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Covid-19: Bereaved families group collects *BMJ* award for holding ministers to account

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A group representing families bereaved by the covid-19 pandemic has received an award from *The BMJ* for its campaigning work this year.

Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, one of the core participants in the first two modules of the covid-19 public inquiry, was given the award at *The BMJ*'s annual event for friends of the journal in London on Wednesday 13 December.

Naomi Fulop, a spokesperson for the group, collected the journal's Get Up Stand Up award, named after Bob Marley's protest song, from the editor in chief, Kamran Abbasi, who praised the group for its efforts in holding those in power to account.

"We await the conclusions and lessons [of the inquiry], but we need a serious conversation now about the nature of our democracy, the nature of the scientific advice to support it, and the nature of the institutions that support our democracy," Abbasi said. "Unequivocally, we must acknowledge the commitment of the bereaved families to hold the decision makers to account."

He added, "It must be incredibly difficult to sit through day after day of lies, obfuscations, and sudden memory lapses from politicians giving evidence at the inquiry. Even when people tell the truth, it is chilling."

In a statement issued this week as the inquiry's second module drew to a close, the group said, "Module 2 has been bruising for bereaved families. Politicians have attempted to use the hearings to settle political scores and shrug off blame, which in turn has been used to discredit the inquiry. However, what matters is the evidence. The inquiry must now reflect on how crisis decision making and response systems are improved at the heart of government.

"Bereaved families have paid the ultimate cost of the arrogance and incompetence at the heart of government, which module 2 of the inquiry has robustly exposed. We will campaign to make sure these failures are recognised and learned from in the future."¹

¹ Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK. Our statement following the closing of module 2 of the UK Covid Inquiry. Twitter. Dec 2023. <https://twitter.com/Covid-JusticeUK/status/1735295683005935747>.

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