



The BMJ

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2020;370:m2869

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2869>

Published: 16 July 2020

Covid-19: PM promises inquiry but says it won't happen during pandemic

Gareth Iacobucci

The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, has committed to an independent inquiry into the country's handling of the covid-19 pandemic but said that now was "not the right time" to launch it.

The announcement during prime minister's questions in the House of Commons on 15 July was in response to a question from the acting leader of the Liberal Democrats, Ed Davey, who pressed Johnson on the issue.

Davey, who served as a cabinet member in the coalition government, said, "Under this prime minister we've suffered one of the worst death rates in the world and Europe's worst death rate for health and care workers.

"If he still rejects an immediate inquiry, will he instead commit in principle to a future public inquiry: yes or no?"

In response Johnson said, "I do not believe now, in the middle of combating the pandemic, is the right moment to devote huge amounts of official time to an inquiry. But he added, "Of course, we will seek to learn the lessons of this pandemic in the future, and certainly we will have an independent inquiry into what happened."

Davey said on Twitter after the announcement, "We need an independent, judge-led inquiry into the handling of coronavirus. I am pleased that at PMQs I got the prime minister to commit to holding that inquiry. We now need to keep up the pressure to make sure he stands by his words today."

The campaigning group Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice said the inquiry needed to be launched now ahead of a possible second wave of the disease. In a statement the group said, "While we are glad the prime minister has committed to some kind of inquiry, we need to know whether it will be a statutory public inquiry with family input and full disclosure of evidence, and part of it needs to be a covid inquiry now in advance of a second wave not in five years' time."