



# Newsletter

November 2020  
Issue 12

## Message from Catherine Nalty, Deputy Secretary to the Inquiry

As I write, we have two remaining weeks of hearings this year. When Sir Brian agreed to chair this Inquiry, he could never have anticipated that we would be holding hearings where witnesses are giving evidence by video link, or that covid restrictions would mean none of the Inquiry participants could join Sir Brian in the hearing room. However, it is important to continue with the evidence sessions, and the current measures are temporary. I hope that it is not too optimistic to believe the recent news allows us to look forward to “normal” hearings again in 2021.

## Watching the hearings online - Inquiry's Red Cross team

A small team from the British Red Cross has been offering confidential emotional support through the Inquiry support line, and in person during the hearings, since the start of the Inquiry. We have a wealth of experience between us of working with individuals and groups in difficult and challenging situations both at home and abroad and, over the past two years, we have gained a greater understanding of the issues faced by people in the Inquiry who are infected and affected.



Clare, from the BRC team

Many participants follow the hearings online. However, this is likely to feel different - and more intense - against the background of the coronavirus pandemic. It can be difficult to switch off from this Inquiry when the news is full of the dangers of another virus. The breaks during the hearing sessions are a good reminder to take a break from the screen, though sometimes connecting with other people watching through social networks can help put things in perspective. Do remember our Red Cross team are available for a confidential conversation - sometimes it's just good to chat with someone outside your regular circle who has an understanding of the Inquiry.

It has been widely acknowledged that the first lockdown had an impact on our mental wellbeing, and we are still facing the uncertainty of when life may return to a degree of normality. It's important to be compassionate and kind to ourselves, remembering what has helped during difficult times in the past and considering what else we could do to support our wellbeing.

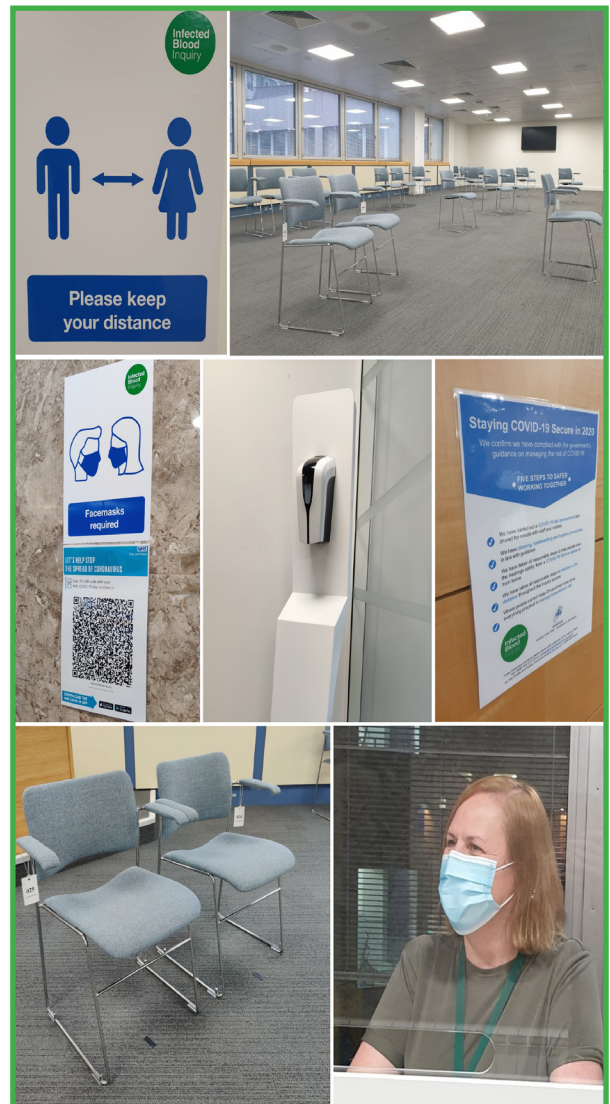
As a final thought, the holiday season is fast approaching and this year it's difficult to make plans with any confidence. We hope you can take time to relax, and if you would like to chat to us, the support line will be open as usual over the holiday period.

## Hearings at Fleetbank House during coronavirus restrictions - Laura Woolgar

In late July I started talking to Hugh, a civil service "space planner", to establish how people could attend the hearings safely despite the pandemic. We started with the hearing room. Although we knew the square footage, there was no simple formula to work out how to allow for two metres distancing and a reasonable view of proceedings. And we didn't know who would want to come on their own, who would come with a partner or perhaps come as a household of three (government guidelines permitting). We got some inspiration from a theatre that managed to re-open in August and, after some meticulous measuring, reached a maximum number of 43 attendees, where previously we had over 150.

We applied what we'd learned to the lounges, and put up new signs, checked the ventilation system was the standard required, installed perspex screens, and stocked up on hand sanitiser.

I spoke to most people who came to Fleetbank during this period, and their feedback was that we'd thought through our preparations and they felt well looked after at "one of the safest places in London". Wearing a mask for most of the day felt strange at first but it's become almost second nature.



Covid measures at Fleetbank House

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### British Red Cross Confidential Support line

**Tel:** 0800 458 9473 or 0203 417 0280 at these times:

Monday between 11am - 1pm;

Wednesday between 7pm - 9pm; and

Friday between 2pm - 4pm.

Or leave a message any time and you will receive a call back as soon as possible