

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## The Executive Office

### **PUBLICATION OF THE EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 MODULE 1 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Published at 11.30am on Thursday 16 January 2025*

**Ms O'Neill and Mrs Little-Pengelly (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):** Baroness Hallett, Chair to the UK-wide Covid-19 Public Inquiry, published the Module 1 findings on 18 July 2024.

Module 1 of the Covid-19 Inquiry examined the UK's resilience and preparedness for the pandemic and the report identifies improvements that could be made to civil contingencies arrangements. It emphasises the need for better risk assessment and governance, streamlining whole-system emergency systems and processes, and holding regular pandemic response exercises across the four Nations of the UK.

There are 10 recommendations in the Module 1 report, which we have accepted fully, partially or in principle. There is an agreed Executive response to recommendations in the Module 1 Report setting this out, which was published today on the Executive Office internet page <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/executive-response-covid-19-module-1-report-jan-2025>

Through the pandemic, all of society faced a crisis unlike anything we have ever seen. Our thoughts remain with those who lost loved ones during the pandemic. We recognise the expectation that more must be done to better prepare for future challenges, and we are committed to taking meaningful steps forward. The Executive remains committed to keeping all in our society safe. We have learned lessons from the Pandemic and have started work to implement changes to ensure we are better prepared for a future pandemic.

The Executive response to the Module 1 report highlights positive progress in a number of areas. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been considerable work to transform the Civil Contingencies arrangements here. For example, we now have a Northern Ireland specific civil contingencies risk register. This work continues and we accept that improvements are required to ensure adequate planning for whole-system civil emergencies on behalf of our citizens.

Our response draws upon work that has been undertaken and provides detail on planned activities to ensure we deliver the improvements intended by the recommendations.

We have sought assurances that adequate time will be allowed for the Devolved Governments to consider fully the constitutional and financial implications of the recommendations.

We continue to give careful consideration to the recommendations made by the Chair and acknowledge that a future crisis may influence our thinking or challenge our current plans.

Future modules of the Inquiry will delve deeper into decision-making and governance structures that were in place during the Inquiry, including those of Northern Ireland. Most importantly, the impact of the pandemic and our response will also be examined. Recommendations on these critical aspects will be made in future Covid-19 Inquiry modular reports.