
Update – 21 May 2020

Covid-19

Since the Inquiry's last progress report on 22 February 2020, the Covid-19 public health crisis has significantly developed and has had, and continues to have, a huge impact on the nation. The Inquiry's website has been updated on a number of occasions to set out how the Inquiry has adapted its working arrangements to ensure that the Inquiry's work is continuing, as far as possible, during the pandemic. In summary:

- The Inquiry has adapted its working arrangements and the Chair and the team are now all working remotely, although they remain contactable on the Inquiry's usual email/telephone details.
- All witness evidence is now being taken via secure video or telephone conferencing, if the witness agrees to proceed on this basis. Otherwise, arrangements are still being made to set up face to face meetings once the Inquiry is in a position to meet with witnesses in person.

The Inquiry also remains in contact with all key stakeholders that are providing information to assist the Inquiry's work, and the disclosure of documentary evidence is continuing. Some of those stakeholders are however on the front line of the emergency response to the pandemic. This, inevitably and understandably, has resulted in some interruption to the progress being made in gathering relevant evidence. The Inquiry continues to work closely with those organisations to ensure the impact of any such delay is minimised.

Witnesses

The Inquiry continues to meet with, and take the evidence of, witnesses who have information to provide that is relevant to the Terms of Reference; as mentioned above, at this time, meetings with witnesses are being undertaken via secure video and telephone conferencing.

The Chair has also begun to approach organisations and make requests to speak to individual witnesses in relation to information they may be able to provide that is relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. The Chair however continues to encourage anyone that has information to share to come forward. Individuals should not assume that the Chair will proactively contact them; in some cases, that would not be appropriate, particularly where this involves victims/survivors, or family/friends of victims/survivors. Individuals should also not assume that the Inquiry is in possession of their contact details or able to use such details, for reasons of data protection. For this reason, if you have relevant evidence to give, please do get in contact with the Inquiry. The Chair will be making a further public call for evidence when the time is appropriate to do so.

The independent confidential support service for anyone providing evidence to the Inquiry remains in place, and further details about the service and the relevant contact details can be found here: <https://www.iitcse.com/confidential-support>

Disclosure

To date, the Inquiry has received approximately 143,000 documents in total, which are potentially relevant to its Terms of Reference, and disclosure of further documents is continuing. The Inquiry continues to work through and analyse this material to help inform its investigations. The Inquiry will need to assimilate these documents before further, specific requests for any additional documents are made.

The documentation received from the Council to date amounts to approximately 816,000 pages of material that is potentially relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. Further, the Inquiry understands that a large volume of disclosure is still expected from the Council over the coming weeks. The Inquiry is therefore anticipating that well in excess of a million pages of potentially relevant material will be received by the Council alone. The volume of potentially relevant material is greater than the Chair had originally expected. The Inquiry however continues to work through the significant volumes provided to help inform its investigations.

In its last progress report, the Inquiry explained that it was also working closely with West Mercia Police to identify and gather relevant material. That work continues and documentation has started to be disclosed in larger volumes. The sensitivities inherent in the documents being received has meant that extra care has needed to be taken in the sharing of the information, both from a security and data protection perspective. This, coupled with the fact that potentially relevant documents are stored across a multitude of police systems, has meant that this process has taken some time. Work however continues to analyse and request police documentation in order to assist the Chair's work.

The Inquiry has started to receive documentation from relevant NHS provider organisations, Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group and West Midlands Police, and remains in contact with these stakeholders. The Chair has also now had useful discussions with NHS England, who will be providing relevant documentation over the coming months. It remains clear to the Chair that significantly more material will be disclosed, all of which will help inform his investigations.

CONTACT THE INQUIRY

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