

Written Ministerial Statement

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The Executive Office

PUBLICATION OF THE EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE UK COVID-19 INQUIRY MODULE 2 REPORT

Published at 2pm on Wednesday 18 March 2026

Mrs O'Neill (The First Minister) and Mrs Little-Pengelly (The deputy First Minister): We wish to update the Assembly on the Northern Ireland Executive's response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 2 Report, which examines core UK-level political decision-making, governance, and the structures that influenced responses across all administrations during the pandemic.

Module 2 has provided important insights into the functioning of government at the highest levels, including intergovernmental engagement, ministerial decision-making, advisory mechanisms, and the systems used to coordinate urgent responses. The Executive welcomes the detailed analysis and recommendations contained within the report and recognises their relevance to strengthening governance arrangements here.

Since publication of the Inquiry's Module 2 findings in November 2025, departments have been working collectively to review the implications for our strategic preparedness, governance processes, and crisis-response arrangements. This response sets out the Executive's assessment of the report's recommendations, the actions already underway, and the commitments we are making to ensure delivery.

The Executive acknowledges the need to enhance clarity in roles and responsibilities, improve the flow of information during times of emergency, and strengthen coordination between devolved administrations and the UK Government and with the Irish Government. We also note the importance placed by the Inquiry on the culture of decision-making, including transparency, record-keeping, and the robustness of systems supporting Ministers.

We remain committed to ensuring that lessons learned from the pandemic are translated into durable improvements. The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for coherent, timely, and well-coordinated action, and the Executive is determined to ensure that processes and structures reflect those needs.

We extend our thanks to all who contributed to assisting the Chair of the Covid-19 Inquiry formulate the Module 2 report, including officials, expert advisers, and stakeholders, and the Covid bereaved families whose voices are vital to learning the lessons of the pandemic as they continue to shape the Inquiry's findings. Their experiences are central to our commitment to transparency and accountability.

The Executive will continue to update the Assembly as work progresses and as further modular reports of the Covid-19 Inquiry are published. We remain dedicated to strengthening governance, improving readiness, and safeguarding everyone here in the event of future emergencies.