# Uk Covid-19 inquiry costs set to hit £227 million amid calls for spending cap



The UK Covid-19 Inquiry is spiraling towards an eye-watering £227 million in projected costs, drawing sharp criticism as it risks becoming the most expensive investigation of its kind in British history. While the inquiry scrutinizes the government's pandemic response, taxpayers are rightfully alarmed at this escalating expenditure, with pressing calls for a spending cap to safeguard their finances.

Launched on 28 June 2022, the inquiry covers myriad aspects of the pandemic response, from testing to isolation protocols. As it enters its seventh round of hearings, the costs have surged alarmingly. Analysts from the TaxPayers’ Alliance have highlighted that spending is averaging over £158,000 daily, an amount that might seriously underrepresent the true financial burden. John O’Connell, the Alliance's chief executive, has labeled the length of the inquiry a "damning indictment of the speed and agility of the British state." He emphasised the urgent need for ministers to place a cap on inquiry expenditures, warning that the ballooning budget undermines both the adequacy and perceived integrity of the inquiry.

Echoing the TaxPayers' Alliance’s apprehensions, experts including Paul Johnson from the Institute for Fiscal Studies have denounced the inquiry as “overblown, overlong, and absurdly expensive.” His projections indicate that cumulative costs could surpass £200 million, rendering the investigation an extravagant exercise that falls woefully short of providing timely pandemic accountability.

The financialoutlay of the inquiry extends far beyond mere figures. Previous investigations provide a troubling context for this financial mismanagement. For example, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry concluded at approximately £178 million, while the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse incurred daily costs of about £69,000 over a considerably extended duration. In stark comparison, the current inquiry's expenses trigger critical inquiries into governmental budget scrutiny and the prioritization of public funds.

The inquiry’s expanding remit, which now includes contentious issues such as structural racism and hospital conditions, has raised alarms among critics who warn that this could lead to further inflating of costs, potentially seen as a tactic to delay the release of vital findings. Remarkably, the inquiry already consumed nearly £114 million in preliminary expenses before its initial hearings began.

These staggering figures raise serious concerns about the inquiry’s capacity to consume vast sums of public money, diverting much-needed resources from essential services, such as healthcare staffing. Some estimates suggest that the funding allocated for the inquiry could have instead financed the annual salaries of up to 6,000 junior doctors or supported the establishment of several new hospitals over multiple years.

As the inquiry persists, demands for transparency and efficiency will only grow louder. A government spokesperson reiterated the inquiry's independent status, stating that the independent chair determines processes and timelines. Yet, as public scrutiny intensifies over these exorbitant costs, the discourse surrounding the inquiry remains a contentious focal point, highlighting the urgent need for accountability while grappling with fiscal responsibility.

The unfolding inquiry serves as a critical mechanism for accountability following the pandemic, yet its financial trajectory raises dire questions about its sustainability. As the nation confronts the repercussions of Covid-19, the inquiry encapsulates both the necessity for thorough evaluation and the imperative of managing public funds judiciously. Instead of exploring unending avenues, there’s a compelling case for a more focused approach that prioritizes the accountability our healthcare system desperately requires.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2053335/cost-uk-covid19-inquiry-record> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.taxpayersalliance.com/estimate_cost_of_the_covid_inquiry_2024> - The TaxPayers' Alliance estimates that the UK Covid-19 Inquiry will cost over £196 million, making it the most expensive statutory inquiry in British history. The inquiry, established on June 28, 2022, is expected to conclude in June 2026. The daily cost is projected at £136,907, surpassing previous inquiries like the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, which had a daily cost of £69,000. The analysis also highlights that the Covid Inquiry's total cost would be over nine times higher than the Leveson Inquiry, which concluded in 2012.
3. <https://www.taxpayersalliance.com/estimate_the_cost_of_the_covid_inquiry> - The TaxPayers' Alliance projects that the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, established on June 28, 2022, will cost over £156 million by the time witnesses conclude giving evidence in June 2026. This would make it the most expensive statutory inquiry per day since 2005 in real terms, and the second most expensive by total cost. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, completed in 2022, had the largest total cost but was almost double the length of the forecasted Covid Inquiry run time.
4. <https://www.taxpayersalliance.com/estimate_the_growing_cost_of_the_covid_inquiry> - The TaxPayers' Alliance estimates that the UK Covid-19 Inquiry will cost almost £208 million, with a daily cost of £144,939. Established on June 28, 2022, the inquiry is expected to conclude in June 2026. The costs incurred in the 2023-24 financial year were over £70 million, and in the first half of 2024-25, over £30 million. This makes it the most expensive statutory inquiry by total cost and on a per-day basis, surpassing the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/03/17/covid-19-inquiry-government-seven-years-150-lawyers-pandemic/> - The UK Covid-19 Inquiry is projected to last up to seven years, with over 150 lawyers already hired. The bill has reached almost £114 million before the first hearings have begun, making it one of the most expensive investigations of its kind. MPs have raised concerns about the inquiry becoming 'very expensive and very bloated,' with some suggesting it could be used to 'kick things into the very long grass.' The inquiry's remit has expanded to include issues like structural racism and hospital conditions.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/22/uk-covid-inquiry-bill-already-at-85m-as-government-hires-top-law-firms> - The UK Covid-19 Inquiry has already cost £85 million, with the government hiring leading law firms on multimillion-pound contracts. The Department of Health and Social Care has hired Pinsent Masons on a £2.2 million legal services contract, and the Cabinet Office has hired the same firm on a £7 million 'public inquiry response unit co-partnering contract.' The early outlays suggest the inquiry will be one of the most expensive statutory public inquiries in British history.
7. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/covid-inquiry-cost-taxpayers-doctors-salaries> - The UK Covid-19 Inquiry is expected to cost taxpayers £208 million, making it Britain's most expensive statutory investigation. Analysis by the TaxPayers' Alliance indicates the probe is spending approximately £150,000 per day. The total projected cost is equivalent to funding the annual salaries of nearly 6,000 junior doctors. The inquiry, which began on June 28, 2022, is expected to continue until June 2026. For the same amount of money, the government could alternatively fund five state-of-the-art hospitals for four years.