# Political scandals during the Covid-19 pandemic: A retrospective



The Covid-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges globally, leading to significant loss of life and ongoing health issues for many. In the UK, along with dealing with the ramifications of the virus, the public also became embroiled in a series of controversies involving politicians, which have remained burned into collective memory. This was highlighted in a recent retrospective piece from the Daily Star, detailing some of the most infamous political scandals that emerged during the pandemic era.

One of the most notorious incidents involved Matt Hancock, who served as the Health and Social Care Secretary during the height of the pandemic. Despite urging the public to adhere to stricter social distancing measures, Hancock was embroiled in a scandal when it was revealed that he was having an affair with Gina Coladangelo, a colleague in the Department of Health and Social Care. This revelation came to light when photographs surfaced showing the pair in a passionate embrace while Hancock’s wife was home, unaware of the situation. After the scandal broke, Hancock publicly apologised, admitting to having let people down, a statement that further highlighted the disconnect between governmental authority and personal conduct at the time.

Boris Johnson, the then Prime Minister, also found himself at the centre of controversy with his approach to handling the virus. He attempted to emulate a moment from Princess Diana’s legacy by shaking hands with hospital patients during a hospital visit, disregarding advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) against such actions as the outbreak intensified. Shortly thereafter, he tested positive for Covid-19, resulting in his admission to intensive care. Johnson's actions drew widespread criticism, particularly in light of the Prime Minister’s later participation in a garden gathering amidst continued lockdown restrictions, which would emerge as another point of contention known as 'PartyGate'.

The Conservative Party faced further backlash over a Christmas party held on 14 December 2020, amid strict lockdown regulations that prohibited gatherings. Employees celebrated with a festive gathering that included singing and dancing, an event captured in videos and photos. This contravened the measures that restricted family gatherings during the Christmas season, and subsequently led to the resignation of Shaun Bailey from his role as chair of the London Assembly police and crime committee after the event was exposed. The carefree spirit of the gathering starkly contrasted with the public's lockdown experiences, eliciting feelings of frustration and anger across the nation.

Dominic Cummings, who served as a senior adviser to Boris Johnson, contributed to the growing disillusionment with government guidance when he made headlines for a highly controversial journey. Cummings claimed to have driven nearly 300 miles from his home in London to Barnard Castle under the guise of testing his eyesight, an excuse that many found ludicrous, particularly given that he was already displaying Covid-19 symptoms. His trip, which contradicted the government’s self-isolation recommendations, led to public outcry and ultimately the notion of a “Dominic Cummings effect,” where citizens increasingly disregarded lockdown rules citing bizarre justifications.

As the nation continues to grapple with the lasting impacts of the pandemic, these scandals serve as a significant reminder of the perceived hypocrisy and missteps made by those in power during an unprecedented public health crisis. With the emergence of new reports and evaluations surrounding this turbulent period, public sentiment towards these politicians remains a topic of crucial discussion.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominic_Cummings_scandal> - This URL corroborates the information about Dominic Cummings' controversial journey during the pandemic, which contradicted government self-isolation recommendations and led to public outcry.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Controversies_regarding_COVID-19_contracts_in_the_United_Kingdom> - This URL supports the claims about controversies surrounding COVID-19 contracts in the UK, including allegations of cronyism and improper contract awards.
* <https://www.transparency.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-11/Behind%20the%20Masks%20Report%20Final_0.pdf> - This report from Transparency International UK provides evidence of corruption red flags in COVID-19 public procurement, including contracts awarded to politically connected suppliers.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/09/matt-hancock-resigns-as-health-secretary-after-affair-revelations> - This article from The Guardian details Matt Hancock's resignation as Health Secretary following revelations of his affair with Gina Coladangelo, highlighting the disconnect between governmental authority and personal conduct.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-57633281> - This BBC article discusses Boris Johnson's actions during the pandemic, including his participation in gatherings that contravened lockdown rules, contributing to public criticism.