# Sue Gray Testifies at UK Covid-19 Inquiry in Belfast



Sue Gray, former senior civil servant and current chief of staff for Labour leader Keir Starmer, testified at the UK Covid-19 Inquiry in Belfast on Thursday. Gray, who was the top civil servant in Northern Ireland’s Department of Finance during the early stages of the pandemic, indicated that Stormont officials were initially more reactive than proactive. Gray's testimony highlighted that the pre-pandemic absence of devolved government contributed to this reactive stance. She noted ongoing relationship building between ministers and the civil service when the pandemic struck.

With testimonies from key figures including Michelle O’Neill, Arlene Foster, and Health Minister Robin Swann, the inquiry exposed dysfunctions within the Northern Ireland administration. Brenda Campbell KC, representing NI Covid Bereaved Families for Justice, described the evidence as revealing a "dysfunctional system."

Gray also conducted a leak investigation regarding confidential Executive meetings during the pandemic, which did not identify the sources. She compared this with the practices in London, where leaks are less common due to stricter collective responsibility protocols.

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry aims to make recommendations for better future preparedness, but as Chairwoman Baroness Heather Hallett noted, the final report will take time due to its importance.