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Covid-19: Prime minister agrees to meet bereaved families

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Boris Johnson has said that he will meet with bereaved families who have lost loved ones to covid-19.

In what seemed to be a u-turn on his previous stance, the prime minister, speaking to Sky News on 26 August, said that he would reply to letters from bereaved families.¹

The news comes after Layla Moran, chair of the all party parliamentary group (APPG) on coronavirus and Liberal Democrat member of parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon, wrote to Johnson on 24 August urging him to meet with families.

"The APPG was shocked to learn that, despite numerous attempts, you have so far refused to meet with bereaved families or show any willingness to listen to their pleas," Moran wrote. "Because of the loss they have suffered combined with isolation, many are now dealing with prolonged grief and [are] in need of mental health support tailored specifically to them."

Responding to a question about the letters from families, Johnson told Sky News that he was not aware of them and that he would meet with families. "I am not aware of those letters, but of course we will write back to every letter we get," Johnson said. "And of course I will meet the . . . bereaved who have suffered from covid, of course I will do that."

Moran's letter said that the APPG had also recommended that Johnson commit to a judge led public inquiry, in writing, to the covid-19 bereaved families for justice UK group, a group of families calling for an inquiry into the government's handling of the pandemic.²

"We welcome Boris Johnson finally agreeing to meet with us and hear why a [covid inquiry] will save lives," the group tweeted.³ "It shouldn't have taken months to agree to it, and it should only be a matter of days before it happens."

Moran's letter also called on Johnson to launch an immediate inquiry into the advice being given to patients by NHS 111, after it was reported that black people were being asked, "Are your lips blue?" to establish the severity of the virus.

The APPG also asked the prime minister to formally recognise people living with long term symptoms of covid-19, to expand research to include those who were never admitted to hospital or treated, and to set up a working group to establish the needs of these patients.

Editor-in-chief of *The BMJ* Fiona Godlee will chair a free webinar for clinicians, researchers, and policy makers to discuss the emerging evidence for "long covid" on 3 September. For more information visit https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uqOnQUJLS1GVvdeW3yNYyQ

1 Sky News. Twitter. 26 Aug 2020. <https://twitter.com/SkyNews/status/1298595038914641920>

2 Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK. <https://www.covidfamiliesforjustice.org/about-us/>

3 Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK. Twitter. 26 Aug 2020. <https://twitter.com/CovidJusticeUk/status/1298629152128589824>

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