

PRESS RELEASE

Bereaved relatives call for an Immediate Public Inquiry into the Government's handling of the Covid-19 Pandemic

A group of bereaved families has today written to Boris Johnson and Matt Hancock with a formal request for a public inquiry to begin immediately. *Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK* is a group of more than 450 relatives of those lost to Covid-19 in the UK. The group has instructed lawyer Elkan Abrahamson, from Liverpool based law firm Broudie Jackson Canter, to assist them in their campaign for justice.

Matt Fowler, co-founder and spokesperson for the group, said:

“With at least 40,000 deaths from Covid-19 recorded in the UK and over a thousand new cases still being reported every day, it has become tragically clear that fatal mistakes have been made by the Government in its handling of the pandemic. As the staggering statistics continue to roll in, so too do the stories of personal tragedy, heartache and loss.

The crucial fact is that every one of those statistics was a living breathing person, taken before their time and leaving an empty void in the lives of their families and friends. For many, the wounds caused by their loss will never truly heal. For those left behind there is pain, confusion and a sense of having been failed by the system that should be protecting them.”

The group believe that rather than waiting until the pandemic has run its course, now is the time for a public inquiry to begin. They believe that this is especially important in order to establish key learnings which could help to prevent a second wave.

Why did we not react earlier?

As China, Italy and Spain were overcome by the spread, the Prime Minister and his cabinet refused to implement hard safeguarding measures and instead continued to advise the country to “wash their hands and carry on as normal.” When the virus began to spread, they encouraged “business as usual”. As people began to die, the Prime Minister insisted that the country was “very, very well prepared” when it was becoming horrifyingly apparent that it clearly, was not.

The group have identified a range of issues which they believe contributed to the loss of their loved ones:

1. The late implementation of lockdown, despite warnings from scientists and real time case studies from other countries across the world.
2. Government advice was unclear, leaving the population uncertain of the severity of the situation and unable to appropriately react to the threat.
3. The NHS was underprepared and frontline staff lacked adequate equipment and advice to protect both themselves and their patients.
4. Care homes were unsupported and unprotected, with the government actively discharging Covid-positive patients into them, leaving the vulnerable to suffer at the hands of the virus.

The extent to which the Government's handling of this pandemic contributed to the un-necessary deaths of our loved ones must be brought to light and scrutinised for all to see. We need to know what decisions were made, who was responsible and why so many people were consigned to death as a result. An inquiry will not only expose those details but also bring into sharp focus related failings in policy and the manner in which it is implemented, leading the way to reform.

Meanwhile, it is crucial that steps are taken to better protect people while the pandemic continues. Changes need to be made to safeguard people right now. Policies need to be put in place to prevent the loss of further lives to the current pandemic and remain in place so that we are prepared should a second wave or another worldwide event, such as this, happen again.

The first duty of any Government is to protect its people. In the case of our relatives who lost their lives, it has failed to do so. We seek justice for the bereaved and to protect the people of the UK in the future.

Elkan Abrahamson, Head of Major Inquiries at Broudie Jackson Canter, said:

"A Public Inquiry is inevitable and essential. I support the group's call for an immediate limited phase to that Inquiry to prevent future deaths.' Ends

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