

Home UK World Business Politics Tech Science Health

Family & Education Entertainment & Arts Stories

Covid in Scotland: 'Mistake' to discharge Covid patients says Sturgeon

By Glenn Campbell
Political editor, BBC Scotland

18 April 2021



02:25

| Nicola Sturgeon says she wants a four-nation public inquiry into the handling of the pandemic

Nicola Sturgeon has said the way elderly people were discharged from hospital to care homes in the early stages of the pandemic was a mistake.

More than 1,300 elderly people were sent to care homes before a robust testing regime was

in place.

Ms Sturgeon said with "hindsight" she agreed with Health Secretary Jeane Freeman's view that this was mistaken.

She has called for a four nations inquiry into the pandemic by the end of the year.

In the early stages of the pandemic, hundreds of elderly people who no longer needed to be in hospital were discharged, in many cases to care homes.

This was at a time when the Scottish government was being advised to create as much spare capacity as possible in hospitals in anticipation of huge case numbers, and before a rigorous testing regime was in place.

- Government 'failed' social care sector during pandemic
- What went wrong in Scotland's care homes?
- More than 400 care homes investigated over deaths

Earlier this month, the health secretary said the government failed to properly understand the needs of social care during the pandemic.

She said: "We didn't take the right precautions to make sure that older people leaving hospital going into care homes were as safe as they could be and that was a mistake."

In an interview with BBC Scotland, Ms Sturgeon was asked if she agreed with this analysis.

She said: "Looking back on that now, with the knowledge we have now and with the benefit of hindsight, yes."

She later tweeted, emphasising that decisions were taken based on knowledge that was available at the time, but that it was important to be "candid" about what happened.

Allow Twitter content?

This article contains content provided by Twitter. We ask for your permission before anything is loaded, as they may be using cookies and other technologies. You may want to read [Twitter cookie policy](#) and [privacy policy](#) before accepting. To view this content choose 'accept and continue'.

Accept and continue

The first minister said the Scottish government changed the approach when it learned more about how Covid patients without symptoms could spread the virus.

Asked if discharging untested patients from hospitals into care homes had cost lives, she said: "The number of people who died were too many and we got some things wrong and I feel the responsibility of that every single day."

GETTY IMAGES

| Care home residents account for about a third of the 10,000 Covid-related deaths in Scotland so far

Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar said the situation in care homes had been the "biggest crisis" of the pandemic.

He said: "We should never have been sending Covid-positive patients into care homes. That was unforgivable."

Public inquiry

Ms Sturgeon told BBC Scotland she wants a judge-led public inquiry into how Covid was handled to begin before the end of this year.

She said her preference was for an inquiry to be established on a UK-wide basis and take account of devolved decision making, but she was prepared to go it alone.

She explained: "I can't force other governments to agree to it, so if we can't get that agreement in good time I will move ahead with a Scottish-only public inquiry".

Other Holyrood parties have suggested distinct Scottish and UK inquiries should be set up and work together.

Mr Sarwar wants a Scottish inquiry running alongside a wider UK investigation, while Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross said: "It is right that there are inquiries and I think we'll see them both here in Scotland and across the UK."

The Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie said: "there would be an advantage in Scotland actually starting that process, if the UK isn't prepared to come along at this stage."

The Scottish Greens co-leader Patrick Harvie said: "The Scottish government's response to the pandemic, including its reluctance to diverge from the UK government's approach, must be examined."

- RULES: [What are the restrictions in Scotland?](#)
- LOCKDOWN: [Six months that changed our lives](#)
- CASES: [Where are the latest cases in Scotland?](#)
- NUMBERS: [Four key figures to watch out for](#)

Related topics

[Scottish government](#)

[Nicola Sturgeon](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Related content

Covid in Scotland: Government 'failed' social care sector during pandemic

8 April 2021

Coronavirus: What went wrong in Scotland's care homes?

28 July 2020

Covid in Scotland: More than 400 care homes investigated over deaths

22 January 2021

Top Stories

Suppliers pushing up prices of branded goods, says watchdog

15 minutes ago

LIVE Hopes of Gaza truce extension as more hostages set to be freed

Four teenagers drowned after crash, inquest hears

40 minutes ago

Features & Analysis



Chalamet: People didn't want me to 'mess up' Wonka

28 November 2023



'Every Greek felt offended' - how Athens sees the Elgin Marbles row

3 hours ago



The mystery over a baby found in a recycling tip

29 November 2023



'Royal race row' and 'pressure' for PM on migrants

5 hours ago



The story behind this heart-warming father-son kiss

3 hours ago



'I was sold into marriage for £7 at the age of 12'

29 November 2023



Spotify Wrapped: Are music genres irrelevant now?

29 November 2023



Finding happiness after the Clutha helicopter crash

5 hours ago



'Covid and criminals ruined my Airbnb for cars idea'

29 November 2023

Most read

Why you can trust the BBC

[Terms of Use](#)

[Cookies](#)

[Do not share or sell my info](#)

[About the BBC](#)

[Accessibility Help](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Contact the BBC](#)

© 2023 BBC. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. [Read about our approach to external linking.](#)