

## Testimony to the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic

# Herd immunity in Northern Ireland: “My family has been torn apart”

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My name is Christopher Donaghy, and I am from Belfast, Northern Ireland. I'm 32 years old. I am submitting this testimony to the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic because my mum recently passed away from Covid. I lost my mum on the 29th of October 2021, and I think about her every day.

Here in Northern Ireland, 4,236 people have died from COVID-19. These aren't just numbers. They are families who have lost mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, brothers and sisters to this horrible illness. My own family has been personally devastated by it.

My mum's name was Elizabeth Mary Donaghy. She caught COVID in the third week of September last year. It started as a bad cough, fatigue, loss of appetite and body aches. As the days went on, she found it hard to breathe and had terrible pain in her left leg, which antibiotics didn't help.

Mum was admitted to the Mater Hospital in Belfast and was then transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital where they found a blood clot. The doctor called us at 1am to explain she needed emergency surgery to amputate her left leg, or the clot would spread. We were heartbroken and couldn't believe it. I still can't believe it.

My third eldest brother, who is 37, also developed severe COVID and was given a 50/50 chance of survival. He caught COVID in early September and as the days wore on, his symptoms worsened. It was a Saturday when we called for an ambulance. He started to become delirious and could barely breathe. Later that day, the doctor said if we hadn't called an ambulance, or if it hadn't arrived in time, he would have passed away. They told us that every hour was critical and there was a chance he could pass away. I had never felt fear like that ever in my entire life, it was a horrible experience. He was on a ventilator for 18 days. The nurses called my brother a miracle.

My brother was discharged from the Royal Vic on Thursday the 28th of October, a day before my mum passed away. They wanted to keep him in for a while longer but the doctor in charge let him go home because our mum was going to pass away.

My eldest sister, who is 49, caught COVID not long after mum and my brother. Her symptoms were mild at first, but she got worse. She said later she was taking a bath and couldn't breathe. My nephew called an out-of-hours doctor who immediately called an ambulance. When they arrived, they gave her oxygen. My sister thought she was going to pass away in the bath. It was very frightening, and I can't imagine what she was feeling. She was admitted to the Mater Hospital and placed on oxygen. They discovered she had multiple blood clots in her chest, and she was given steroids and blood thinning tablets.

My mum, my father, all three brothers, my sister, her son (my nephew) and myself all caught COVID-19 around the same time. How did this

nightmare happen? Stormont [Northern Ireland's parliament] laid the ground for this by lifting lockdown measures. By last June 14th-27th, there were *no deaths* from COVID-19 being recorded in Northern Ireland. But the Northern Ireland Executive ignored the clear and ongoing threat from the pandemic and pushed ahead with its “Pathway out of Restrictions”.

By the end of May, pubs, bars and hotels were reopened. Schools were sent back on September 1st. The government's own Chief Scientist Professor Ian Young warned, “We are concerned that there will be an increase in case numbers and, in turn, hospital admissions, ICU pressures, and deaths as we move into the autumn.”

All the scientists' warnings were ignored. A surge of infections began, placing huge strain on hospitals and ICUs. The moneymen in government don't care how many families suffer, as long as profits keep rolling and the economy is booming. Their policy was “herd immunity”, which basically means they wanted everyone infected so they wouldn't get infected again. This is total nonsense as people can get COVID-19 more than once. All they are interested in is money and profits. It is disgusting.

I caught COVID, but I was double vaccinated. My other two brothers and my father caught it as well, but they were vaccinated too. My nephew who is 22 also caught the illness but thankfully his symptoms were mild.

My mum was born in London on the 24th of September 1948. She has a brother, sister and two half-sisters. Mum worked in a few factories when she was much younger and met my dad here in Belfast in 1971. They got married not long after and had six children together, four sons and two daughters. My mum was the sort of person who would have done anything for you. She put her children ahead of herself always.

Mum loved to read and was a huge Stephen King fan--she had all of his books and I have kept them. Every time I look at them, I cry as I miss her dearly. I blame myself for what happened because I don't think I did enough to convince her to be vaccinated and I will always have that guilt inside me.

### Anti-vaccination movement

When the pandemic began, mum didn't believe it was true. I didn't either because I was also duped by anti-vax lies. But over the last two years I have realised what an idiot I was. She was watching people like David Icke and others on YouTube. This guy is a total screwball, a leader of a cult (like Jim Jones or Aleister Crowley) and a 100 percent whack

job.

This is the type of people my mum, brother and sister were duped by at the start of all this. This is a man who believes the Royal family and Kris Kristofferson are reptilians and that he is “the Son of Godhead”. But what isn’t funny is the nonsense he dupes people with, about how “bad” COVID vaccines are, how they are taking people’s DNA and how scientists are mass murderers. Icke promotes anti-Semitism, claiming a “clique of Jews” started World War I, the Russian Revolution and World War II. He is a Holocaust denier who attacked Stephen Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List* for indoctrinating children. People like this nutball are the real mass murderers as they have blood on their hands from duping countless people with misinformation.

Mum was reading stuff like “they put microchips in the vaccines”, “they take your DNA and watch your every movement” amongst other rubbish, which is just insane. My mum was never against vaccines though, and deep down she knew that she made a horrendous mistake even listening to these people, but by then it was too late. If she hadn’t listened, she would have gotten the COVID vaccine. To this day I haven’t forgiven myself and don’t think I ever will as I didn’t do enough to convince her to get it.

Hopefully more and more people wake up and realise the anti-vax movement is being driven by far-right fascists. They talk about “freedom” and “liberty” but are the exact opposite of both. It is laughable actually. So I beg you, don’t make the same mistake my family made, don’t listen to whack jobs like David Icke or any of his kind. My family has been torn apart because of it. I lost my mum because of them and nearly lost my brother who is also my best friend. I pray that people stop listening to them and just go and get vaccinated. Don’t go through what my family has gone through and will always go through.

### **Northern Ireland: Poverty and COVID-19 mortality**

My mum never liked the Tories. She was always Labour, but she didn’t like the current Labour Party. She always called [Prime Minister] Boris Johnson a buffoon. We only found out leading up to her passing that she had COPD [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease], but by then it was too late. I think that played a part in her passing as it made her more susceptible.

Since then, I have learned that Northern Ireland has the highest death rate from COVID-19 in the whole of the UK. In August 2021, the *BMJ* [British Medical Journal] published an article called, “Covid-19: Why is Northern Ireland’s death rate so high?” It showed the rate of infections was nearly 80 percent higher than the UK as a whole. Mark Tully, a professor of public health at Ulster University, explained that “Northern Ireland had higher levels of chronic disease and social deprivation than other parts of the UK, which could also be influencing its death rate.”

The COVID-19 hospital admission rate was highest in the 10 percent most deprived areas (275 admissions per 100,000 population) which was more than double the rate in the 10 percent least deprived areas (126 admissions per 100,000 population) and 64 percent higher than the Northern Ireland average (168 admissions per 100,000 population).

The link between COVID deaths and poverty is clear. NISRA [the Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency] found that during the first wave of the pandemic, COVID-19 deaths were highest in the 20 percent most deprived areas and lowest in the 20 percent least deprived areas. The worst hit places were Antrim and Newtonabbey, Causeway Coast and Glens, Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh, and Mid and East Antrim. These are Catholic, Protestant or mixed areas, and this shows the virus pays no heed to sectarian divisions.

NISRA’s study of deaths during the first wave of the pandemic in Northern Ireland found that “After accounting for differences in age, sex and area of residence, there was no significant difference in risk of Covid-19 death, for the time period March to September 2020, for those who identified as Protestant at the time of the 2011 Census, compared to Catholics.”

People are dying because of poverty and this cuts across religious lines. For example, NISRA found 67.6 percent of COVID-19 deaths were among people with no educational qualifications. And 90.2 percent of COVID-19 deaths occurred among the economically inactive/unemployed. For those with a disability, such as COPD in my mum’s case, there was a 48 percent higher risk of death from COVID-19.

### **The pandemic is not over**

The pandemic is still affecting my family. My brother suffers from Long COVID now, as does my sister. My brother has breathing problems, he still gets pain and has rashes. He can’t walk much anymore. My sister has long-term lung damage, constant pains in her body and legs, and it has given her rashes too. They are fatigued a lot of the time and will never be the same again. Both have now been vaccinated.

On February 15, Northern Ireland became the first place in the UK to lift all remaining COVID restrictions. Mandatory masks on public transport have been ended and social distancing is replaced with guidance only, which I find incredible as the pandemic is far from over. They are even calling it endemic which is not true. The virus has not been confined to localised outbreaks, it is out of control globally, which means it’s still a pandemic.

The only way to eradicate COVID-19 for good is for everyone to get vaccinated and that means vaccines need to be freely available to the poorest countries. Schools and other public buildings need to have proper ventilation, masks need to be kept, workplaces made safe, and contact tracing, self-isolation and PCR testing kept in place free of charge. I find it incredible they have lifted self-isolation so if anyone becomes infected, they can just walk around freely and infect everyone with COVID. It is just criminal but does not surprise me as the Tory party are heartless money grabbers who look after their mates and have a screw everyone else attitude. They are criminals themselves and there is no opposition from the other parties—either in Stormont or Westminster.

I would also like to take this time to praise the nurses and doctors in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast who looked after my mum and brother. They were fantastic. I wish that I could repay them somehow. I would like to praise the nurses and doctors who looked after my sister in the Mater Hospital. They are all fabulous and are under-appreciated as is the whole NHS, so thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Thanks for taking the time to read my testimony and keep safe, take care and look out for one another.



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