



10 DOWNING STREET  
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THE PRIME MINISTER

22 September 2020

*Dear colleagues,*

Today I made a statement on our response to the rising number of Coronavirus cases and how we must act now to avoid still graver consequences later.

We always knew that while we had driven the virus into retreat, there was a real prospect of a second wave. Like other countries we have reached a perilous turning point. A month ago, on average around a thousand people across the UK were testing positive for Coronavirus every day; today 3,929 tested positive. The latest data suggest that fewer than 8 percent of us have the antibodies to keep the virus off.

Yesterday, on the advice of the four Chief Medical Officers, the UK's Covid alert level was raised from 3 to 4, meaning that transmission is high or rising exponentially. New cases are growing fastest among those aged 20-29, however the evidence shows that the virus is spreading to other more vulnerable age groups. In the last fortnight, daily hospital admissions in England have more than doubled. Tens of thousands of daily infections in October would lead to hundreds of daily deaths in November and those numbers would continue to grow unless we act. As with all respiratory viruses, Covid-19 is likely to spread faster in the winter.

If we can curb the number of daily infections, and reduce the Reproduction (R) rate to 1 or below, then we can save lives, protect the NHS and the most vulnerable, and shelter the economy from far more costly measures that would become necessary later. We will ensure that schools, colleges and universities stay open - because nothing is more important than the education, health and well-being of our young people. We will ensure that businesses can stay open in a Covid-secure way. We must, however, take action to suppress the disease.

The Government will introduce new restrictions in England to achieve the maximum reduction in the R number, with the minimum damage to lives and livelihoods:

- **We are once again asking office workers who can work from home to do so.** In all professions where homeworking is not possible, such as construction or retail and for all those in key public services, people should continue to attend their workplaces.
- **From Thursday all pubs, bars and restaurants must operate table-service only, except for take-aways and together with all hospitality venues must close at 10pm.** To help the police enforce this rule, this means closing, not calling for last orders. The same will apply to takeaways - though deliveries can continue thereafter.
- **We will extend the requirement to wear face coverings** to include staff in retail, all users of taxis and private hire vehicles, and staff and customers in indoor hospitality, except when seated at a table to eat or drink.
- **In retail, leisure, tourism and other sectors, our Covid-secure guidelines will become legal obligations.** Businesses will be fined and could be closed if they breach these rules.
- **We will tighten up the rule of six.** From Monday, a maximum of 15 people will be able to attend wedding ceremonies and receptions. However, up to 30 can still attend a funeral as now. We will also have to extend the rule of six to all adult indoor team sports.
- **Business conferences, exhibitions and large sporting events will not be able to reopen from 1 October.** I recognise the implications for our sports clubs, which are central to many communities, and we are urgently considering how we can support them.

These measures will only work if people comply and will be enforced by higher penalties. We have already introduced a fine of up to £10,000 for those who fail to self-isolate; this will now be applied to businesses breaking Covid rules. The penalty for failing to wear a mask or breaking the rule of six will now double to £200 for a first offence. We will provide the police and local authorities with the extra funding they need, a greater police presence on our streets, and the option to draw on military support where required to free up the police. If all our actions fail to bring R below 1, then we reserve the right to deploy significantly greater restrictions.

About 13 million people across England are living under various local restrictions, over and above national measures. We will continue to act against local flare-ups, working alongside councils and strengthening measures where necessary. I know those who were shielding early in the pandemic may be anxious. Following advice from our senior clinicians, our guidance continues to be that they do not need to shield – except in local outbreak areas – but we will keep this under constant review.

We will spare no effort in developing vaccines, treatments and new forms of mass-testing but unless we palpably make progress, we should assume these restrictions will remain in place for perhaps six months. In addition to regular statements and debates, in the future Hon Members will be able to question the government's scientific experts more regularly, gain access to data about their constituencies, and join daily calls with the Paymaster General.

Each and every one of us must remember the basics – wash our hands, cover our faces, observe social distancing – and follow the rules. This is fundamental to our ability to fight back against this virus, shelter our economy from even greater damage, protect the most vulnerable in care homes and hospitals, safeguard our NHS and save many more lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Boris Johnson', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

All Members of Parliament and Peers