



House of Commons
Public Administration
and Constitutional Affairs
Committee

A Public Inquiry into the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Fifth Report of Session 2019–21

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 8 September 2020*

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Iwona Hankin (Committee Assistant), Claire Hardy (Committee Specialist), Gabrielle Hill (Senior Committee Assistant), Dr Philip Larkin (Committee Specialist), George Perry (Media Officer), Sarah Rees (Clerk), Dr Patrick Thomas (Committee Specialist), Rebecca Usden (Senior Committee Specialist) and Jonathan Whiffing (Second Clerk).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3268; the Committee's email address is pacac@parliament.uk.

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Summary

Public inquiries have become an established part of the political landscape in the UK and are routinely held in the wake of significant events or crises. The Government has said that an independent public inquiry will be held into the response to the coronavirus pandemic. There is, however, limited established practice around important issues such as how chairs are appointed, whether they are supported by panels, or how the terms of reference are decided. As part of its broader inquiry into the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee considered how a public inquiry might be conducted.

The Committee agreed that an independent public inquiry is the best means to consider the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the experience of the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards has shown that, in the right circumstances, Parliament can conduct major inquiries itself, the prospective inquiry into the COVID-19 response will be of such a scale that an independent public inquiry should be established.

The primary purpose of public inquiries can vary. Where some have sought to establish facts or to apportion blame, others have been focussed on learning public policy lessons. Whilst it will be important for an inquiry to thoroughly investigate what decisions were taken, when and by whom, its primary purpose should be to learn lessons and to make recommendations about how similar events can be better handled in future.

The Public Inquiries Act 2005 provides the legislative basis for statutory public inquiries. It makes provision for statutory investigatory and also for procedural fairness for those involved. However, many inquiries are not established under its auspices. Outside the terms of the Act, these non-statutory inquiries have greater procedural flexibility. Though they lack the statutory power to compel the attendance of witnesses or to hear evidence under oath, this means they can be more consensual and less adversarial. Avoiding adversarialism will be important in the inquiry if lessons are to be learnt, but the use of statutory powers may be required so the inquiry should be a statutory one. Given the timescales typically involved, steps to establish the inquiry should be taken immediately. It will be important for the inquiry to report in a timely fashion and, indeed, make use of interim reports.

The Government is responsible for appointing inquiry chairs and panels. However, too often this is done in a rushed and unsystematic manner. Such is the importance of the chair and panel to the conduct of inquiries, far greater transparency is required. The appointing minister should be able to demonstrate that proper consultation and deliberation has been conducted before the appointment is made. The appointment should be subject to a pre-commencement hearing with the relevant select committee. The chair should be supported by a high calibre panel with a broad range of skills and expertise. The process by which panel members are appointed should also be transparent.

Terms of reference are sometimes subject to external consultation before being finalised. Consultation with those who have been directly affected by the coronavirus pandemic can make a significant contribution to a public inquiry. However, the process can also lead to terms of reference that are too wide. The expectations need to be managed and a

single inquiry cannot address every issue. A balance needs to be struck between being inclusive and comprehensive and ensuring that the inquiry's terms of reference are sufficiently focussed.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has involved all tiers of Government in the UK with an important role played by the devolved administrations. Each of the Governments of the UK should establish their own public inquiries. Important aspects of the pandemic response have been devolved and separate inquiries should ensure proper attention is granted to each of their responses. It is still possible to understand the UK-level response by including matters relating to inter-government cooperation in within the terms of reference of each inquiry.

1 Introduction

1. Public inquiries have become a ubiquitous part of the political landscape in the UK and they are now routinely held into major events. Between 1990 and 2017, there were 69 public inquiries. In the preceding 30 years, there had only been 19.¹ On 15 July, the Prime Minister told the House that an independent inquiry will be established to examine the coronavirus pandemic and the response to it.²

2. But, despite the frequency with which they are held, there is relatively little guidance or procedure surrounding how, for instance, they are established, how their terms of reference are decided upon, how their composition is arrived at, nor the fate of any recommendations that may emerge from them. These decisions lack transparency and often to appear to be decided in an arbitrary way. It should perhaps not be a surprise that, though some public inquiries result in substantial change to policy, others are rather less impactful.

3. In this report, which is part of our wider inquiry into Responding to COVID-19 and the Coronavirus Act 2020,³ the Committee has sought to address that lack of procedure as it relates to the prospective public inquiry into coronavirus. We have not made recommendations about who should be appointed to chair it or join its panel, what its terms of reference should include, nor what its recommendations should be. Nor have we tried to make recommendations to address the problems of public inquiries more generally. Instead, we have highlighted issues that we feel the Government should be taking into account when making its decisions about how this inquiry should proceed.

4. Our inquiry into Responding to COVID and the Coronavirus Act 2020 was launched on 15 May 2020. On 21 July 2020, the terms of reference were amended to include the questions about the conduct of a public inquiry that this report addresses. We received nine written submissions responding to the questions on a public inquiry and heard oral evidence on 23 July 2020. The Committee would like to thank all those who have contributed to our inquiry.

1 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.6

2 [HC Deb 15th July 2020 c1513 \(the Prime Minister\)](#)

3 <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/310/responding-to-covid19-and-the-coronavirus-act-2020/>

2 Inquiry purpose

A role for Parliament?

5. Though the Government's announcement that a public inquiry will be held renders it somewhat academic, the Committee did consider whether a public inquiry was the most appropriate means by which the response to the coronavirus pandemic should be investigated and, in particular, whether Parliament should play a prominent role. The public inquiry process is typically dominated by the Executive which can lead to accusations that it is, if not marking its own homework, at least setting the criteria by which its marks are awarded. Were Parliament to take the primary role in scrutinising the Government response, it would have the advantage of removing the Executive from the process to a greater degree. In scrutinising the policy of government, a public inquiry would, after all, be performing a similar task to that of parliamentary select committees.

6. However, the scale and breadth of the response to coronavirus would put it beyond the remit of any single permanent select committee in the House of Commons, which are generally bound by the remit of the government department and agencies that they are tasked with scrutinising.⁴ Even the provisions for joint inquiries by more than one select committee or the guesting provisions, allowing members of one select committee to participate in the inquiries of others, seem inadequate to the task of scrutinising a whole of government effort on the scale of the coronavirus response. Although the House of Lords' committees are thematic, they would lack the democratic legitimacy of their Commons counterparts. Committees of either House lack the staff capacity or the members' time to undertake a scrutiny task of such magnitude. Indeed, undertaking this work would be to the detriment of any other inquiries that a committee might like to pursue, as a public inquiry would squeeze out time for any other scrutiny work.

7. An alternative to inquiries by one or more select committees was the prospect of a Parliamentary Commission along similar lines to the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards (PCBS) established in 2012 following the LIBOR scandal.⁵ The PCBS was essentially an *ad hoc* joint select committee. But it had a number of features, such as the use of counsel in cross-examining witnesses, that distinguished it from most other joint committees and made it more like a public inquiry. It also had a budget and dedicated staff far larger than select committees enjoy.⁶

8. The emergence of public inquiries in the twentieth century was a response to the shortcomings of parliamentary scrutiny. The select committee established to investigate the Marconi scandal in 1912 split acrimoniously on partisan lines and was seen to have undermined public confidence in the select committee process and its replacement with public inquiries as the vehicle to investigate major issues of public concern.⁷ The experience of the PCBS suggests that Parliament can provide a viable alternative to independent public inquiries. However, its Chair has suggested that specific conditions would need to be met for a similar commission to succeed in future. These conditions include that there must be a clearly identifiable problem amenable to a policy solution, and that there

4 A few select committees, such as Environmental Audit, Public Accounts or the Joint Committee on Human Rights, are not tied to specific departments but do have a specific, thematic remit.

5 <https://www.parliament.uk/bankingstandards>

6 H. White *Select Committees Under Scrutiny* Institute for Government 2015, p.15–17

7 J. Beer *Public Inquiries* Oxford University Press 2011, p.6

is both cross-party and bicameral agreement that it is the appropriate approach to take.⁸ Whether these conditions are present in the case of the coronavirus or not, we found no great appetite for employing a Parliamentary Commission rather than a public inquiry to investigate the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic. Jason Beer QC noted practical difficulties of Parliament replacing the public inquiry process.

The resources, abstractions and different skillsets needed to conduct an inquiry of that kind are inconsistent with all the other important, essential work that Parliament has to carry out. I just don't think that it is feasible When you look at the range of issues, it would take a parliamentary commission a couple of years, with all members of the commission devoting their time to that. It would require 20, 30, 40 or 50 staff to service its needs. I just don't think it is feasible.⁹

9. The prevailing view was that Parliament should be playing a much greater role once public inquiries have reported. We return to this in more detail in chapter five.

10. Whilst the Parliamentary Commission into Banking Standards demonstrates that Parliament can, under the right circumstances, provide an alternative to public inquiries, in the case of the coronavirus pandemic, an independent public inquiry is the most appropriate means to scrutinise the Government's coronavirus response. The available resources and time obligations would risk overwhelming any parliamentarians involved and would prevent them from fulfilling their main responsibilities. However, a Parliamentary Commission could be used to investigate matters not covered in a public inquiry, providing it can be demonstrated that it is the most appropriate vehicle for doing so.

Inquiry purpose

11. Whilst all public inquiries review events, the purpose of conducting the review can vary. Some inquiries have been focussed on establishing exactly what has occurred or focussed on accountability and, to a greater or lesser extent, apportioning blame for something that has gone badly wrong. Others may be more forward-looking, focussing on lesson learning and making recommendations for changes to policy. Dr Alistair Stark (University of Queensland) also noted the symbolic importance of public inquiries after a traumatic event.¹⁰ The Anticorruption Coalition also highlighted the role of public inquiries in maintaining or restoring trust and confidence in public institutions.¹¹ Sir Robert Francis QC noted the cathartic effect of being listened to that inquiries can provide the bereaved or others directly impacted by the events that have led to the establishment of an inquiry.¹²

12. The primary purpose of the inquiry should determine the way it is organised. It should affect the type of chair and panel appointed to conduct the inquiry, the terms of reference, how the inquiry is conducted, whether statutory powers are used, the nature of the outputs from it and the timeframe within which the inquiry is conducted. The difficulty with pursuing two more of these within the same inquiry is that constructing

8 A. Tyrie [The Poodle Bites Back](#) Centre for Policy Studies 2015, p.44–15

9 [Q207](#)

10 [RCC0018](#)

11 [RCC0019](#)

12 [Q223](#)

an inquiry for one might not leave it well equipped to pursue the other; as Jason Beer QC noted, “the possible aims and objectives of an investigation point in very different directions, depending on the purpose for which the investigation is being carried out”.¹³ Those adopting ways of working akin to a court room and led by a judge, for example, are more suited to establishing facts and accountability and not necessarily best suited to develop recommendations for improved policy. This is because their adversarial nature:

can encourage a perception in government that learning is not the priority and that the inquiry is more interested in blame than lesson-learning. When this occurs, witnesses clamp-up ensuring biased evidence and implementing agencies reject recommendations. Non-statutory inquiries that pursue lesson-learning through more typical public-managerial evidence gathering do not typically suffer these problems and tend to get implemented more comprehensively.¹⁴

13. *The coronavirus pandemic did not arise because of human error or systemic failures of policy. Consequently, a public inquiry into how the Government has responded to the coronavirus pandemic should be primarily focussed on improving policy. It should ensure that the right lessons are learnt from any mistakes that have been made. Accountability cannot be ignored: for learning to take place, it is important to understand the events that have occurred, the decisions that were taken and the reasons for that. The impact of decisions on those most directly affected by them must be understood. There must be honesty about mistakes made. But the public inquiry should be forward-looking and the primary purpose of any look backwards should not be to apportion blame but to understand how to ensure that the country is better prepared for any future pandemic. The inquiry should be organised on this basis. This should include avoiding the excess adversarialism of the quasi court-style proceedings of some inquiries.*

14. The primary purpose of the inquiry should also inform whether or not the inquiry is established on a statutory basis. The Inquiries Act 2005 provides a legislative basis for public inquiries, but it is often not used and many high-profile inquiries have been set up without recourse to the Act. In many instances, the impact of the legislation on the conduct of the inquiry has been limited. However, the Act gives the inquiry recourse to a range of statutory powers, including the power to compel witnesses to give evidence or produce documents and to take evidence under oath. Unlike Select Committees, there are sanctions for failing to comply with a statutory inquiry, including up to 51 weeks imprisonment and fines of up to £1,000.

15. The Act also prescribes certain ways in which statutory inquiries should work. For instance, there is a presumption in favour of public proceedings and the expectation that papers will be published. The circumstances under which provisions such as these may be waived are set out in the Act and decisions by the Chair to do so are often the subject of legal challenge.¹⁵ These procedures can prove somewhat unwieldy. Jason Beer QC said that:

13 [Q190](#)

14 [RC0018](#). Also E. Norris and M. Sheppard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.17

15 E.g. [Inquiries Act 2005](#) S19

A non-statutory inquiry is nimbler; it is less of a super tanker and therefore is able to move at a faster pace and at less cost. It is perhaps less hidebound by the procedural rights given to participants in a statutory inquiry, such as the right to make opening and closing statements, to ask questions and to receive warning letters.¹⁶

16. Where there is no need for statutory powers to be used, a non-statutory inquiry certainly offers a more streamlined vehicle. The Cabinet Manual suggests that non-statutory inquiries be considered where all the relevant parties to the inquiry have agreed to cooperate.¹⁷ Reflecting on chairing a non-statutory inquiry, and having secured the agreement of the Permanent Secretaries of the relevant government departments to cooperate, Lord Butler felt that his inquiry was able to operate without the need of the statutory powers contained in the Act.¹⁸ Jason Beer QC felt that statutory powers would be less significant given the primary source of evidence will be the government.¹⁹ And they may be less significant if the primary focus of an inquiry is policy development rather than accountability.²⁰ Dr Alistair Stark (University of Queensland) also noted the limited effectiveness of statutory powers, with those compelled to appear potentially proving reluctant to give up more than the minimum information required of them.²¹ Cooperation will be more effective than compulsion.

17. Nonetheless, the Committee heard arguments in favour of establishing a statutory inquiry even if powers of compulsion are not likely to be needed. Some view evidence gathering under oath as “totemic” and may view a non-statutory inquiry as of inferior status.²² Statutory inquiries also have a recourse to statutory powers if it emerges that they are needed after all.²³

18. ***It is clear that non-statutory inquiries are able to proceed more flexibly outside the confines of the Inquiries Act. Their reliance on cooperation can also create an environment that is more conducive for evidence gathering. Nonetheless, the safeguard that the statutory powers provide for accessing evidence or administering oaths means that it would be preferable that an inquiry into the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic should be established under the Inquiries Act.***

19. The tension between competing purposes for an inquiry is particularly apparent in discussions about the timeframe within which an inquiry should be conducted. Research by the Institute for Government shows that the average length of time for a public inquiry is over two years, with many taking in excess of five years. The Saville Inquiry (“the Bloody Sunday Inquiry”) took 13 years, for example.²⁴

20. The need to balance competing priorities, including regarding timescale, led several of our witnesses to advocate more flexibility in inquiry form. The COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK recommend that the inquiry take advantage of the powers contained within section 24 of the Inquiries Act allowing the publication of interim

16 [Q192](#)

17 Cabinet Office [The Cabinet Manual](#) 2011, para. 6.35

18 [Q226](#)

19 [Q192](#)

20 [Q213](#) (Jason Beer QC)

21 [Q212](#)

22 [Q192](#) (Jason Beer QC)

23 [RC0027](#) (Institute for Government)

24 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.14

reports.²⁵ However, Emma Norris (Institute for Government) warned that given the time it takes from an inquiry being established to actually gathering evidence, even publishing an interim report may be too late to influence policy ahead of any coronavirus second wave. This is particularly the case if the inquiry is a statutory one.²⁶ She suggested that a rapid inquiry focussed on immediate policy lessons ahead of any second wave of the pandemic could be conducted separately from a larger inquiry which would include a focus on both accountability as well as on longer term policy learning. The British Medical Association advocated a similar approach in their written submission.²⁷

21. There are avoidable factors which contribute to the duration but a thorough investigation into what has taken place will inevitably take time which can limit inquiries' usefulness as a vehicle for making timely improvements to policy. Dame Una O'Brien noted how "petty" squabbles over resources with the sponsoring department slowed progress,²⁸ for example, and inquiry terms of reference need to be manageable (a topic we return to in Chapter Four). However, there are practical issues that limit the pace at which public inquiries can proceed. Sir Robert Francis QC's experience as an inquiry chair highlights some of the issues that have to be dealt with before an inquiry can even begin its evidence gathering. This would be the case for both statutory and non-statutory inquiries:

I was presented with a very capable support secretariat, but we were all starting with a blank piece of paper when it came to setting up resources, so there was no idea where we would have offices or where we were going to get equipment from. We were promised resources, and they arrived, but all that took time.²⁹

22. Given the time that public inquiries typically take, our concern is that it is already too late to conduct a public inquiry of any sort ahead of any resurgence of the disease in the autumn or winter. Even with the greater procedural flexibility offered by a non-statutory inquiry, it is doubtful whether an inquiry substantial enough to offer genuine value can be conducted in time for its lessons to be integrated in time for any second wave this winter.

23. However, we are convinced of the value of scrutiny in improving policy. Departments have presumably been conducting ongoing in-house assessments of what has and has not worked well with their responses to the pandemic. Departments should make these assessments available to the relevant select committees to scrutinise the Government's response in the areas within their remit. Summaries should also be made public.

24. The Government has committed to holding a public inquiry into the response to the coronavirus. It is correct to do so. The Prime Minister has said, however, that the inquiry will not be held whilst efforts to combat the pandemic continue. Given the time an inquiry typically takes to begin its evidence gathering, the Government should announce the inquiry into the response to the coronavirus immediately to allow time to set up the secretariat and other administrative functions which should mean it could start taking evidence early next year. Delaying the set-up will inevitably delay the inquiry's ability to start work in earnest.

25 [RCC0025](#)

26 [Q216](#)

27 [RCC0029](#)

28 [Q263](#)

29 [Q258](#)

3 Composition

Choice of Chair

25. The significance of the role of inquiry chair was stressed in the evidence we heard. Dr Alistair Stark (University of Queensland) said that the choice of chair will “influence almost everything. It is crucial that it is given to the right person”.³⁰ Similarly, Dame Una O’Brien, who, as Permanent Secretary for the Department of Health was involved in appointing inquiry chairs, said:

You cannot overstate the significance of the choice of the chair, with the authority, impartiality and depth of experience that that individual brings to leading the entire machinery of the inquiry. He or she is also the public face of the inquiry.³¹

26. The significance of the choice of chair is, however, at odds with the somewhat haphazard nature in which they have often been appointed. The Inquiries Act makes clear that the choice of Chair (and any panel members) lies with the sponsoring minister, but it includes no further detail.³² The Cabinet Office Guidance emphasises that the impartiality of the prospective chair must be beyond doubt and suggests that advice might be sought from relevant professional or regulatory bodies about prospective candidates.³³

27. In practice, Dr Stark (University of Queensland) told us that chairs were often appointed on the basis of “a hunch”:

Typically, a phone call goes out to someone, or several people, and they say yes or no. In my experience of speaking to sponsoring Ministers and the chairs themselves, there is no real logic other than gut instinct.³⁴

Dame Una’s experience as Permanent Secretary seemed to confirm this relatively *ad hoc* approach:

what usually happens is that there is a conversation between the legal advisers to the Department, the Secretary of State, the permanent secretary and the Cabinet Office. That would normally be how the process would work in appointing a chairman of an independent inquiry.³⁵

28. This impression was further supported by the former inquiry chairs we heard from. Lord Butler told us he was in a car in Mexico when he received a call asking him to chair the Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction.³⁶ Similarly, Sir Robert Francis QC told us he was received a phone call inviting him to chair the first inquiry into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust and giving him just an hour to decide whether to accept - a decision which he described as “life changing”.³⁷ Research by the Institute

30 [Q201](#)

31 [Q230](#)

32 [Inquiries Act 2005 s4](#)

33 Cabinet Office [Inquiries Guidance: Guidance for Inquiry Chairs and Secretaries, and Sponsor Departments](#) (n.d.), p.3

34 [Q204](#)

35 [Q240](#)

36 [Q232](#)

37 [Q231](#)

for Government suggests this experience is common, with many chairs reporting they that received a call from the Minister's office, out of the blue, telling them they had been nominated and asking for an almost immediate answer or, in one case, congratulating them on their appointment.³⁸

29. *The role of the inquiry chair is clearly fundamental to the way in which the inquiry is conducted as well as to how it is perceived. Chairs need to be seen to be impartial but also as authoritative and sympathetic. Given this significance, the rather haphazard nature of many appointments seems to us inadequate. The appointment of chair lies with the relevant Minister. However, in the case of a public inquiry into coronavirus, a far greater degree of transparency in the appointment of the chair is required. The appointing minister should be able to demonstrate that proper consultation and deliberation has been conducted before the appointment is made. The appointment should be subject to a pre-commencement hearing with the relevant select committee, given the high level of parliamentary interest in this inquiry.*

30. There has been a tendency for Ministers to appoint judges as inquiry chairs. The Institute for Government have noted that judges have been appointed to chair over two thirds of public inquiries.³⁹ There are legitimate reasons why judges might be the most appropriate choice of inquiry chair, even where the inquiry is not primarily concerned complex legal issues. Judges have a reputation for professional impartiality as well as for evaluating and interrogating evidence, for instance, and they will have experience of running hearings.⁴⁰ Jason Beer QC also noted that they are usually available.⁴¹ Dr Stark (University of Queensland) added the symbolic importance of a judge-led inquiry, especially for the bereaved.

A statutory inquiry led by a judge and facilitated by counsel assisting via court-room-like processes is essential post-crisis if a large loss of life has occurred. This is because of the symbolic importance of these features. Post-crisis trauma at the national level demands the symbolism that comes through the public questioning of powerful decision makers and the families of those who have lost relatives from COVID-19 need to feel represented by a process with authority.⁴²

31. However, the Cabinet Office Guidance says that “thinking through what type of Chair is required is critical” and notes that this need not always result in a judicial appointment.⁴³ Whilst there good reasons why judges might be the most suitable choice of chair, Ministers should not simply default to a judge. Where an inquiry is not primarily focussed on establishing facts and accountability but on generating clear policy recommendations, for example, a judge may not be the most suitable appointment, a point made by Jason Beer QC and others:

If in fact the issues are not neat, fact-finding exercises—why did a plane crash, why did a ferry capsized, and those kind of issues—but are instead

38 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.16

39 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.16. They found 44 of the 68 inquiries between 1990 and 2017 had judicial chairs.

40 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.16

41 [Q201](#)

42 [RC0018](#)

43 Cabinet Office [Inquiries Guidance: Guidance for Inquiry Chairs and Secretaries, and Sponsor Departments](#) (n.d.), p.3

broader issues of social policy, which the coronavirus inquiry might be, a subject-matter expert, or experts, may be better. In particular, that is the case where culpability issues either are not in play or are playing second fiddle to the important work of shaping future responses.⁴⁴

32. There are aspects of the court room that do not necessarily lend themselves to effective public inquiries. While they may be suited to uncovering facts or apportioning blame, it was suggested to us that inquiries that adopt a quasi-legal style or “court room style drama” might not be the most appropriate for developing practical policy recommendations.⁴⁵ Emma Norris (Institute for Government) also noted the tendency for judicial chairs to view the publication of their inquiries’ reports as the end of their involvement, akin to the end of a case. Non-judicial chairs had, by contrast, shown a greater willingness to remain involved even after the end of the inquiry, in particular in maintaining pressure on Government to implement their inquiry’s recommendations.⁴⁶

33. The Committee has recommended that an inquiry into the Government’s response to the coronavirus outbreak should be forward-looking and policy focused. As a result, thought should be given to a non-judicial appointment as Inquiry Chair. The Minister should clearly demonstrate the consideration that has been given to the choice of appointment, in accordance with the Cabinet Office Guidance and as part of greater transparency for which we have called. This should include publishing the candidate specifications in advance of the appointment being made and allowing a brief amount of time for feedback on the documentation.

Panel

34. Inquiry chairs can be supported by a panel. As with the choice of chair, the decision to appoint a panel, as well as its composition, lies with the sponsoring minister (though chairs should be consulted about panel appointments).⁴⁷ Panels are a means by which the expertise of the chair can be supplemented in other relevant areas. Lord Butler noted how panels can be used to ensure a degree of political balance and party “buy in” to the inquiry process.⁴⁸ However, the Committee would hope that such partisan considerations will not dominate any inquiry into coronavirus. Instead, the main advantage of panels is that they extend the range of expertise and experience that can be brought to bear in the inquiry beyond just that of the chair. Emma Norris (Institute for Government) said that

panels that bring in a broader range of expertise are almost always helpful, particularly when an inquiry is dealing with a large scope that spans multiple subject areas. That will clearly be the case with any inquiry into coronavirus, which will have to consider issues of healthcare, regulation, epidemiology and governance—such a broad and challenging set of issues that you absolutely need a panel that can bring in as broad a set of expertise as possible to advise the chair.⁴⁹

44 [Q201](#) (Jason Beer QC)

45 [RC0018](#)

46 [Q201](#)

47 [Inquiries Act 2005 s4](#)

48 [Q233](#)

49 [Q205](#)

35. As chair, Sir Robert Francis QC did not have the support of a panel but used advisers to broaden the range of expertise available to his inquiry. He told us that attempting to use a panel to cover the range of expertise required for his inquiry would have required it to be unmanageably large.⁵⁰

36. A balance needs to be struck between incorporating all the expertise an inquiry needs within its panel and the need to ensure that the panel is small enough to work effectively. However, whilst we acknowledge that external advisers can be used, the breadth of any inquiry into COVID-19 is likely to be so wide-ranging that a panel will be a necessity. Even if a panel is appointed, the breadth of the inquiry is likely to require further expert input from advisers. For the inquiry to usefully incorporate such advice, as well as the range of evidence it will inevitably receive and then to synthesise this into workable recommendations, a high calibre panel will be fundamental.

37. As with the appointment of the chair, the Government should be fully transparent in the appointment of panel members.

4 Terms of reference

38. The coronavirus pandemic has involved the most far-reaching range of government interventions seen in peacetime. Inevitably then, the range of issues to be covered by any public inquiry is going to be exceptionally wide. Jason Beer QC gave an indication of the breadth of the issues that might be included:

I wrote a list of the things that it might look at: past response to pandemics, the implementation of recommendations from previous reviews, the fitness for purpose of the Civil Contingencies Act, the role of the World Health Organisation in providing timely and accurate advice to the Government, decisions as to when to restrict movement, the introduction of social distancing, the closure of schools, the closure of businesses, the provision of information to the public, the use and misuse of statistics, the role of the media, the approach taken to care homes, the availability of PPE, the availability of other medical equipment, including ventilators, the non-use of the EU procurement route, the impact on members of BAME communities, the impact on elective treatments not being carried out, decisions to lift restrictions, differences in approaches across the four nations—my list goes on and on.⁵¹

39. The terms of reference for public inquiries are set by the minister establishing the inquiry. However, the Inquiries Act obliges the minister to consult the inquiry chair (or proposed chair) before setting out the terms of reference for statutory inquiries.⁵² However, it seems that such consultation is often tokenistic and, in practice, chairs may have little or no input. Jason Beer QC said:

having been on the inside on some inquiries, generally what happens is the chair gets given the terms of reference, and then very shortly afterwards they are made public. Although the public statement says the terms have been agreed with the chair, the extent to which there can be meaningful participation in their formation has been relatively limited. It tends to be a *fait accompli*.⁵³

40. The terms of reference for Lord Butler's inquiry were the outcome of negotiations between political parties which left little scope for his input.⁵⁴ Dame Una O'Brien also found party political negotiation as the basis for establishing the terms of reference for the Renewable Heat Incentive inquiry.⁵⁵

41. The Institute for Government have noted the increasing length and detail of inquiry terms of reference. There is a legitimate concern that they are set too early and leave inquiry or panels too little flexibility in following lines of inquiry as they emerge. Lord Butler told us he simply ignored parts of the terms of reference, which he viewed as "absurd". In his view, not to have done so would have made it impossible for the inquiry to report by the deadline they were set.⁵⁶ Dame Una O'Brien emphasised the need to ensure that terms of reference focussed on those things that only an inquiry could investigate.⁵⁷

51 [Q207](#)

52 [Inquiries Act 2005 s5\(4\)](#)

53 [Q214](#)

54 [Q245](#)

55 [Q250](#)

56 [Q245](#)

57 [Q250](#)

42. In some instances, genuine consultation does take place. The example of the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire, where draft terms of reference were the subject of consultation with local residents, survivors and other affected families, was noted.⁵⁸ Sir Robert Francis QC said that he felt that the authority and effectiveness of the terms of reference for his inquiry derived from the consultation process.⁵⁹ Similarly, the Institute for Government have written the legitimacy of an inquiry can be improved through consultation:

The idea of such consultation is to ensure that the expectations of different groups—including affected parties—are acknowledged from the outset, and to help build trust in the inquiry.⁶⁰

43. However, whilst consultation can widen the range of viewpoints incorporated into the terms of reference, it can equally present difficulties. Jason Beer QC struck a sceptical note about the value of extensive consultation on terms of reference.

I am not convinced about the idea of a consultation period. That happened in a very recent inquiry, the Grenfell Tower inquiry, and from my sense from the outside, that led to increased delay and frustration, rather than any meaningfully better terms of reference.⁶¹

44. Whilst more positive towards consultation, the Institute for Government has acknowledged that it can create difficulties. In particular, the consultation process can lead to pressure to extend terms of reference too far.⁶² A balance needs to be struck between comprehensive terms of reference and the need for a focussed and manageable inquiry.⁶³ Timeliness is also an important consideration, with overly broad terms of reference one of the factors that contribute to excessively drawn out public inquiries.

45. Inquiries should have a clear purpose, be it policy learning or accountability, and the terms of reference should be determined by that. Consultation with those who have been directly affected by the coronavirus pandemic can make a significant contribution to a public inquiry. Gaining the input of those with direct experience of the issues being inquired into can ensure the inquiry covers the most important questions far better than would be the case if the terms of reference were to emerge fully formed from a ministers' office. However, the expectations need to be managed and a single inquiry cannot address every issue. The minister and chair must balance the need to be inclusive with the need to allow the inquiry to maintain focus and to report in a timely manner.

46. The Government should, alongside the terms of reference, set out its plans to cover issues that cannot be included in the public inquiry. This will allow those who are impacted by the wider issues to understand how and when they can contribute to lessons learned and allow the public inquiry to focus on the issues with which it has been tasked.

58 Grenfell Tower [Inquiry Consultation meetings on the terms of reference](#) 17 July 2017

59 [Q248](#)

60 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.15

61 [Q214](#)

62 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.15

63 [RC0027](#) (Institute for Government)

The devolved nations

47. The Committee considered whether the devolved administrations should be included in a single, UK-wide public inquiry. Important aspects of the UK's response to the coronavirus pandemic fall within the competency of the devolved administrations and there has been a degree of policy divergence between them and the UK government.

48. The territorial aspects of statutory public inquiries are mainly addressed in sections 27–31 of the Inquiries Act. The Act limits the ability of the UK Government to establish inquiries into devolved matters without the consent of the relevant devolved administration. Under the Act, ministers of the UK Government can establish inquiries which cover the entire UK. The Act's Explanatory notes state that:

It is envisaged that UK Ministers will not usually set up inquiries into devolved matters without the agreement of the relevant devolved administration.⁶⁴

49. UK Government ministers cannot include in the terms of reference anything that would require evidence to be received or recommendations to be made on areas which are entirely or primarily the responsibility of a devolved administration without the consulting that administration.⁶⁵ Where a UK-wide inquiry wishes to receive evidence on devolved matters, the inquiry chair is expected to consult devolved administrations before compelling them to produce evidence.⁶⁶ These restrictions would be avoided with a non-statutory inquiry. But such an inquiry would lack the statutory powers to compel the participation of witness or to take evidence under oath. Professor Aileen McHarg wrote that the Government could try to circumvent the provisions of the Inquiries Act with a bespoke piece of legislation giving it statutory powers to inquire into devolved areas. But such a piece of legislation would be subject to the Sewel convention and would require the consent of the devolved parliaments.⁶⁷ There is little way in which the UK Government could include devolved issues within the remit of a public inquiry without the cooperation of the devolved governments.

50. *The Committee believes that each administration, be it the UK or devolved should establish its own inquiry. This is because most aspects of the response to the pandemic are devolved matters but doing such also ensures proper attention is granted to each of the nations' response, it is the route to a statutory inquiry that requires the least negotiation and deliberation and it is still possible to understand the UK-wide response by including cooperation between administrations in the terms of reference within each inquiry. The UK Government should consider the coordinating role between the Governments of the UK, including public communications.*

Recommendations and implementation

51. Inquiries end when the final report has been published and there is very little formal process surrounding the next steps.⁶⁸ Where some inquiries bring about substantial

64 [Inquiries Act 2005 Explanatory Notes s27](#)

65 [Inquiries Act 2005 s27\(2\)](#)

66 [Inquiries Act 2005 s27\(4\)](#)

67 [RCC0028](#)

68 [Inquiries Act 2005 s14\(1a\)](#)

change, others do not and their recommendations are quietly shelved.⁶⁹ Once the inquiry has reported, responsibility for the next steps lies with the Government. It must decide whether to accept the inquiry's recommendations and decide if and how they should be implemented.

52. The Government is under no obligation to accept the recommendations of an inquiry, but it is expected to respond. This response might be through a written or oral statement in Parliament or a written report. In the response, it is expected to indicate which recommendations it accepts.⁷⁰ However, responses vary in their substantiveness. A review of a sample of government responses to public inquiries by the National Audit Office (NAO) found that it was often unclear whether recommendations had been accepted or not. The NAO found that, for their sample, 45% of recommendations were accepted by government, 33% were 'accepted in principle', 'partially accepted' and 'subject to wider reform', 7% were explicitly rejected, and no clear response was given to the remaining 15%.⁷¹

53. Governments are within their right to reject inquiry recommendations and in some instances may be correct to do so. As Dame Una O'Brien said, inquiry panels are not "completely omniscient":

sometimes their recommendations do not quite fit, having sat inside government and received recommendations from various inquiries. Of course, life moves on, and they have to be reinterpreted for a changing context.⁷²

54. However, the Cabinet Office Inquiries Guidance requires only that the Government indicates which recommendations it accepts. It is under no obligation to give a detailed explanation for why it has accepted a recommendation or not. Some government responses have done this, but it is not always the case.

55. *With an event as far reaching and impactful as the coronavirus pandemic, government policy has been put under enormous strain, so it is important that the Government can clearly demonstrate that it is learning lessons. The Committee would expect the Government's response to include a full explanation of why it does not accept a particular recommendation. It should also adopt this "comply or explain" approach where a recommendation is only partially accepted or addressed by different means.*

56. Responsibility for implementation of inquiry recommendations largely falls to Government. But holding Government to account for this implementation is somewhat arbitrary. Some witnesses wanted inquiry chairs and panel members to play a role in maintaining pressure on government to implement recommendations.⁷³ Emma Norris (Institute for Government) noted instances where chairs had played this more activist role after their inquiries had ended.⁷⁴ One of the arguments against the appointment of judicial chairs was their unwillingness to adopt this post-inquiry role.⁷⁵

69 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.26

70 Cabinet Office [Inquiries Guidance: Guidance for Inquiry Chairs and Secretaries, and Sponsor Departments](#) (n.d.), p.15

71 NAO [Investigation into government-funded inquiries](#) HC 836 Session 2017–2019 23 May 2018, para. 3.16

72 [Q266](#)

73 [Q201](#) (Alistair Stark); [Q202](#) (Jason Beer)

74 [Q201](#)

75 See paras 30–32

57. The former inquiry chairs and panel members took a different view. Dame Una O'Brien felt that it was unrealistic to expect chairs and panel members to continue to be the voice of the inquiry once it has ceased to exist.⁷⁶ Similarly, Baroness Prashar felt that the responsibility for implementation lay with the Government rather than her and her fellow inquiry members.⁷⁷ Lord Butler engaged with the Government's implementation effort when called upon and Sir Robert Francis QC engaged with the health sector about his inquiry's conclusions. But neither felt a responsibility to ensure their inquiry's recommendations were being implemented.⁷⁸

58. Even where chairs and panel members would like to hold the Government to account for the implementation of their inquiries' recommendations, there are clear obstacles to them doing so. Once inquiries end, they lose the support of their inquiry secretariat and their status as inquiry chair or panel member. As private citizens, they may also lack access to information about the state of implementation. As a consequence, the responsibility for holding government to account for implementation falls to others.

59. Established for the duration of each Parliament and tasked with scrutinising the administration, expenditure and policy of the respective departments, departmental select committees were singled out as the best vehicles for holding Government to account for its implementation of inquiry recommendations. Some committees have been active in pursuing the Government over its implementation of the recommendations of some public inquiries. But the lack of clear procedure surrounding the period after an inquiry has reported means that this has not always been the case. The Institute for Government found that only a small minority of public inquiries received full or even incidental scrutiny after reporting.⁷⁹ Their report recommended adding the scrutiny of inquiry recommendations and their implementation to the Liaison Committee's list of select committee core tasks. There was some frustration apparent amongst some of our witnesses that select committees have not engaged more positively with inquiry findings. Sir Robert Francis QC included in his recommendations that the Health Select Committee scrutinise the implementation of his inquiry recommendations and felt that, for a period at least, it had done so effectively.⁸⁰ But both Lord Butler and Baroness Prashar felt that the relevant select committees had missed the opportunity to do.⁸¹

60. *Select committees control their own agendas and it is up to their chairs and members whether to hold the Government to account for the implementation of inquiry recommendations. However, it is clear that, for the value of an inquiry to be realised, there needs to be a some means by which Government is held to account for the steps it takes in response to the inquiry findings. Too often that has not been the case. The breadth of the areas likely to be covered by the inquiry means that a number of select committees will have oversight of key areas of the Government response. The Liaison Committee should consider adding the 'scrutiny of the Government's responses to public inquiries' to the list of core tasks for departmental select committees.*

76 [Q266](#).

77 [Q265](#)

78 [Qq267-268](#)

79 E. Norris and M. Shephard [How public inquiries can lead to change](#) Institute for Government (2017), p.25-26

80 [Q268](#)

81 [Q267](#) (Lord Butler) [Q265](#) (Baroness Prashar)

61. In addition to select committee scrutiny, Dr Alistair Stark (University of Queensland) noted the successful use of implementation monitors in holding governments to account in other jurisdictions.⁸² These might then feed into further oversight by the relevant parliamentary committee. He suggested that the NAO would be well placed to play such a role.

62. The National Audit Office should work with select committees to monitor the implementation of all the elements of the recommendations of the coronavirus public inquiry. It should provide periodic reports to the relevant select committees updating them on the state of implementation across the range of areas covered.

Conclusions and recommendations

Inquiry purpose

1. *Whilst the Parliamentary Commission into Banking Standards demonstrates that Parliament can, under the right circumstances, provide an alternative to public inquiries, in the case of the coronavirus pandemic, an independent public inquiry is the most appropriate means to scrutinise the Government's coronavirus response. The available resources and time obligations would risk overwhelming any parliamentarians involved and would prevent them from fulfilling their main responsibilities. However, a Parliamentary Commission could be used to investigate matters not covered in a public inquiry, providing it can be demonstrated that it is the most appropriate vehicle for doing so. (Paragraph 10)*
2. *The coronavirus pandemic did not arise because of human error or systemic failures of policy. Consequently, a public inquiry into how the Government has responded to the coronavirus pandemic should be primarily focussed on improving policy. It should ensure that the right lessons are learnt from any mistakes that have been made. Accountability cannot be ignored: for learning to take place, it is important to understand the events that have occurred, the decisions that were taken and the reasons for that. The impact of decisions on those most directly affected by them must be understood. There must be honesty about mistakes made. But the public inquiry should be forward-looking and the primary purpose of any look backwards should not be to apportion blame but to understand how to ensure that the country is better prepared for any future pandemic. The inquiry should be organised on this basis. This should include avoiding the excess adversarialism of the quasi court-style proceedings of some inquiries. (Paragraph 13)*
3. *It is clear that non-statutory inquiries are able to proceed more flexibly outside the confines of the Inquiries Act. Their reliance on cooperation can also create an environment that is more conducive for evidence gathering. Nonetheless, the safeguard that the statutory powers provide for accessing evidence or administering oaths means that it would be preferable that an inquiry into the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic should be established under the Inquiries Act. (Paragraph 18)*
4. *Given the time that public inquiries typically take, our concern is that it is already too late to conduct a public inquiry of any sort ahead of any resurgence of the disease in the autumn or winter. Even with the greater procedural flexibility offered by a non-statutory inquiry, it is doubtful whether an inquiry substantial enough to offer genuine value can be conducted in time for its lessons to be integrated in time for any second wave this winter. (Paragraph 22)*
5. *However, we are convinced of the value of scrutiny in improving policy. Departments have presumably been conducting ongoing in-house assessments of what has and has not worked well with their responses to the pandemic. Departments should make these assessments available to the relevant select committees to scrutinise the Government's response in the areas within their remit. Summaries should also be made public. (Paragraph 23)*

6. *The Government has committed to holding a public inquiry into the response to the coronavirus. It is correct to do so. The Prime Minister has said, however, that the inquiry will not be held whilst efforts to combat the pandemic continue. Given the time an inquiry typically takes to begin its evidence gathering, the Government should announce the inquiry into the response to the coronavirus immediately to allow time to set up the secretariat and other administrative functions which should mean it could start taking evidence early next year. Delaying the set-up will inevitably delay the inquiry's ability to start work in earnest. (Paragraph 24)*

Composition

7. *The role of the inquiry chair is clearly fundamental to the way in which the inquiry is conducted as well as to how it is perceived. Chairs need to be seen to be impartial but also as authoritative and sympathetic. Given this significance, the rather haphazard nature of many appointments seems to us inadequate. The appointment of chair lies with the relevant Minister. However, in the case of a public inquiry into coronavirus, a far greater degree of transparency in the appointment of the chair is required. The appointing minister should be able to demonstrate that proper consultation and deliberation has been conducted before the appointment is made. The appointment should be subject to a pre-commencement hearing with the relevant select committee, given the high level of parliamentary interest in this inquiry. (Paragraph 29)*
8. *The Committee has recommended that an inquiry into the Government's response to the coronavirus outbreak should be forward-looking and policy focused. As a result, thought should be given to a non-judicial appointment as Inquiry Chair. The Minister should clearly demonstrate the consideration that has been given to the choice of appointment, in accordance with the Cabinet Office Guidance and as part of greater transparency for which we have called. This should include publishing the candidate specifications in advance of the appointment being made and allowing a brief amount of time for feedback on the documentation. (Paragraph 33)*
9. *A balance needs to be struck between incorporating all the expertise an inquiry needs within its panel and the need to ensure that the panel is small enough to work effectively. However, whilst we acknowledge that external advisers can be used, the breadth of any inquiry into COVID-19 is likely to be so wide-ranging that a panel will be a necessity. Even if a panel is appointed, the breadth of the inquiry is likely to require further expert input from advisers. For the inquiry to usefully incorporate such advice, as well as the range of evidence it will inevitably receive and then to synthesise this into workable recommendations, a high calibre panel will be fundamental. (Paragraph 36)*
10. *As with the appointment of the chair, the Government should be fully transparent in the appointment of panel members. (Paragraph 37)*

Terms of reference

11. *Inquiries should have a clear purpose, be it policy learning or accountability, and the terms of reference should be determined by that. Consultation with those who have been directly affected by the coronavirus pandemic can make a significant contribution to a public inquiry. Gaining the input of those with direct experience*

of the issues being inquired into can ensure the inquiry covers the most important questions far better than would be the case if the terms of reference were to emerge fully formed from a ministers' office. However, the expectations need to be managed and a single inquiry cannot address every issue. The minister and chair must balance the need to be inclusive with the need to allow the inquiry to maintain focus and to report in a timely manner. (Paragraph 45)

12. *The Government should, alongside the terms of reference, set out its plans to cover issues that cannot be included in the public inquiry. This will allow those who are impacted by the wider issues to understand how and when they can contribute to lessons learned and allow the public inquiry to focus on the issues with which it has been tasked. (Paragraph 46)*
13. *The Committee believes that each administration, be it the UK or devolved should establish its own inquiry. This is because most aspects of the response to the pandemic are devolved matters but doing such also ensures proper attention is granted to each of the nations' response, it is the route to a statutory inquiry that requires the least negotiation and deliberation and it is still possible to understand the UK-wide response by including cooperation between administrations in the terms of reference within each inquiry. The UK Government should consider the coordinating role between the Governments of the UK, including public communications. (Paragraph 50)*
14. *With an event as far reaching and impactful as the coronavirus pandemic, government policy has been put under enormous strain, so it is important that the Government can clearly demonstrate that it is learning lessons. The Committee would expect the Government's response to include a full explanation of why it does not accept a particular recommendation. It should also adopt this "comply or explain" approach where a recommendation is only partially accepted or addressed by different means. (Paragraph 55)*
15. *Select committees control their own agendas and it is up to their chairs and members whether to hold the Government to account for the implementation of inquiry recommendations. However, it is clear that, for the value of an inquiry to be realised, there needs to be a some means by which Government is held to account for the steps it takes in response to the inquiry findings. Too often that has not been the case. The breadth of the areas likely to be covered by the inquiry means that a number of select committees will have oversight of key areas of the Government response. The Liaison Committee should consider adding the 'scrutiny of the Government's responses to public inquiries' to the list of core tasks for departmental select committees. (Paragraph 60)*
16. *The National Audit Office should work with select committees to monitor the implementation of all the elements of the recommendations of the coronavirus public inquiry. It should provide periodic reports to the relevant select committees updating them on the state of implementation across the range of areas covered. (Paragraph 62)*

Formal minutes

Tuesday 8 September 2020

Members Present

Mr William Wragg in the Chair

Ronnie Cowan	Tom Randall
Jackie Doyle Price	Lloyd Russell-Moyle
Rachel Hopkins	Karin Smyth
Mr David Jones	John Stevenson
David Mundell	

Draft Report (*A Public Inquiry into the Government's response to the Covid 19 Pandemic*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 62 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 134.

[Adjourned till Thursday 10 September 2019 at 1.55pm]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 16 June 2020

Raphael Hogarth, Associate at Institute for Government; **Dr. Ronan Cormacain**, Senior Research Fellow, Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, British Institute of International and Comparative Law; **Professor Aileen McHarg**, Professor of Public Law and Human Rights, Durham Law School [Q1–60](#)

Tuesday 23 June 2020

Michael Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, Europe and External Affairs, Scottish Parliament; **Jeremy Miles MS**, Counsel General for Wales and Minister for European Transition, Welsh Government; **Gordon Lyons MLA**, Junior Minister, the Executive Office, Northern Ireland Assembly [Q61–109](#)

Tuesday 14 July 2020

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, Paymaster General, Cabinet Office; **Edward Argar MP**, Minister of State, Department of Health and Social Care; **Katharine Hammond**, Head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office; **Clara Swinson**, Director General, Global and Public Health, Department of Health and Social Care [Q110–188](#)

Thursday 23 July 2020

Emma Norris, Director of Research, Institute for Government; **Dr Alister Stark**, School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland; **Jason Beer QC**, Specialist in public inquiries, inquests, police law, and regulatory law [Q189–218](#)

Dame Una O'Brien DCB, Former Permanent Secretary for Health and Panel Member of Renewable Heat Incentive Inquiry; **Sir Robert Francis**, Chair, Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry; **Lord Butler of Brockwell**, Chair, Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction; **Baroness Prashar**, Committee member, Iran Inquiry [Q219–268](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

RCC numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 A1 ([RCC0026](#))
- 2 Abrahamson, Elkan ([RCC0025](#))
- 3 Big Brother Watch ([RCC0011](#))
- 4 British Medical Association (BMA) ([RCC0029](#))
- 5 Collyer, Mr Adam ([RCC0005](#))
- 6 The Consultation Institute ([RCC0013](#))
- 7 Department of Health and Social Care ([RCC0017](#))
- 8 Groenewegen BEM, S.J. ([RCC0020](#))
- 9 Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum ([RCC0006](#))
- 10 Hardy, Ms Chloe ([RCC0022](#))
- 11 The Institute for Government ([RCC0027](#))
- 12 Institute for Government ([RCC0024](#))
- 13 Institute for Government ([RCC0012](#))
- 14 Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management (ICPEM) ([RCC0004](#))
- 15 Mind (Rhea Newman, Senior Parliamentary Officer) ([RCC0003](#))
- 16 Newcastle University (Dr. Alistair Clark, Reader in Politics) ([RCC0016](#))
- 17 NHS Providers (Mrs Susan Bahl, Head of Policy and Public Affairs) ([RCC0002](#))
- 18 OTHO UK (Mr Anthony Thompson, Director) ([RCC0010](#))
- 19 Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman ([RCC0021](#))
- 20 Professor Aileen McHarg ([RCC0028](#))
- 21 Southampton Law School (Dr Alun Gibbs, Associate Professor in Public Law) ([RCC0009](#))
- 22 Southampton Law School (Dr Asif Hameed, Lecturer in Law) ([RCC0009](#))
- 23 Trendall, Mr Philip ([RCC0015](#))
- 24 Trendall, Philip ([RCC0023](#))
- 25 UK Anti-Corruption Coalition, and Transparency International UK ([RCC0019](#))
- 26 University of Birmingham (Mr James Tudor-White, Scholar) ([RCC0007](#))
- 27 University of Queensland (Dr Alastair Stark, Senior Lecturer) ([RCC0018](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2019–21

First Report	Appointment of Rt Hon Lord Pickles as Chair of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments	HC 168
Second Report	Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Scrutiny 2018–19	HC 117
Third Report	Delivering the Government's infrastructure commitments through major projects	HC 125
Fourth Report	Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Government's handling of COVID-19	HC 377
First Special Report	Electoral law: The Urgent Need for Review: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019	HC 327