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Subject: Fwd: PMs Announcement today

Date: 27 January 2021 at 20:48

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WP

FYI

Sincerely, Frank
Cllr Frank Pearson
Central Meon Valley Ward

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From: Laura Taylor <LTaylor@winchester.gov.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2021 8:11 pm

To: _Members - All

Subject: PMs Announcement today

Dear members

I have just received this helpful summary of the PMs announcement today from MHCLG – so forwarding it for your interest

Today, the Prime Minister made a statement on the measures the government is putting in place to safeguard people against the new variants of Covid. The statement included the following details:

The government is acutely conscious of the impact of these restrictions on all of us, and that, sadly, many are coping with the anxiety of illness or tragedy of bereavement. The Prime Minister expressed that he was deeply sorry that the number of people taken from us has now surpassed 100,000 and we know you will all join us in offering our deepest condolences to all those who have lost loved ones.

It is vital that we persevere against this virus with ever greater resolve. The UK has immunised over 6.8 million people, more than any other country in Europe, and 13% of the entire adult population. In England we have delivered first doses to over four-fifths of those aged 80 and over, over half of those aged between 75 and 79, and three quarters of elderly care home residents. We are on track to achieve our goal of offering a first dose to everyone in the top four priority groups by the middle of February.

All current evidence shows that both the vaccines we are administering remain effective against the new variant that was first identified in London and the South East. The UK is a world leader in genome sequencing and through our New Variant Assessment Platform, which the Health Secretary announced yesterday, we will work with the World Health Organisation to offer our expertise to help other countries, because a new variant anywhere poses a potential threat everywhere.

We are taking additional steps to strengthen our borders to stop new strains from entering the UK. We have already temporarily closed all travel corridors, and we already require people to have proof of a negative Covid test taken in the 72 hours before leaving. They must also complete a Passenger Locator Form –

hours before leaving. They must also complete a Passenger Locator Form - which must be checked before they board - and then to quarantine on arrival for ten days. We want to make clear that under the stay at home regulations it is illegal to leave home to travel abroad for leisure purposes and we will enforce this at ports by asking people why they are leaving and instructing them to return home if they do not have a valid reason to travel.

All arrivals from countries where we have imposed international travel bans and who cannot be refused entry will be required to isolate in government-provided accommodation (such as hotels) for ten days without exception. They will be met at the airport and transported directly into quarantine, which they will be unable to leave for any reason. The Department for Health and Social Care is working to establish these facilities as quickly as possible and the Home Secretary set out further details in her statement to the House today. As we have throughout the pandemic, we will be working closely with the Devolved Administrations to implement these new measures so that where possible we continue to take a UK-wide approach.

We know that the whole country yearns to hear how much longer we must endure these restrictions. We will not persist for a day longer than is necessary but nor can we relax too soon. If we do, we would run the risk of our NHS coming under still greater pressure, compelling us to re-impose every restriction and sustain them for even longer. Although our efforts appear to have reduced R, we do not yet have enough data to know exactly how soon it will be safe to reopen our society and economy. What we do know is that we remain in a perilous situation, with more than 37,000 patients now in hospital with Covid, almost double the peak of the first wave.

The overall picture should be clearer by mid-February: by then, we will know much more about the effect of vaccines in preventing hospitalisations and deaths, using data from the UK but also other nations like Israel. We will also know how successful the current restrictions have been in driving down infection. We will also know how many people are still in hospital with Covid, which we cannot predict with certainty today. We will then be in a better position to chart a course out of lockdown, without risking a further surge that would overwhelm the NHS.

When this lockdown was announced, the Prime Minister said we would review its measures in mid-February, once the most vulnerable had all been offered the first dose of the vaccine. As such, when Parliament returns from Recess in the week commencing 22 February (subject to the agreement of the House), the government intends to set out the results of that review and publish our plan for taking the country out of lockdown. That plan will, of course, depend on the continued success of our vaccination programme, the capacity of the NHS, and on deaths falling at the pace we would expect as more people are inoculated. Our aim will be to set out a gradual and phased approach towards easing restrictions in a sustainable way, beginning with the most important principle of all: that reopening schools must be our national priority. We also know that parents and teachers need as much certainty as possible, including two weeks' notice of the return of face-to-face teaching.

Therefore, the Prime Minister informed the House today that it will not be

Therefore, the Prime Minister informed the House today that it will not be possible to re-open schools immediately after the February half term. The government understands how frustrating this will be for pupils and teachers who want nothing more than to get in the classroom, and for parents and carers who have spent so many months juggling their day jobs not only with home-schooling but with meeting the myriad other demands of their children. We know the worries we all share about the mental health impact on our young people during this prolonged period stuck at home. This decision does not suggest that schools and colleges are no longer safe places for young people. Instead, limiting attendance is about reducing the number of contacts that all of us have with people in other households. Our plan for leaving the lockdown will set out our approach towards reopening schools.

If we achieve our target of offering a first dose vaccination to everyone in the four most vulnerable groups by 15 February then we expect immunity for the overwhelming majority of these individuals by about three weeks later. Every passing day sees more progress towards this goal. We hope it will therefore be safe to commence the reopening of schools from Monday 8 March, with other economic and social restrictions being removed thereafter as and when the data permits.

As we are extending the period of remote learning beyond the middle of February, the government can also confirm that we will prolong arrangements for providing free school meals for those eligible children not in school, including food parcels and the national voucher scheme, until they have returned to the classroom. We can also commit now that, as we did this financial year, we will provide a programme of catch up over the next financial year. This will involve a further £300m of new money to schools for tutoring and we will work in collaboration with the education sector to develop specific initiatives for summer schools and a Covid premium to support catch up. We recognise that these extended school closures have had a huge impact on children's learning which will take more than a year to make up. So we will work with parents, teachers and schools to develop a long-term plan to make sure pupils have the chance to make up their learning over the course of this Parliament.

We know that the measures set out today will be deeply frustrating and disappointing for all of us. However, our goal must be to buy the extra weeks we need to immunise the most vulnerable and get this virus under control so that together we can defeat this wretched disease and reclaim our lives once and for all.

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