

Prime Minister announces COVID-19 Inquiry Chair

Update: 28 February 2022

The Inquiry now has its own independent website.

Visit the [UK COVID-19 Inquiry website](#) for the latest news and updates.

Today (Wednesday 15 December) the Prime Minister has appointed the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE as Chair of the forthcoming public inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Inquiry, set to begin its work in spring 2022, will be established under the Inquiries Act 2005, with full powers, including the power to compel the production of documents and to summon witnesses to give evidence on oath. Additional panel members will be appointed in the new year to make sure the Inquiry has access to the full range of expertise needed to complete its important work.

The Inquiry will play a key role in examining the UK's pandemic response and ensuring that we learn the right lessons for the future. The Prime Minister will now consult Baroness Hallett and ministers from the devolved administrations on the terms of reference for the Inquiry and will publish them in draft in the new year.

Those most affected by the pandemic – including those who have sadly lost loved ones – must also have an opportunity to play their proper role in the process. Once the terms of reference have been published in draft, Baroness Hallett will take forward a process of public engagement and consultation – including with bereaved families and other affected groups – before the terms of reference are finalised.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I want to thank Baroness Hallett for agreeing to take on the position of Chair of the COVID-19 Inquiry.

She brings a wealth of experience to the role and I know shares my determination that the inquiry examines in a forensic and thoroughgoing way the government's response to the pandemic.

The Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE, said:

I am honoured to be appointed to chair the COVID-19 Inquiry. The

pandemic has affected us all, some much worse than others. I am acutely conscious of the suffering it has caused to so many.

In the new year I shall be seeking views from those who have lost loved ones and all other affected groups about the Inquiry's terms of reference.

I want to assure the British public that, once the terms of reference are finalised, I shall do my utmost to ensure the Inquiry answers as many questions as possible about the UK's response to the pandemic so that we can all learn lessons for the future.

Baroness Hallett retired from the Court of Appeal in 2019 and was made a crossbench life peer. She has previously conducted a range of high-profile and complex inquests, inquiries and reviews, including acting as coroner for the inquests into the deaths of the 52 victims of the 7 July 2005 London bombings; as chair of the Iraq Fatalities Investigations; and as chair of the 2014 Hallett Review of the administrative scheme to deal with 'on the runs' in Northern Ireland.

Baroness Hallett is currently acting as coroner in the inquest into the death of Dawn Sturgess, who died in July 2018 following exposure to the nerve agent Novichok. A new chair for that inquiry will be appointed early in the new year.