

IN THE COVID-19 UK PUBLIC INQUIRY

BEFORE RT HON BARONESS HALLET DBE

IN THE MATTER OF:

**THE PUBLIC INQUIRY TO EXAMINE THE UK'S PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOANNA GOODMAN ON BEHALF OF COVID-19
BEREAVED FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE UK**

I, Joanna Goodman, c/o Broudie Jackson Canter, 3rd Floor Walker House, Exchange Flags, Liverpool, L2 3YL WILL STATE AS FOLLOWS:

1. I am the co-founder of Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK (CBFFJ UK) and I make this statement at the request of the Covid-19 Public Inquiry.
2. This is the second Module of the Covid-19 Inquiry and relates to Core UK decision making and political governance. I have been asked to explain who the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK represent and how and why the group was established.
3. CBFFJ has always been a UK wide organisation. It has members from across the devolved nations and jurisdictions and has campaigned for devolved inquiries in addition to a UK wide public inquiry.

Why the Group was established

4. CBFFJ UK came into being at the very end of April 2020 after I lost my father Stuart Goodman on 2nd April and Matt Fowler lost his father Ian Fowler on 13th April. An article was published about my loss on 30th April and Matt left a comment. As a consequence, I contacted him and after that we formed the group.

5. After losing my father I looked online for places for support and saw that some groups had been established to memorialise people who had been lost to Covid-19. I found that these didn't resonate with me as I didn't feel my Dad should be a photo on a page to be remembered, I felt strongly that he should still be here with us and would have been, had different decisions been made. I became angry because even though the public had so little information about the virus, I had enough to know that we needed to protect my Dad from it and as a family we had decided basically to shield him. I couldn't understand why people like Boris Johnson were saying things like we should let it rip and to rely on herd immunity. I knew that my father was never going to contribute to herd immunity and if he was exposed to the virus, he would become very ill and die. The letter telling my Dad that he needed to shield arrived 9 days after he died.
6. That letter arriving really got me fired up as I knew there would be more deaths if the Government failed to protect its citizens. A journalist from the Independent wanted to talk to someone who had lost a loved one to Covid, so I agreed to speak with them.
7. On 30th April 2020 the article was published in the Independent newspaper about the circumstances in which my father contracted Covid-19 and lost his life. I looked online and at the comments, and saw one from Matt Fowler who said he had just lost his own father and that he felt the same way that I did. I sent him a private message and we quickly agreed we needed to do something to save other lives.
8. That was the start of our group. In those first early months we specifically hoped to influence government decision-making for the remainder of the pandemic in order to minimise further deaths. We felt strongly that poor and delayed decision-making in the first few months had resulted in the death toll being as high as it was, with it already seeming clear to us that if the Government had taken decisions to ramp up testing and contact tracing, quarantine, border screening, manufacture and procurement of PPE, infection control in hospitals and care homes, and taken decisions to cancel mass events and go into lockdown earlier, many people like myself and Matt's fathers would still be alive.
9. As the membership of the group increased and we talked to more bereaved families, certain themes were coming through strongly and there were a few issues that felt

very avoidable. Most stark was 111. We had a lot of people saying their loved ones had been asked unusual triage questions such as “can they make a cup of tea?” and using that to assess the severity of the person’s condition. These were people who then either died at home or were rushed into hospital, but it was too late. Other symptoms were simply not recognised as the focus was solely on cough and fever. We were hearing reports of many people presenting with horrific gastrointestinal issues but because it wasn’t recognised as a symptom at that stage, despite their loved ones making clear they were deeply unwell, it wasn’t leading to the appropriate treatment. We tried really hard to push for that to change but we didn’t really know where to turn.

10. We did some Zoom sessions trying to identify themes. It soon became clear that there were a lot of issues with care homes and people not getting the treatment they needed. Hospital-acquired covid wasn’t being reported on but that was another issue that was prominent in the group with people often not tested before discharge and minimal measures seeming to be in place to prevent the virus spreading to vulnerable patients.
11. A lot of people came to the group with stories of their loved ones being denied intensive care treatment or having DNACPRs applied where family members didn’t feel this was appropriate. Another common theme we encountered was the families of health and social care workers finding it really difficult to access the life assurance scheme.
12. In July 2020 we gave evidence to the APPG on Coronavirus and talked about issues we had identified, including with the 111 triage process. I exhibit JG/1 which is our Submission to APPG dated July 2020.
13. Despite being completely traumatised by our own bereavement and being re-traumatised daily by hearing the stories of loss suffered by our members, we worked incredibly hard because of the sense of urgency to get things to change. The need to achieve change was so intense and it felt like the responsibility for doing that was on us because pubs were reopening, Eat Out to Help Out was being launched and there was a sense that the Government just wanted people to get back to normality, whereas for me it was like watching a slow-motion car crash, as we knew people would die, and for that reason none of it was worth the risk, but it felt like we were on another planet to the Government.

My Dad

14. Stuart Howard Goodman was my Dad and he was 72 when we lost him to Covid-19. He was retired at the time but had previously worked on Fleet Street as a photographer capturing events like the Brixton Riots. After that he taught photography and had a number of exhibitions. He was just about to have his first book published.
15. Dad had started his life being born in slum housing in the West End of London. He lived with his parents and an aunt who was dying of TB. In a way TB was the pandemic of the time and something that spread unequally. In the few years after he was born, my Dad's family was moved into social housing and the NHS was created. Dad was always really passionate about people being given an equal chance in life and he was so grateful for the NHS. It is interesting that his life was bookended with two pandemics that had such unequal impact.
16. Dad and Mum had both been married before. My Dad had a stepdaughter who went to the school where my Mum taught. I am told that my Dad was sitting with the headmaster when a woman in a blue boiler suit and yellow bovver boots went past with a gaggle of kids. My Dad asked "*what the hell was that,*" and the headteacher explained simply, "*that was Annie*". After my Dad's marriage broke down, he went into a pub where he happened to see the same teacher. He struck up a conversation with her telling her that he recognised her from somewhere. She thought it was just a line and brushed him off before eventually agreeing to go on a date with him.
17. They obviously went on to become a couple and I arrived a while later. When I was 19 months old my brother Adam arrived. Apparently, I wanted a sister so when Adam was born, I wasn't at all impressed and tried to push his incubator away.
18. My Mum and Dad were a very funny couple. My Dad absolutely adored my Mum, but he wasn't above a bit of teasing. He had a dent in his head from a car accident and he used to tell people it was from where Mum had hit him over the head with a frying pan and quite a lot of people believed him. They had a lot of fun together and balanced each other out so well. They were not all that traditional. They didn't get married until I was 12 years old, so it was fun that me and my brother got to be part of the wedding.

19. My Dad had already had quite a lot of health issues including two heart attacks, the second of which was when Mum was heavily pregnant with me. This marked a real change for my Dad. The hospital asked him if he wanted to see his daughter grow up and he said yes. They told him in that case he would never be able to smoke again. Dad gave up in that moment. He told me later that despite giving up he never stopped wanting to smoke so it really touches me that he denied himself that for me.
20. We moved from London to Norfolk when I was three years old. Mum was working full-time so Dad was the main caregiver. I remember now he would pick us up from school and our treat would be a can of Vimto and a marshmallow ice cream (always promoting healthy habits!) Dad was great with kids. He was really silly and would do anything to make us laugh. I remember he used to get our feet and rub them in his beard and we would be howling laughing.
21. Dad had a bit of a tummy and as kids we used to call him Daddy Fatman and my cousins called him "Wobble Wobble Gut Belly" and "Wobble Belly Gut Bucket." In fact, his tummy caused some trouble as it stuck out in quite a pronounced way and once when he was taking my Mum to a pregnancy clinic the organisers counted one too many pregnant women!
22. Dad was very funny and everyone enjoyed being in his company but kids in particular loved him. He didn't treat kids as lesser beings, he treated you as being on the same level. I remember him walking me to school when I was 8 and he would talk to me about the news. I'm sure now I was talking nonsense, but he never made me feel that way. He always took on board what I was saying as if I had a really valid take on whatever it was we were discussing.
23. Dad couldn't wait to be a Grandad too. From when I was a teenager, he used to tell me I should have a baby so he could get himself an all-terrain buggy and push the baby around. I told him I was no rush so he would have to keep himself healthy to make sure he was around. I have now had my first child and it is a matter of deep regret that my Dad never got to meet my son. I know how close they would have been and how much they would have had each other howling in hysterics.

24. After Dad died, people told us stories about him. He was just one of those people who made you feel special and when he spoke to you, it was like he was shining a light on you. He genuinely took an interest in you and what you were saying and made you feel like you were the most important person in the world in that moment. So many people told us they'd met him once but he'd left a real impression on them that they'd always remembered.
25. In the year before the pandemic, we nearly lost Dad. Dad started to suffer from chest pains and we were told that he would need a heart bypass. On the night the clocks went forward in March 2019, Dad fell really ill. But he had a heart bypass and although his recovery was slower than expected he did really well and was very motivated to take up more exercise. He was so grateful to the NHS for saving his life.
26. In November 2019, Dad had a scan. We were told it was some sort of cancer but they did not know what precise type or how aggressive it was. The hospital said that it was most likely the appropriate course of treatment would be to watch and wait.
27. Between November 2019 and March 2020 there was a lot of toing and froing trying to organise a biopsy which was complicated by concerns about how he could be anaesthetised as he was awaiting the fitting of a pacemaker. He had long delays between appointments and it seemed as though his diagnosis was delayed because the NHS was overwhelmed. It wasn't until 18th March that we got the diagnosis.

The Pandemic

28. At that time, I was living in India. I had heard about cases of Covid-19 and whilst it sounded scary it also sounded fairly distant to the UK. Once cases started to be reported in the UK it seemed much closer to home and I started to get worried for my Dad. I sent my Dad a text message on 3rd March saying that I was concerned about what I was reading in the news and I just wanted to wrap him up in a big ball of cotton wool like an overprotective parent.
29. Dad was due to have his book launch on 26th March but because of the risk from Covid-19 the event was cancelled was 13th March. My Mum and Dad started to dial

down their social interactions and basically put themselves into their own lockdown to keep Dad safe.

30. On 18th March, Dad had a hospital appointment to get his diagnosis. I couldn't understand why the hospital would want him to attend in person when they could give him the information over the phone. I thought it was a very bad idea, but Dad said that there were not many cases in Norfolk and he had a huge amount of trust in the NHS to keep him safe. I don't think he realised he was also putting his trust in the UK Government which he never should have done.
31. Mum and Dad went to hospital and there were no measures in place. No ventilation, no masks, everything was just as normal. They ended up waiting around all day to speak to a consultant and nurse, so they spent a lot of time waiting around in crowded waiting rooms. Because of their otherwise limited social interaction, this is almost certainly where Dad caught Covid-19. That day, Dad got his diagnosis of non-Hodgkin lymphoma which was aggressive and needed treatment straight away. This was not what we were expecting.
32. Dad came home from the hospital later that day and found the first copies of his book had arrived on his doorstep. So in one day he got his cancer diagnosis, a copy of his book and probably caught Covid.
33. People in India were seeing the news and asking me what was going on in the UK because at the time, any cases in India were being isolated and measures were promptly taken to stop the spread whereas cases in the UK seemed to be rising exponentially. There were more cases in the UK than the whole of India. People in India seemed to be taking it far more seriously and public celebrations for the Hindu festival of Holi had been cancelled to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
34. When I heard the news about my Dad's diagnosis I took one of the last flights out of Mumbai back to the UK. The BA flight attendant asked me why I was wearing a mask and said "oh, you haven't been taken in by all of this have you?" I landed at Heathrow on 21st March and was shocked that the only sign of any Covid measures was someone there handing out leaflets about Covid. I explained that I had just got off a flight and my Dad was very vulnerable. I said that I was planning to isolate for 2 weeks and asked whether there was any advice. He told me I only needed to isolate if I had

symptoms. I think it was probably an NHS and Government leaflet and it just talked about washing hands and things like that. I was surprised and concerned by the lack of screening or quarantining or any action whatsoever to monitor or control the infection spreading.

35. I went straight to Norwich where me and my brother decided to isolate together so that we could be with our parents afterwards. This was all before the UK lockdown. I recall that someone in my brother's building posted on Facebook saying that if anyone was isolating they would go out for shopping for them – he bought us some food and wouldn't accept any money for it. People were so kind and there was already so much mutual support going on.

36. On the night that the UK lockdown was announced I remember watching the announcement and thinking finally, thank God. I thought it might have been enough to save Dad as I didn't know then that he had probably already caught it.

37. On the first full day of lockdown Dad started Chemotherapy. He was due to have 6 sessions. The first seemed to go well. He reassured us about the measures that were in place and said people were spread out. My Mum dropped him off, but she wasn't allowed to go in with him. I think he was there most of the day, but he wasn't tested before it started. He said some people were wearing masks.

38. On Thursday 26th March we had a Zoom call and he had a real coughing fit on the call and I asked him if he was ok. He said he was fine. That was the first sense I had of any symptoms. On Friday 27th March, Dad was very lethargic and spent a lot of the day in bed. Mum made him his Mum's chicken soup which we call Jewish penicillin.

Losing Dad

39. On the Saturday evening into Sunday morning – the night the clocks went forward again – Dad developed a fever, vomiting, loss of lucidity. He didn't know who Mum was. Mum called an ambulance. As the ambulance crew got him into the fresh air, Dad briefly had a moment of lucidity. The crew asked him if he knew who this lady was and he said, "that's no lady that's my wife." One of his Dad jokes.

40. The ambulance crew said Mum couldn't go with him. We understand that when Dad arrived at hospital, he was placed in a covid assessment bay. At the time we thought he was suffering from an infection linked to his chemo but because he had a fever they had to assess him. We were worried he could contract Covid-19 from there.
41. On Monday evening, Mum phoned us and gave us the devastating news that Dad had Covid. I just howled. That for me was the absolute worst moment because I knew he was going to die and he was the one person we had desperately tried to protect and despite everything we had done, it had got to him. My brother and I had to go to bed knowing that Dad was alone, and Mum was at home on her own having just found out the love of her life was about to die.
42. On Tuesday morning, the hospital told Mum we were allowed to come – something we hadn't expected to be able to do and are still incredibly grateful for. We were each allowed to see him individually. I hadn't seen him for four months so he was really pleased to see me. He was still able to speak but not much. He had seen my Mum just before and said to me "your mother was glowing."
43. We got lucky and someone let us all in with him together. We all sat around singing the Monty Python song "I've got a ferret sticking up my nose" – one of his favourites. After that we were only allowed in individually.
44. It was basically 48 hours of watching Dad deteriorate, getting more and more breathless. He looked so scared. He had a mask on but lifted my hand to his mask to kiss it so we knew he knew we were there.
45. On the Wednesday evening, I was so tired as I hadn't slept for days. My head had just hit the pillow when the phone rang. It was the hospital, and it was time. We wanted my Mum to be with him in his final moments, so my brother and I each spent around five minutes with him. Every time his breathing went ragged, I panicked he was slipping away and Mum would miss it.

46. My mum sat with him all night. She is a music therapist so she sang with his breath and the doctors were amazed because he went from fighting for breath to being so calm all because he knew she was there.
47. I went to the chapel of rest and I was reading comments online from people asking why the country was closing the economy down for just a few vulnerable people. People were saying this while I was literally in hospital waiting for my Dad to die.
48. Although my dad was vulnerable, he wasn't someone who was always going to die; his death wasn't inevitable. He wasn't sitting around waiting to die. He was very much in the world and making a difference to the people around him and had a huge amount to offer.

The Funeral

49. We were allowed to have 10 people at the funeral. However, there were family members who were vulnerable or lived far away who weren't able to attend – the hardest was his brother and sister-in-law not being able to come. We were able to get a Jewish celebrant and managed to get enough Jewish men to carry the songs which was important to my Mum. We were not able to have a proper wake so afterwards we sat by the grave. In one sense it meant that we didn't have to entertain guests or order sandwiches, but in another it meant that we missed out on hearing people sharing their stories about my Dad. We tried to sit Shiva (a Jewish tradition) over zoom but it didn't really work, it was too formal.

Bereavement

50. For me, the hardest thing about my Dad's death was that was that I didn't feel it was an inevitability, I could see how if the government had made different decisions he would have been significantly less likely to contract Covid. I knew the government could have made better decisions because even though the scale of the spread of the virus hadn't been made clear to us, my family effectively put ourselves into lockdown and shielded my Dad before the government did anything, presumably with much fuller information at their disposal than what was available to us.

51. The most difficult thing about bereavement during the pandemic was watching the same 'mistakes' repeated time and again. I think all of us bereaved in the first wave were retraumatised every time we had someone else come into the group whose story sounded so similar to ours, and whose pain we had been doing our best to prevent. I found winter 2020/21 by far the hardest time - watching elderly people walking into pubs, people packing onto trains, people getting excited to go home for Christmas and visit vulnerable relatives etc, and then all the people flooding into the group looking for support when we knew those deaths hadn't needed to happen, at least on that scale, particularly with the vaccine around the corner.
52. Other challenges included accessing appropriate bereavement support. I was lucky to be able to access counselling through the National Bereavement Partnership who had a limited amount of funding for Covid specific bereavement support but they soon developed a huge waiting list. This meant many of our members were unable to access this support. They either weren't able to access local services or when they did, they found that counsellors didn't meet their needs as they were not trained in the specific challenges of Covid bereavement and grieving in lockdown.
53. Our bereavement was compounded by not being able to have direct contact with family and friends. I didn't get to hug my best friend for over a year after losing Dad. CBFFJ UK was left providing support to one another and it wasn't unusual for us to need to make contact with mental health services due to concerns about members expressing suicidal thoughts and plans. There is more than one person who credits the group with enabling them to survive the pandemic.

The Stories from our members

54. One thing we have been consistent on is the importance of the Inquiry hearing from bereaved families personally. The reason for that is that our experiences can shed light on politicians and policy maker's blind spots - blind spots that we know exist as otherwise we wouldn't be here. It stands to reason that you can't evaluate any kind of decision making without examining the outcome of that decisions. Those outcomes are experienced far away from the halls of power by normal people like me and the many others in our group.

55. We submitted a spreadsheet of accounts from 23 of our members which is exhibited here as JB2. I was one of those 23. All other 22 have confirmed that they want their accounts to be shared. The accounts reflect a wide range of experience of CBFFJ UK members. It includes the families of frontline health and social care and key workers, and people who are themselves Doctors and Professors and have relevant professional knowledge. It also illustrates the disproportionate loss in Black and Brown communities.
56. Trevor Szadowski was 63 years old when he died on 25th January 2021. Trevor had received a shielding letter and had been shielding but went back to work after getting a letter advising him to return. He did so, because of the letter and he was afraid he would lose his job. The lack of understanding about his health vulnerabilities and the lack of financial protection to enable people to shield major concerns for the family.
57. Hannah Brady lost her father Shaun Brady on 16th May 2020. Shaun was 55 years fit and healthy, went to the gym three times a week. Shaun was a key worker in the food supply industry and therefore required to work during lockdown. He travelled to work on public transport at a time when masks were not required. After falling ill his treatment was delayed because his symptoms did not match those identified by the Government.
58. Rivka Gottlieb lost her father Michael Gottlieb. He was an active, relatively healthy 73 year old man. Michael continued working up to 17th March and contracted Covid the week before lockdown. He received advice from 111 to take paracetamol, delaying admission to hospital where he later died. Lateness of lockdown and inadequate advice from 111 are key factors for the family.
59. Emeka Nyack-Ihenacho was a 36 year old Black British man. He was a London bus driver and worked without any protective measures, masks or PPE. Emeka died on 4th April 2020. Better protective measures in the workplace for key workers is a key issue for his family.
60. Simon Deverson was 59 years old when he died on 2nd April 2020. He was an otherwise fit and healthy man with no underlying health conditions. Simon is believed

to have contracted covid at a work meeting on 10th March 2020. An earlier lockdown would have saved his life.

61. Ambrogio Renoldi died on 3rd April 2020, he was 76 years old. He lived in Stanford-le-hope and was a landlord of a local pub. His son had been to a Champions League match and came back ill. Other individuals within his son's office also had been at Cheltenham and felt ill. The failure to call off mass gatherings is a key concern for the family.
62. Vincenzo Manta died on 1st April 2020. He was 62 years old when he died. He worked full time and attended the gym 3 - 4 times a week. Vincenzo continued to work at his Pizzeria until he became unwell. On 15th March 2020 Vincenzo attended a family wedding where he sat beside a cousin who had attended the Champions League match. Also, at the wedding were family members who had recently visited Italy. After falling ill, the 111 advice was for Vincenzo to stay home and take paracetamol as the reported symptoms were not believed to be C19. In further calls the family was advised that it couldn't be C19 as he was able to make a cup of tea. The decision not to cancel mass gatherings and the 111 advice are issues of concern for the family.
63. Paul Smith worked as a factory warehouse worker in Aintree Liverpool. Paul was a fit and healthy 56 year old with no underlying health issues when he died on 23rd April 2020. Paul is believed to have contracted Covid at the factory where he worked. A colleague had contracted Covid and was later hospitalised but the factory didn't close. Paul told his family that no one was following social distancing and there was no enforcement of PPE. The lack of PPE for key workers is an issue the family wish to see explored.
64. Nicola Goddard was 60 years old and working as a probation officer. She had been given a shielding letter because of her health vulnerability but was advised to return to work when the "government shielding" ended. Nicola returned to work at the probation office. She tested positive for Covid on 17th August and died on 8th September 2021. The lack of understanding about her health vulnerabilities and lack of NPIs and PPE in the workplace are key concerns.

65. Martin Douglas Bowkett was 50 years old when he died on 8th February 2021. Martin was initially told to shield in March 2020, then this was redacted by the government when the decision was made that diabetics who were key workers should continue to work. Martin self-isolated without pay until May 2020 but returned to work due to concerns about his job and finances. There was no social distancing at all in place in the production line. Martin is believed to have contracted Covid from a fellow factory worker whose wife was a healthcare receptionist who was isolating awaiting a PCR test. The worker didn't isolate because he was afraid of losing his job. The lack of understanding around his need to shield and the financial provisions to allow him to do so in order to stay safe are key concerns for the family.
66. Nishat Choudhury's father, Alamgir Al-Karim Choudhury, died 17th November, 2021 from Covid-19. He was 63 when he died and had suffered from diabetes and hypertension. Nishat's dad was Bangladeshi and he worked as a librarian. It was an economic necessity for him to continue working, despite his vulnerability and health risk if he contracted C19. The lack of understanding about his particular health vulnerabilities and the lack of financial provision to permit him to remain safe are key concerns for the family as is the disproportionate impact on people from black and brown communities.
67. Pasqualino Ferro was 74 years old when he died. He contracted Covid in hospital on 29th December 2021 as a result of the movement of patients to different areas of the hospital because of a lack of beds/facilities. The lack of infection prevention and control measures and the risk of nosocomial infection are key concern for the family.
68. Rab Sherwood lost both her parents. Her father, Sucha Singh Hothi was 85 years old when he died on 12th January 2021 and her mother, Gurdev Kaur Hothi was 74 years old when she died on 22nd January 2021. After Sucha was hospitalised he tested positive for Covid-19, Although Sucha and Gurdev lived in the same house and Gurdev was elderly with underlying medical vulnerability, she was not tested. She later reported Covid symptoms. She was hospitalised on 9th January 2021. The family is concerned that the inconsistent and confusing messages from the government as to what made people hem vulnerable meant Sucha and Gurdev did not understand. The Government messaging and lack of clarity is therefore a key concern for the family.

The Work of our Group

69. Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice have successfully campaigned for the formation of the Covid-19 Inquiry and have, at every turn, fought for lessons to be learned as soon as possible to prevent other families from suffering as they have.
70. Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice have also campaigned for improved accessibility to bereavement support and post-bereavement financial support. Please see Exhibit JB3 which is a letter we wrote to Rishi Sunak in September 2020 in his then capacity as Chancellor. We have campaigned for policy reviews to prevent avoidable mistakes from being repeated. We continue to empower our members to hold the Government and public bodies to account to ensure that the circumstances leading to their loved ones' deaths are avoided in the future.
71. CBFFJ created the National Covid Memorial Wall, which, along with our online activities, has provided comfort and community to those who have lost the most to Covid 19. We have campaigned for increased provision of bereavement support for those who lost loved ones during the pandemic, and for memorialisation of the pandemic throughout the UK.
72. The aim of Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, since its inception in 2020, has been to bring about a public, statutory inquiry into the handling of the pandemic so that lessons can be learned that will save lives in this and future pandemics. In May 2021, under threat of Judicial Review and under renewed media scrutiny following the creation of the National Covid Memorial Wall, the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson agreed to hold an Inquiry into the handling of the pandemic. We continued to campaign until December of 2021 for a Chair to be named, and that was followed by further months of campaigning for the Prime Minister to officially begin inquiry proceedings, which he did in June 2022, under threat of Judicial Review once again.
73. Although Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice have always maintained that a statutory public inquiry would provide the best mechanism for learning lessons and saving lives, in the absence of an inquiry until 2022, we have at times campaigned for

specific policy changes and interventions. Drawn from the experiences and insights of our members, who know better than any, how and to what severity those who died of Covid-19 were let down, our recommendations were made with the aim of saving lives and making the handling of the pandemic more equitable.

74. We called on the Government to carry out an urgent review into NHS 111 systems which our members know from experience is not fit for purpose and is riddled with racial and ableist bias. We also successfully appealed to the Health and Safety Investigation Branch to carry out an investigation.
75. We have also urged the Government to reinstate the free provision of Covid-19 tests in order to encourage regular testing and prevent those who look after or live with vulnerable people from experiencing disproportionate financial harm in the course of keeping their loved ones safe.
76. We forced the Care Quality Commission to publish the number of people who died of Covid-19 in care homes, in the belief that greater transparency would help families make decisions about the care of their loved ones throughout the rest of the pandemic, and we have continuously offered to meet with Sage and Government Ministers to share our members' valuable insights as experts by experience into what has gone wrong so far and how systems can be improved to keep our communities safe.
77. We have also called for the resignation of political figures such as the ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson and ex-Health Secretary Matt Hancock following revelations that they broke the lockdown restrictions they themselves set, as by remaining in office they undermined faith in life-saving public health messaging.
78. We have also called on the Government to amend measures to support the families of victims of Covid-19. We have called for the NHS Life Assurance Scheme to be extended to all key workers who lost their lives to Covid-19 (not just Health and Social Care workers) and we have continuously campaigned for the provision of a national standard of specialised Covid-19 informed bereavement support across the UK. Our campaigning in every area mentioned above has involved, but not been limited to, writing to or meeting with Ministers, providing briefings for parliamentary debates,

providing submissions to APPGs and select committees and raising questions in the House of Lords and the House of Commons

I believe the facts stated in this statement are true

Signed **Personal Data**

Dated 27th September 2023