

Written Ministerial Statement

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The Executive Office

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT COVERING MODULE 3 AND MODULE 4

Published at 11:30am on Wednesday 20 May 2026

Mrs O'Neill (The First Minister) and Mrs Little-Pengelly (The deputy First Minister): Baroness Hallett, Chair of the UK wide Covid 19 Public Inquiry, has recently published her findings from Modules 3 and 4.

Publication of these reports represents another significant milestone for the families of those who lost loved ones during the pandemic, and for all those who continue to live with its lasting effects. Our thoughts remain with them.

Module 3 examined the operational resilience, preparedness and performance of healthcare systems in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the Covid 19 pandemic, including surge planning, workforce pressures, patient care and the interaction between health and social care.

Module 4 considered the development of Covid 19 vaccines and therapeutics, the implementation of vaccination programmes, highlighting the success of the development and rollout of vaccines and treatments, as well as lessons identified to strengthen future pandemic preparedness. It drew attention to the experiences of groups affected by unequal vaccine uptake and the challenges in ensuring fair access, and the need for clear communication and effective delivery systems during the pandemic response.

We wish to place on record our sincere appreciation for the dedication and tireless efforts of our health and social care workers throughout the pandemic.

As with the Module 1 and 2 reports, TEO continues to coordinate NICS-wide consideration of Covid-19 Inquiry findings through a cross-departmental steering group. This group will continue to fulfil that function for the recommendations arising from Modules 3 and 4, working closely with the Department of Health and relevant delivery bodies.

TEO also continues its engagement with the NI Covid Bereaved Families for Justice and other stakeholders. Their insights and lived experiences remain vital in ensuring that we learn from the pandemic and strengthen our preparedness for future whole system emergencies. We are grateful to all those who continue to give their time to engage with us.

We would like to thank the Chair and the Inquiry team for their continued work. It is important that we now take time to consider carefully the findings and recommendations of Modules 3 and 4 before making further comment.