

# Approach to engagement and evidence gathering

## Purpose

1. This paper sets out proposals for the Committee's engagement and evidence gathering strategy for scrutiny of Module 1. On 14 October, the Committee agreed the following:

- to commission Nottingham Trent University to undertake a gap analysis;
- to issue a public consultation;
- to hold a stakeholder engagement event;
- to meet with the Covid Committee Observation Group;
- On completion of the above, propose to the Senedd by motion, any gaps identified in the preparedness and response of the Welsh Government and other Welsh public bodies during the Covid-19 pandemic that should be subject to further examination.
- Once these gaps have been approved to hold oral evidence sessions with relevant witnesses and the Welsh Government.

## Background

2. On 18 July, the UK Covid-19 Inquiry published its first [report on Module 1](#) on the resilience and preparedness of the UK. The report makes 10 recommendations. The UK Government and each of the devolved governments have six months to respond, therefore it is likely to be issued in December/January.

**3.** The Committee will need to bear in mind the timing of the Welsh Government’s response in undertaking its own work to ensure the response does not supersede it.

**4.** The Committee has therefore agreed to conduct an inquiry on Module 1 with the aim of reporting early next year. This work will initially identify gaps, compare these gaps with the Welsh Government’s response to determine if any of these gaps have been filled adequately, and then propose to the Senedd by way of motion which gaps need further scrutiny.

### **Nottingham Trent University - Gap analysis**

**5.** The Committee agreed to commission Nottingham Trent University (NTU) to undertake a gap analysis which can be used as part of an evidence base to support the Committee’s work in scrutinising the Module 1 report. This work is outlined below:

Task 1 - Complete the gap analysis of the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry module 1 report with the Welsh Interim Operational Review.
Task 2 - Summary report and gap analysis produced.
Task 3 - Brief the Committee on the report including input from the Committee Clerking Team and Research Service.
4 - Gap analysis, UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry module 1 report, and other sources of evidence and documentation reviewed.
5 - Collaborative work and comparison of findings with other academics involved with the committee, collaborative shared report produced with other academics. This will be written to inform the committee’s next steps.

### **Public consultation**

**6.** It is suggested the Committee issues an eight week public consultation to run from 6 November 2024 to 3 January 2025. The Committee has agreed to use the recommendations from Module 1 as a starting point to identifying “any gaps”. As such the consultation questions will be based on these issues.

**7.** The consultation will be targeted at a comprehensive list of consultees. It will also be published on the Committee’s webpage and advertised via social media to ensure everyone who wishes to respond can do so.

8. Following the close of the consultation, a summary of responses will be prepared for Committee's consideration.

## Stakeholder Engagement Event

9. The Committee held a stakeholder event at the start of the year, with the aim of engaging with all stakeholders, and to provide an overview of the Committee's remit, work so far and future activities. This event was held in hybrid-format and was aimed at providing information rather than gathering evidence at that stage.

10. The Committee has agreed to hold a further stakeholder event as an opportunity to engage and update stakeholders on the work of the Committee now that the Module 1 report has been published. This will provide organisations/individuals to comment on the Module 1 report and identify potential gaps. Possible options include:

- **Option 1** - a roundtable event, with tables organised by relevant sectors with a Member/s on each table to facilitate discussions and a feedback session at the end (preferably this would be held in-person only).

However, given some organisations/individuals may be unable to attend the event, the Committee could also hold a separate fully virtual session (on a different day).

- **Option 2** - host a webinar to allow participants to attend virtually and in-person.

11. During the event, stakeholders will be invited to comment on the Module 1 report, discuss potential gaps, and comment on changes Welsh Government has made to its approaches to civil contingencies planning and its current preparedness for a future pandemic.

12. A note of the meeting will be taken and to ensure an open discussion, views will not be attributed to individuals/organisations, unless they so wish. This note will be published to the Committee's webpage.

13. The Committee could use its meeting slot on 2 December to hold the event.

## Oral evidence sessions

14. Once gaps for further scrutiny have been identified and approved by the Senedd the Committee will wish to take oral evidence from relevant witnesses. A list of potential witnesses to provide oral evidence is suggested below. This is not

an exhaustive list and by no means limited to those listed below. Members may have suggestions and further witnesses may be identified as the Committee's work progresses:

- Public Health Wales, local health boards, Welsh Ambulance Service;
- WLGA (representatives from local government);
- representatives from the Covid Observation Group;
- Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru;
- Auditor General for Wales;
- Local Resilience Forums;
- Joint Emergency Services Group;
- UK Cabinet Office (which had a role in coordinating civil emergency arrangements with government departments, devolved administrations and local responders to ensure that plans and the practical ability to respond to an emergency are in place)
- Charitable organisation if they had a role in emergency planning and responding (British Red Cross; St John's ambulance)
- civil contingency experts;
- Chief Medical Officer (either with Welsh Government or separately depending on the focus of the session).

**15.** The Committee's final evidence sessions will be to scrutinise the Welsh Government and hold it to account on the changes it has made to its approaches to civil contingencies planning and its current preparedness for a future pandemic. As mentioned in this paper, the governments of the UK are preparing a collective response to the recommendations in Module 1, which is expected in December/January. The session/s with Welsh Government will therefore take place once the response is available to enable the Committee to scrutinise the Welsh Government on it.

## **Actions**

**16.** The Committee is invited to:

**17.** note that NTU will complete the gap analysis of the UK Covid 19 Public Inquiry module 1 report with the Welsh Interim Operational Review and prepare a summary report;

- agrees to issue a public consultation to run from 6 November to 3 January 2025 (8 weeks);

- to consider holding a stakeholder engagement event either **option 1**, in-person and possibly a virtually session (although Members will wish to note that stakeholders will also have the opportunity to engage and feed in their views through the written consultation), or **option 2**, a webinar to allow participants to attend virtually and in-person;

- to consider the list of potential witnesses for oral evidence at paragraph 15.