

UK teacher with Long COVID welcomes Global Workers Inquest into the pandemic

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UK secondary school teacher Kathleen Munro (a pseudonym) has been off work with Long COVID since March 18, 2020. She faces the prospect of losing her income, career and pension, for catching a disease through no fault of her own. Because she is unfit to return to work, her employer is looking to terminate her contract in January, while refusing to accept she caught COVID at work.

Kathleen is a member of Facebook groups which support education staff with Long COVID, as well as Twitter group Long Covid Kids. She also supports the Educators Rank-and-File Committee (UK) and signed up to assist with the Global Workers Inquest into COVID-19.

She explained to the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) how she is coping with the illness.

The 12-week Nuffield rehabilitation programme “was really helpful because it allows me to know what I can do, to stop me from overdoing it. If I overdo it that has an impact, my insomnia’s terrible, I’m overfatigued, it knocks you back for days so it’s important to stay within your energy level. It’s like having a battery in a car—you can’t run it out, you have to keep in credit all the time to keep that energy going. Each day I need to make sure I’ve still got energy to be able to function and if you overdo it then you literally have to rest to jump start your body again.

“Some days I feel like I’m brain damaged. I feel like I’ve got dementia. Just talking to you on the phone, I’m getting abnormal heart rates detected on my watch, and my oxygen levels have gone down to 92.”

Kathleen pointed to recent research into Long COVID led by doctor Beatte Jaeger in Germany. “They believe it’s all down to micro clots in the blood and there are people going to Germany to have treatment called HELP Apheresis. This is a transfusion system

where it takes out the fibron in the blood.

“All these trials are very experimental, and people are paying tens of thousands of pounds to do it. There’s a massive waiting list.”

Kathleen strongly condemned the response of Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s UK government to the pandemic. “I was reading some of the comments in the teachers Facebook group pages this week and one lady said, ‘I feel so bitter. Long Covid ruined my life and has taken away my career prospects. If I could sue the government I would.’ I feel the same. Lots of us in the groups are beginning to get really angry.”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the government along with the education unions and opposition Labour Party have been fully committed to keeping schools open, which has contributed to the uncontrollable spread of the virus. Despite the emergence of the new variant Omicron, which appears to disproportionately affect the very young, the government is determined to keep schools open with the prospect of a Christmas profits bonanza in sight.

“Because there’s money to be made, that’s capitalism, that’s their driving force, and the other parties are all included. They’re going to ruin the world, its greed and money,” said Kathleen.

Kathleen shared a poll taken on November 11, 2021 by Facebook groups Teachers with Covid UK, and Long Covid teachers and Support Staff UK. More than 47 percent who responded said they were considering leaving teaching because of COVID issues (safety, illness), while 30 percent said they had already left for the same reasons. Only 26 percent intend to remain in the profession despite the difficulties.

“The government’s whole strategy is they don’t care how many people are dying, it’s about survival of the fittest,” continued Kathleen.

In relation to victimised London bus driver David O’Sullivan, sacked for fighting for COVID safety on London transport, Kathleen said, “He was doing his best for the community, and to be sacked for doing the right thing, it’s incredible. It’s all these key workers being affected and there’s not enough thought about their safety. It’s about keeping the economy going and not about people’s lives. The government think if people die or become ill, there’s got to be something wrong with them, you got what you deserve. They want to reduce what they think is a burden on society. It’s been their strategy to reduce the burden on the NHS.”

Fearful of the dangers schoolchildren face every time they go into class, with virtually no mitigations in place, Kathleen said, “It frightens me to death every time my daughter May goes to school.

“I’m actually in the Long Covid Kids group because my niece Anne, 13, got Long COVID. She caught it on her first day back in Year 8 and hasn’t been back since. She’s tried to go back a couple times; the school keeps pushing her and of course she can’t manage it. Schools don’t understand the condition, they don’t understand the issues with concentration, the difficulty trying to focus, the extreme lethargy where you literally feel like a lead weight, and every movement is like you’re really old. Children don’t understand how much they are suffering.

“The more transmission there is, the more variants we’re going to get, the longer this is going to go on.

“These children have got their whole lives ahead. Are they going to be permanently damaged? My niece was the brightest in the class. She spent every weekend travelling around the country in competitions and now literally all she can do is just sit on the sofa. She can’t even follow her passion for reading. She had her best friend over last week, just for a couple of hours and they sat just watching telly together and after that she spent three days in bed just from the concentration of having a friend there and watching TV.

“I think children’s mental health is going to be horrendous if they have Long COVID because this is so isolating. Their friends will be carrying on having a wonderful time, they’ll see things on social media. Luckily, Anne’s mum works part time so she can look after her a lot of the time at home, and she can prepare healthy foods and she’s really on it in terms of supplements and taking her to private health doctors

and having acupuncture.

“Other children won’t have that. They may have what Anne’s got and just be shoved to school. They’ll spend the whole day in torturous pain trying to concentrate, they’ll probably not produce anything. That’s if they can manage to get to school not just be stuck at home.

“I think with the transmissions rates among children, schools should be shut.

“I feel like I’m living in a parallel universe. How has this all happened? How is it the unions are behaving like this? What makes them think that they don’t need to protect their members anymore? What is the point of them?

“I think there will be a lot of teachers that will want to participate in the global inquest into the pandemic. On Facebook recently there’s been lots of threads where people ask what can we do? Do we write to our MPs? That’s not going to work at all, is it? They need direction to your organisation.

“Teachers, they’re so angry now, they don’t know what to do. Teachers are coming to the Long COVID groups who have been double jabbed. There’s a flood coming through from the beginning of September. It could be down to the high viral load in the classroom.

“I absolutely support a global workers inquest. It’s the only way to get out of this mess without causing more death and more comorbidities in the working class and children in state schools, where we’ve got high class numbers, and you can’t be socially distanced.”



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