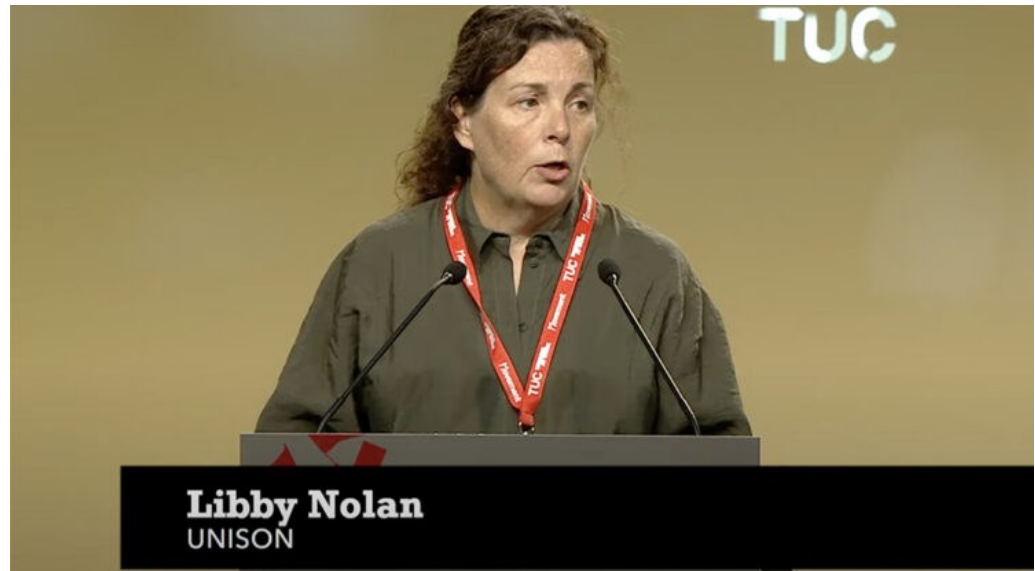


The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

## TUC Congress

Union's president describes how a decade of austerity damaged the UK's ability to protect workers during the COVID-19 pandemic



## UNISON takes COVID-19 inquiry call to TUC Congress

**"In many ways, it took the pandemic to expose the true cost of austerity."**

**So said UNISON president Libby Nolan as she moved the union's motion on the COVID-19 public inquiry at the TUC Congress in Liverpool yesterday, saying that the most fitting memorial to all the working people who died during the pandemic would be for lessons to be learned and acted upon.**

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She pointed out that the hearings in the inquiry, which only started in June, had revealed that the "government has failed in their preparedness and response."

Ms Nolan, a cardiac nurse from Swansea, described how, "as a nurse, I used bin bags to cover my uniform and a Tesco carrier bag on my head to cover my hair.

"We knew this government wasn't

ready. This lack of PPE [personal protective equipment] caused unnecessary exposure and a huge amount of fear."

She said that many unions reps are still dealing with members whose lives have been changed by the pandemic. Masks are returning to wards as COVID-19 cases rise, planned vaccinations are to be brought forward and

testing scaled up once more.

Noting that the "UK had one of the worst death rates", Ms Nolan reminded congress that the country also featured among those with the highest COVID-19 deaths among health workers.

"Let's always remember the dead and fight for the living," she said, invoking the slogan for International Workers' Memorial Day.

Congress applauded the important evidence that the TUC has submitted to the inquiry so far, "demonstrating that austerity seriously damaged the UK's resilience".

Delegates also agreed that the TUC should continue to:

- raise issues of direct relevance to union members, their families and communities;
- support trade unionists to share their experiences with affiliates, so that these can be built into TUC evidence, and direct to the inquiry through the [Every Story Matters](#) process;
- highlight the equalities impact of the pandemic;
- hold decision makers to account.