



NORTH TYNESIDE  
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**Chronicle Live**

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## Covid inquiry

The total deaths due to Covid from February 15 2020 till February 2024 are 232,112. An estimated 1.9 million people have reported that they were experiencing Long Covid and 1.3 million had symptoms that lasted more than a year.

Estimates of the total cost to government of Covid measures range between £310 billion to £410 billion

All in all, Covid has had a devastating effect on the country both in human suffering and financially.

But did it need to be quite so devastating? With the right responses and functioning public services we would have been more prepared.

The on-going inquiry and the report from Baroness Hallet has stated that public health, NHS and social cares' capacity to respond to the pandemic was "constrained" by funding. It was negatively impacted by "severe staff shortages" and infrastructures were not fit for purpose. The report also warns that not investing in systems of protection will impact on the UK's "preparedness and resilience" in a future pandemic. TUC general secretary, Paul Novak, has said that, "Baroness Hallet's report confirms that austerity left the UK under-prepared for the pandemic. "Baroness Hallet also pointed out that 'Covid was not an equality opportunity virus. It resulted in a higher likelihood of sickness and death among the poorest people.

Two professors, Bambra and Marmot, who contributed to the report determined that "In short, the UK entered the pandemic with its public services depleted, health improvement stalled, health inequalities increased and health among the poorest people in a state of decline".



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In contrast, we now know that £21 billion of public money was lost in fraud. Most will never be recovered, according to the National Audit Office. Private companies were handed £30 billion of public money to assist in the pandemic response. This included Test and Trace, PPE and hospital supplies such as ventilators and medicines. But management consultants, and lawyers were also drafted in to replace the civil service which had been cut back.

There is no denying that the health service has been left in a much worse state since the Tories took office. However, the new Labour government appear to be carrying on with austerity politics and relying on private companies to shore up our depleted health service. Again, those with the least will end up paying the most. Surely this report and inquiry proves that not investing today only leads to more expenditure later. As Confucius is supposed to have said 'To define the future one must study the past'. We need to invest in our public services to be prepared for the future or it will be the most vulnerable who will suffer the consequences again.

**Sincerely,**

**Cathy Davis**

North Tyneside Community Independent



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