# UK Covid-19 Inquiry in Northern Ireland Highlights Costs and Future Preparedness



**UK Covid-19 Inquiry: Focus on Northern Ireland and Costs**

Baroness Heather Hallett, chairwoman of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, has concluded three weeks of hearings in Belfast, Northern Ireland. During her address, she emphasized the importance of formulating recommendations to better prepare Northern Ireland for future pandemics. She noted that the final report will require time to ensure thoroughness and effectiveness, and apologized for any delays.

The inquiry is examining various aspects, including decision-making processes, care homes, test and trace systems, and the impact on mental health. The hearings in Northern Ireland are part of the UK-wide inquiry which aims to learn from the Covid-19 pandemic to improve future responses.

The inquiry, which began in June 2022 and is expected to run until at least summer 2026, has already incurred costs of £94 million. The total is projected to reach £196 million, making it potentially the most expensive inquiry of its kind. This expenditure includes £15,180,000 spent in the final quarter of 2023/24.

Baroness Hallett, a retired Court of Appeal judge, has previously led inquiries into significant events, such as the London 7/7 attacks. The Covid-19 Inquiry aims to understand the decision-making processes of ministers and public health officials during the pandemic, with high-profile figures such as former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and key advisors Sir Patrick Vallance and Professor Chris Whitty, providing evidence.

The financial report indicates that the inquiry, due to its expansive scope, is engaging numerous organizations and government departments across the UK to gather comprehensive evidence.