



## **#ItCouldHappenToYou: THE LONG COVID GROUPS LAUNCH THEIR CAMPAIGN TO COINCIDE WITH BORIS JOHNSON'S APPEARANCE AT THE COVID INQUIRY**

**Anyone can get Long Covid. This is the message that will be sent out across central London on Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December as Boris Johnson appears in front of the Covid Inquiry to give evidence.**

The Long Covid Groups are core participants in the Inquiry and comprise volunteer-led charities and associations Long Covid Support, Long Covid SOS, Long Covid Physio and Long Covid Kids. Through their legal team, headed up by Jane Ryan of Bhatt Murphy solicitors, the Groups have been working hard to ensure that Long Covid, ignored and dismissed since the start of the pandemic, runs as a thread throughout the Inquiry.

From the revelation that Boris Johnson thought that Long Covid was 'Bollocks' and 'Gulf War syndrome stuff' to the claim from Chris Whitty that it didn't warrant bringing to the attention of No 10, the evidence heard at the Covid Inquiry has confirmed that Long Covid has been sidelined, disbelieved and ignored. Despite written appeals from the Groups that Long Covid should be a consideration in policy making decisions, the potential for hundreds of thousands to go on to suffer long-term consequences from a Covid-19 infection was never given the importance it deserved. There are now 1.9 million people impacted in the UK, including 62,000 children.

**People with Long Covid are the surviving victims of the pandemic** and the millions injured by Covid-19 have faced huge struggles to have their illness recognised and to get the care they so desperately need.

Due to an almost complete absence of messaging from our government, the public have essentially been kept in the dark about this relatively common and debilitating consequence of a Covid infection. Even now, as Covid continues to circulate, the risk of developing Long Covid is still not being communicated and as a result many members of the public are unaware that it exists. They may themselves be unwell after a Covid infection without knowing how to seek help, or could go on to develop sequelae at some point in the future.

This is why the Long Covid Groups have commissioned a 'digivan' which on **6<sup>th</sup> December** will spend the day touring London streets around the Inquiry venue in Paddington, Westminster and Downing Street with a powerful set of images to hammer home the message to the public that anyone can get Long Covid: **#ItCouldHappenToYou**.

The digivan reel will be launched on the Long Covid Groups [website](#) on 6th December.

To coincide with this, a letter to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will be hand delivered to No 10 at 2.30pm demanding increased investment into urgent biomedical research and clinical trials for Long Covid. The £50 million invested by the government in 2021 is now spent, and while other countries are investing significant sums in research to help prevent and cure this debilitating condition, the UK is

lagging behind and researchers struggle to get funding. The [letter](#) also urges the government to invest in public awareness campaigns so that members of the public understand the real risk of contracting Covid-19.

**Ondine Sherwood, Co-founder of Long Covid SOS said:**

“It is clear from the evidence presented to the Inquiry that for our government, Long Covid was and continues to be an inconvenient truth. The sidelining of this condition and prioritisation of the economy over health has resulted in almost 3% of the UK population suffering ongoing harm from Covid-19, and the impact to the workforce is now being keenly felt.”

**Amitava Banerjee, Professor of Clinical Data Science and Honorary Consultant Cardiologist and Long Covid SOS Trustee said:**

“Without urgent, further funding for Long Covid research, there is a danger that we will be unable to see through or translate existing research across studies, such as STIMULATE-ICP, and help the many patients still in need of recognition, research and rehabilitation.”

**Danny Altmann, Professor of Immunology Imperial College London and Long Covid Support Trustee said:**

“Long Covid continues to limit the lives of millions in the UK and countless others around the globe. The burden of Long Covid disability has a massive impact on the lives of the sufferers and their families, their livelihoods, the education of children, additional NHS pressures, and the economy in the broadest sense. New cases are appearing all the time from Omicron breakthrough infections – there are no signs that Long Covid is coming to an end. While the UK had been considered a leader in efforts to address Long Covid, there now appears little momentum or support behind the research or care pathways. These are areas where the UK has the skills-base to lead – if given the chance – as was the case in therapeutic trials for acute COVID-19.”

**Sammie McFarland, Founder and CEO of Long Covid Kids said:**

“As a mother of a child living with the condition since 2020, I urgently draw attention to the stark realities faced by our youngest generation. New data evidences that 40% of children aren’t improving. These statistics underscore a life-changing impact on these young lives, yet the government remains silent on the issue. Reduced school attendance, diminished opportunities, increased disability, and heightened health needs are the everyday reality for these children, who developed a preventable disease due to ignored science.”

**Lindsay Skipper, Long Covid Physio Peer Support Committee Member said:**

“Long Covid has devastated the lives, careers and futures of so many people in the U.K. As the Inquiry reveals the depth of this continuing national health crisis it is essential that research, funding, treatment and support is given to the 1.9 million people affected in our country. Without effective treatment and prevention, both children and adults are facing devastating health and social consequences which impact personally and on a wider community level.”

**ENDS**

**Background**

- Many with Long Covid are unable to work and support their families and are being forced to sell their homes. Health and social care are the sectors most impacted but as yet the condition has not been classified as an [Occupational Disease](#). The last [estimates](#) from the ONS suggest that 2.9% of the UK population have Long Covid, of whom 1.5 million are adversely affected. 1.8% of those aged between 25-34 and 3.1% of 35–49-year-olds have had Long Covid for more than a year – totalling around 560,000 people in the prime of their working lives.
- Although NHS England has set up more than 90 Long Covid clinics there is no cure and no validated treatments, only symptom relief. These clinics are accepting fewer than [2000 new referrals](#) each month. There are currently no Long Covid clinics in Scotland with only patchy provision in Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Long Covid is having a direct impact on the economy. The Bank of England [highlighted](#) the contribution Long Covid has made towards an estimated 440,000 missing workers and more than [10,000 long term absences](#) among NHS staff are Covid related. The Institute of Fiscal Affairs [estimated](#) in 2022 that 110,000 workers are on sick leave due to Long Covid. More recently it has been [reported](#) that economic inactivity due to long term sickness is at a record high of 2.6 million: Long Covid is considered to make an important contribution to these figures.

**For more information, interviews and case studies go to [www.longcovidgroups.org/contactus](http://www.longcovidgroups.org/contactus)**