

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
The Prime Minister
Number 10, Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

Thursday 3rd December

Dear Prime Minister,

On 15th July you committed the Government to holding an inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we exit the second national lockdown in under a year, we the undersigned are now demanding that you call an immediate statutory public inquiry with a rapid review first phase which would report back within weeks.

We believe this is paramount in order to minimise further loss of life. Indeed, there is precedent for a rapid review – the inquiry by Lord Justice Taylor after the Hillsborough Disaster reported back in just 31 days and quickly identified important measures to ensure safety in football stadiums. An inquiry must also satisfy the Government’s legal responsibility to give bereaved families an opportunity to participate under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Any government, particularly during an unprecedented public health crisis, should be guided by the evidence, and we have never been more in need of swift, evidence-based policy recommendations. While it is not for us to determine the outcome of an inquiry, there are several areas which we believe should be addressed as a matter of priority.

Firstly, it is essential that we assess the effectiveness of the UK’s test and trace programme in line with the WHO’s principal recommendation.

Secondly, we must review how the Government has made decisions including how infection control measures are decided and how risk levels are communicated to the public.

Third, there is mounting research that Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on Black and ethnic minority communities. It is critical that we identify why this is the case and what actions can be implemented now to mitigate the impact of the virus on these communities.

Finally, the inquiry must also look at the functioning and capacity of the NHS to provide appropriate care to Covid-19 patients, including the effectiveness of 111 to identify those in need of medical intervention, and how to ensure the provision of other urgent NHS treatments. This also includes the threat of Covid-19 in hospitals and care homes to prevent residents and health workers from contracting the virus.

The recent news that a vaccine has been approved is a step in the right direction. As public life begins to return to normalcy, it is more important than ever that you make good on your promise and call an urgent statutory public inquiry now to learn lessons and save lives.

Unprecedented times call for an unprecedented response. A Covid-19 inquiry cannot be delayed any longer.

Yours sincerely,

