

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health & Social Care
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

Via email

16 September 2020

Ref: **I&S**

Dear Secretary of State,

Covid Escalation Proposals for Greater Manchester

I am writing following discussions yesterday with the Leaders of Greater Manchester councils in respect of potential escalation measures that could be introduced across the city-region. We are grateful for the support we have had from you and your colleagues in developing this escalation plan and we hope it can form the basis of a new partnership with Government.

We propose a range of interventions that we plan to deliver locally to help control transmission. Detail can be found in the annex below, however, we would like to highlight our offer to Government to work in partnership on the following proposals:

- GM will utilise support from Greater Manchester Police and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (equivalent to 170 FTE staff) to support **contact tracing** activity as an emergency time limited measure with the aim of achieving the 80% contact rate (focused on uncontacted contacts of index cases)
- The GM Growth Company will work with employers and employees to develop **support packages for those required to self-isolate**, funded through employers, but bolstered by a limited local fund for those who are still unable to self-isolate because of financial impact
- All districts will establish joint enforcement teams with Greater Manchester Police targeting higher risk premises and locations
- We will utilise **behavioural insight** to understand our community's barriers and motivations and to best target communications and engagement activity
- We will further develop our **local food support services** to support those most vulnerable should the Shielding programme not be reintroduced

In return we ask Government to:

- Prioritise the **national testing capacity to those areas with the greatest number of cases**. The system is not working for Greater Manchester and this is having a disproportionate effect on our most deprived communities

- In light of the above **provide additional resources (staffing and finance) and local control over test, track and isolate** (see annex 2)
- Support our self-isolation proposal with additional funding and including financial support through business support grants and flexible furlough for those required to close
- **Change legislation related to enforcement to support targeted activity** at a local level, rather than blanket restrictions across the whole of GM (which Leaders oppose)
- **Reintroduce the Shielding programme** to support our most vulnerable residents
- **Allocate realistic levels of funding and resources** to enable local and time-limited interventions to be developed into longer term propositions. For example, the reallocation of police and fire resources for contact tracing will not be sustainable beyond 2-3 months, Local Authorities are putting in resources in the form of staff redeployed from front line service delivery which is also not sustainable, and any financial local support we direct to support those self-isolating will be limited
- **Provide childcare support** for parents as this is a critical requirement given the increasing number of school outbreaks in Greater Manchester
- Continue the **Coronavirus Care Home Support Package** for at least as long as GM is experiencing levels of transmission

As you are aware Infection rates continue to rise across GM. A key objective for Greater Manchester is to avoid any blanket restrictions or lockdown measures that further harm the GM economy and society, whilst also ensuring that the safety of the population is protected as far as possible.

We believe our interventions at this stage need to focus on 'living with the virus in circulation'. This letter sets out a range of escalation measures that try to achieve the careful balance between protecting the most vulnerable members of our population, whilst also maintaining the ability of our residents to work and study. It is recommended that **the proposals outlined in the paper are implemented across GM as a city-region**, avoiding the piecemeal approach to containment measures that we currently see across the conurbation.

Our aims are to:

- reduce infection rates across GM to try and control the virus
- protect our most vulnerable
- enable our key workers, especially in health and social care, to continue working and not have to self-isolate because of a failure in testing/tracing processes
- keep schools open
- continue to get the economy working

In summary, GM requires the tools and resources to effectively deliver a **local, intelligence-led and responsive targeted approach** to reduce transmission, instead of blunt local economic restrictions which have had a limited impact so far. We also believe our proposals will make the national test and trace system work better and get to 80% of contacts in GM (one element of which is our proposal to utilise Fire and Police resources as an emergency time-limited measure to help the tracing of contacts through home visits).

Lastly, we urgently require that **national financial support is provided to support residents and businesses** that will be adversely affected by either the measures outlined above or any further lockdown measures that may be brought into effect in Greater Manchester or in our individual boroughs (e.g. Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme retained at 80% recognising the inability of residents to make-ends-meet on statutory sick pay).