

12 September 2023

Congress debates the Covid-19 public enquiry

The TUC noted that the Covid-19 enquiry has revealed serious failings in the government's readiness and response to the pandemic and deep structural inequalities.

[Composite Motion C11 , The Covid-19 Public Inquiry](#) was moved by UNISON. It highlights how the Covid-19 public inquiry hearings have found that poorer households, disabled people and Black people suffered disproportionately, with 60% of people who lost their lives to Covid-19 being disabled.

It noted the damaging effects of austerity, saying that "Safe staffing levels, public service capacity and resources, the social security system and health and safety protections at work were all subjected to funding cuts in the decade before the pandemic. This reduced capacity to respond."

Congress voted for the TUC to continue to raise issues of relevance to union members, their families and communities, support trade unionists to share their experiences, so that these can be built into TUC evidence, and direct to the inquiry through the 'Every Story Matters' process, highlighting the equalities impact of the pandemic.

Speakers from UNISON, the FBU, NASUWT, UCU, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists, Prospect and Unite spoke on the motion and about the experiences of them and their members during the Covid pandemic.

Speaking on the motion on behalf of PCS, delegate Carol Revell said: "The Covid-19 public enquiry revealed serious failings and highlighted the UK government's failure to address deep structural inequalities in society. Covid hit after years of austerity which devastated the civil service."

She said "PCS repeatedly warned the Cabinet Office that the systematic underfunding of vital services severely undermined the UK's preparedness for dealing with a pandemic."

“Many of our workplaces were not safe, we did not have adequate PPE and most of the ventilation systems in our own buildings were not fit for purpose....in DWP workers and claimants’ lives did not seem to matter. Trade union reps throughout the civil service fought for safer workplaces while continuing to support the most vulnerable in society.”

The motion was carried.

Share your experiences of Covid-19 with [Every Story Matters](#).

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