

Michael Rosen introduction

Michael Rosen, former Children's Laureate, author and broadcaster

I welcome the government's announcement that they're going to hold an inquiry, but it slightly misses the point because we need an inquiry now, or if possible, yesterday. Why? Well, because there were serious errors that this government made in February, March, September and December in particular, in 2020 that is. And the problem is, the same people who committed those errors are there they are still there now. So we desperately need to delineate, to number and to make very particular what these errors were, why they were committed. And indeed, what used to be called the sins of omission as well as commission. That's to say what things were not done.

So for example, the whole debacle of test, trace and isolate, and indeed, their unwillingness to implement masking, social distance and washing early enough and fixed enough, because they were so resistant to the idea of a public health policy. We only have to reference Boris Johnson's speech of 3 February 2020 for that.

Now, the pandemic is not over, in spite of our optimism, and I'm very much in favour of optimism, I think it's a great idea. But variants are appearing. And we don't know which variants will appear and might be of an even more serious nature than the ones that are appearing. And we're also in a phase of contradictory and muddled advice. So we're getting all sorts of advice about amber and green and red and a variety of advice coming from the EU versus what the UK is coming up with, and whether we're going to have localised shutdowns or not.

So we're not actually in a situation in which we're clear. And then to reference back, we should reference back to Operation Cygnus, I keep calling it Cygnet, but I don't mean to diminish it. That operation Cygnus was not implemented, we need to know why not, because this would have made things better if it had been.

And obviously, we've got to look closely at the nature of the awarding of the contracts. Because this is part of the general picture that we're uncovering about the way in which this government favours the private sector when we're talking about a public health matter. And the way those contracts were awarded.

I was in an intensive care ward in which Professor Hugh Montgomery, it's in the public domain, has said that the issue with PPE was so appalling, they were receiving second-hand PPE, some of which had blood on it. And in my ward, I contracted Klebsiella - that's also in the public domain. So it's a secondary infection. I had a viral pneumonia, of course, as a result of Covid. But then I got bacterial pneumonia as a consequence of the overcrowding in the ward, but that was exacerbated, if you like by the terrible state of PPE. So a lot of questions need to be answered. And they need to be answered now. And not kicked off into the long grass.