

## Report and Recommendations In Brief

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry is an independent public inquiry examining the response to, and impact of, the Covid-19 pandemic, to learn lessons for the future.

The scale of the pandemic was unprecedented; the Inquiry has a huge range of issues to cover.

The Chair of the Inquiry, the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE, decided to address this challenge by dividing its work into separate investigations known as modules. Each module is focused on a different topic with its own public hearings where the Chair hears evidence.

Following hearings, recommendations for changes are developed and put into a Module Report. These reports will contain findings from the evidence collected across each module and the Chair's recommendations for the future.



The first module, Module 1, focuses on the resilience and preparedness of the United Kingdom. The investigation examined the state of the UK's structures and the procedures in place to prepare for and respond to a pandemic.

Future reports will focus on specific areas, including:

- Core UK decision-making and political governance - including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Healthcare systems
- Vaccines and therapeutics
- Procurement and distribution of key equipment and supplies
- The care sector
- Test, trace and isolate programmes
- Children and young people
- The economic response to the pandemic



## Module 1: The Resilience and Preparedness of the United Kingdom

Politicians have to make tough decisions about how to use resources to prepare for emergencies. Preparing for a pandemic or any other emergency costs money, even if it is an event that might not happen.

However, the UK Covid-19 Inquiry has found that **the system of building preparedness for the pandemic - that is, our ability to deal with a pandemic - suffered from several significant flaws:**



Despite planning for an influenza (also known as flu) outbreak, our preparedness and resilience was not adequate for the global pandemic that occurred



Emergency planning was complicated by the many institutions and structures involved



The approach to risk assessment was flawed, resulting in inadequate planning to manage and prevent risks, and respond to them effectively



The UK government's outdated pandemic strategy, developed in 2011, was not flexible enough to adapt when faced with the pandemic in 2020



Emergency planning failed to put enough consideration into existing health and social inequalities and local authorities and volunteers were not adequately engaged



There was a failure to fully learn from past civil emergency exercises and outbreaks of disease



There was a lack of attention to the systems that would help test, trace, and isolate. Policy documents were outdated, involved complicated rules and procedures which can cause long delays, were full of jargon and were overly complex



Ministers, who are often without specialised training in civil contingencies, did not receive a broad enough range of scientific advice and often failed to challenge the advice they did get











Advisers lacked freedom and autonomy to express differing opinions, which led to a lack of diverse perspectives. Their advice was often undermined by "groupthink" - a phenomenon by which people in a group tend to think about the same things in the same way

If we had been better prepared, we could have avoided some of the massive financial, economic and human cost of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Inquiry's Module 1 Report therefore recommends a major overhaul of how the UK government and devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales prepare for whole-system civil emergencies.

### Recommendations

A comprehensive description of the recommendations can be found in the Module 1 Report. A summary of these are as follows:

-  A radical simplification of the civil emergency preparedness and resilience systems. This includes rationalising and streamlining the current bureaucracy and providing better and simpler Ministerial and official structures and leadership
-  A new approach to risk assessment that provides for a better and more comprehensive evaluation of a wider range of actual risks
-  A new UK-wide approach to the development of strategy, which learns lessons from the past and from regular civil emergency exercises, and takes proper account of existing inequalities and vulnerabilities
-  Better systems of data collection and sharing in advance of future pandemics, and the commissioning of a wider range of research projects
-  Holding a UK-wide pandemic response exercise at least every three years and publishing the outcome
-  Bringing in external expertise from outside government and the Civil Service to challenge and guard against the known problem of groupthink
-  Publication of regular reports on the system of civil emergency preparedness and resilience
-  Lastly and most importantly, the creation of a single, independent statutory body responsible for whole system preparedness and response. It will consult widely, for example with experts in the field of preparedness and resilience, and the voluntary, community and social sector, and provide strategic advice to government and make recommendations

These recommendations are designed to be implemented and work together; to produce real change in how the UK prepares for emergencies like pandemics.

The Chair expects that all recommendations are acted upon and implemented within the time frames set out in the recommendations. The Inquiry will be monitoring the implementation of the recommendations during its lifetime.

To find out more or to download a copy of the full Module 1 Report or other accessible format, visit: <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/reports>