting lists and people not seeking or receiving treatment. Palliative care. The discharge of patients from hospital.
6. Decision-making about the nature of healthcare to be provided for patients with Covid-19, its escalation and the provision of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, including **the use of do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation instructions** (DNACPRs).
7. The **impact of the pandemic on doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff**, including on those in training and specific groups of healthcare workers (for example by reference to ethnic background). Availability of healthcare staff. The NHS surcharge for non-UK healthcare staff and the decision to remove the surcharge.
8. **Preventing the spread of Covid-19 within healthcare settings**, including infection control, the adequacy of PPE and rules about visiting those in hospital.
9. **Communication with patients** with Covid-19 and their loved ones about patients' condition and treatment, including discussions about DNACPRs.
10. **Deaths caused by the Covid-19 pandemic**, in terms of the numbers, classification and recording of deaths, including the impact on specific groups of healthcare workers, for example by reference to ethnic background and geographical location.

11. **Shielding** and the impact on the clinically vulnerable (including those referred to as “clinically extremely vulnerable”).
12. Characterisation and identification of **Post-Covid Condition** (including the condition referred to as long Covid) and its diagnosis and treatment.

### Preliminary hearing – Module 3

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The preliminary hearing on Module 3 was held on 28 February 2023.

At the hearing Baroness Hallett explained that there will be some **overlap between different Modules** in the public inquiry:

Module 3, healthcare, is obviously at the heart of an inquiry into the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a huge topic and, as I've said before, my aim in conducting this Inquiry is to provide reports, interim reports, throughout the Inquiry and to make timely recommendations where possible in the hope of reducing the suffering that we witnessed during the pandemic. That means that we've had to break down the vast array of issues that healthcare systems in the UK could cover into manageable chunks. So what you might at first have thought would be covered in Module 3 may well be covered in other modules. So, for example, there will be other modules dedicated to examining health inequalities and the impact of Covid-19 on mental health and particular groups such as the elderly, the disabled, the poor and minorities.

The Covid Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru **called for Module 3 to be subdivided** so that in addition to Module 3 there are Modules 3A, 3B, 3C, looking at the healthcare systems in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. They said this would reflect the fact that health is a devolved matter and therefore that healthcare systems are different in each country and that different decisions were taken in the countries at different times.

Mr Williams KC **on behalf of Covid Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru** told the inquiry:

Wales has its own healthcare system. NHS Wales is not a legal entity and instead is comprised of local health boards, NHS Trusts and Public Health Wales. Relevant offices and agencies, such as the Office of the Chief Medical Officer and Care Inspectorate Wales are specific to Wales. This means that key decisions made in Wales were largely separate to and often quite different from those taken by the UK Government.

However, Ms Carey KC from the public inquiry legal team said:

The themes and topics identified in the provisional outline of scope enable the Inquiry to take account of any structural differences in the way each country's healthcare system is set up without the need for individual hearings.

Ms Carey KC added:

The hearing of a health-related matters in an overarching module such as Module 3 allows comparisons between all four nations to be more easily evidenced and drawn.

The **second preliminary hearing** for Module 3 will take place on **Wednesday 27 September**. The Inquiry plans to hear evidence for this investigation in the autumn of 2024.

## Module 4 - Vaccines and Therapeutics

Module 4 on **Vaccines and Therapeutics** opened on 5 June 2023. A list of **Core Participants** in module 4 was published on 7 September. They include, **Covid 19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru (CBFJ Cymru), Disability Wales, Public Health Wales and Welsh Government**.

Module 4 will consider and make recommendations on a range of issues relating to **the development of Covid-19 vaccines and the implementation of the vaccine rollout programme** in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Issues relating to the treatment of Covid-19 through both existing and new medications will be examined in parallel. There will be a focus on lessons learned and preparedness for the next pandemic.

Thematic issues relating to **unequal vaccine uptake** will be examined, to include the identification of groups which were the subject of unequal uptake, potential causes of such unequal uptake and the Government response.

The module will address issues of recent **public concern relating to vaccine safety** and the current system for financial redress under the UK Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme. In particular, this module will examine:

1. The **development, procurement, manufacture and approval of vaccines** during the pandemic, including the effectiveness of UK-wide decision-making, in particular, the role of the UK Vaccine Taskforce. What lessons



can we learn from innovative practices that were successfully introduced during the pandemic for future pandemic preparedness?

2. The development, trials and use of **new therapeutics** during the pandemic, in addition to the use of existing medications.
3. **Vaccine delivery** in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, including roll-out procedures such as: arrangements on the ground and public messaging; Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommendations on eligibility / prioritisation and decisions taken by policy makers; the ethics of prioritisation decisions and impact on particular groups such as those with comorbidities.
4. **Barriers to vaccine uptake**, including vaccine confidence and access issues and the effectiveness, timeliness and adequacy of Government planning for and response to inequalities relevant to vaccine uptake.
5. **Vaccine safety issues** including post marketing surveillance, such as the Yellow Card monitoring and reporting system and a suggested correlation between Covid-19 vaccines and cardiovascular issues.
6. Whether any reforms to the **UK Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme** are necessary

#### Preliminary hearing – Module 4

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The preliminary hearing on Module 4 was held on 13 September 2023. [A transcript has been published.](#)

At the hearing Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, a core participant, stressed the importance of Module 4 “giving meaningful consideration to the processes adopted in Wales” and **the impact of the different decisions taken in Wales**. The Inquiry team said it has already started the process of seeking evidence from the 4 nations and will continue to do so. The case for taking a **comparative approach** in this module was made.

At the preliminary hearing, Ms Sheppard representing the **Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru** said there needs to be a specific focus in Module 4 on:

- Decisions made by the Welsh Government about **prioritisation** and the manner in which the vaccine was rolled out.



- Consideration of **regional and local issues** and why different decisions were taken by local health boards rather than a centrally-run and organised strategy.
- Whether sufficient consideration was given to the **inequalities or barriers** faced by those living in rural communities and whether the older population and those who had comorbidities had particular difficulties in accessing the vaccine.
- The decisions made regarding **antivirals**, particularly in the months before the vaccine became available (it has previously been stated the use of antivirals falls in the scope of Module 3).
- The divergence of policy across the UK nations on **vaccine mandates** (or vaccine passports), including why there was no requirement for healthcare workers to be vaccinated in Wales as there was elsewhere in the UK.

The Inquiry plans to hear evidence for this investigation in the **summer of 2024**.