

Press Release

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“Why won’t you speak to us?” ask families bereaved by Covid-19.

The Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group has today expressed its disappointment that its request for the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health to meet with them has been met with silence. The 1,000-strong group of relatives of those lost to Covid-19 had, in conjunction with the lawyers representing them, formally submitted a request for a public inquiry on the 11th of June. Jo Goodman, co-founder of the group says, *“We are deeply disappointed that the government has not accepted our invitation to meet and there is no evidence they have even considered our petition. Once again, grieving families feel forgotten, with the government refusing to accept any degree of responsibility for mistakes that have been made in its response to the pandemic. The government offers condolences to those who have been bereaved, but while it is unwilling to engage with us, it is very difficult to accept its sympathy.”*

The group understands that a full-scale inquiry is likely to take a number of years and that some questions will only be possible to address once the initial phase of the pandemic is over. However, there is still a need for an inquiry now.

“Our desire for an inquiry of more limited scope to begin immediately is to ensure that lessons can be learned so that other families do not needlessly have to go through the pain that we are experiencing. The errors made in the early part of the pandemic response cost our loved ones their lives. Our fear is that the government is still failing to demonstrate that public health and saving lives is its top priority.”

The other concerns of the group are to ensure that information and evidence which would be of use to a future public inquiry is preserved, particularly after concerning reports have surfaced of the potential destruction of evidence relating to the government’s ill-fated order of PPE from Turkey.

Following on from the group’s request for an inquiry, others have joined the call, including most prominently a group of health leaders who wrote in the British Medical Journal of the need for an urgent review, referencing the call of bereaved families¹. This too has been summarily dismissed by the government.

The group believes that the government’s failure to engage is part of a wider effort to underplay the scale of loss being experienced across the country: *“The UK has recorded one of the highest Covid-19 death tolls in the world, and yet we have seen very little recognition of the fact that this is a country in mourning. As reports came in from Italy, the country was rightly horrified by what it saw, but as similar harrowing scenes have played out in our own country, those of us who have been bereaved feel that our loss has simply been swept under the carpet.”*

¹ <https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m2514>

Elkan Abrahamson of Broudie Jackson Canter, solicitors representing the group, said:

“The government is constantly saying that they are aware that each death represents an individual tragedy and a grieving family; why then will they not agree to meet?”

The group has launched [a public petition](#) for those in support of their call, with signatures having quickly reached 60,000.

Ends

Contact:

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Phone: If you would like to discuss the release by phone, please send your phone number to the above email address and someone will call you as soon as possible.

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CovidJusticeUK>

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Website: www.covidfamiliesforjustice.org