

MAYOR OF LONDON

The Prime Minister

10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Date: 18 September 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you privately, and in confidence.

Over the last few weeks, my team at City Hall has worked extremely closely with London Councils, Public Health England and officials in the Department of Health and Social Care on an escalation process so we can jointly take action should Covid-19 levels continue rising across the city.

I note your comments this evening about us seeing the start of a second wave of the virus. Today we were presented with the latest evidence from public health experts which points to the accelerating speed at which COVID-19 is spreading across the city, confirming your assessment.

This afternoon I held an emergency meeting with London council leaders, Government officials and Public Health England to discuss the next steps.

It is increasingly likely that additional measures will soon be required to slow the spread of the virus as have already been imposed in other parts of the UK – perhaps very soon.

I am of the firm view that we should not wait for this virus to again spiral out of control before taking action and the best thing for both public health and the economy is new restrictions imposed early, rather than a full lockdown when it's too late.

London was too late into lockdown in March. This decision cost lives and untold damage to the economy. We simply cannot afford to be slow to respond again.

The data I have seen today is extremely worrying but matters are compounded by the uncertainty caused by the lack of testing capacity in the capital, which meant that I was today advised that we should not take further immediate action in London, despite the new information we have.

I understand that difficult decisions have had to be made about testing priorities nationally given the current lack of capacity. However I am deeply concerned that this means we do not have the essential data available to us in London that can be used to understand whether and to what extent further restrictions are required.

Having seen the data presented to me today, I cannot with any conscience avoid alerting Londoners to the threat, and the need for further measures, if we are to save lives.

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Over the weekend, I will be strongly urging all Londoners to be as cautious as possible, advising them to strictly follow social distancing rules, regularly wash their hands and wear a face covering to help reduce the spread of the virus. But this is not going to be sufficient.

Given that the data is showing growing problems across the country, I am asking you to convene COBR at the earliest opportunity so that everyone is clear whether unified action is going to be taken, or we should proceed with London-specific measures.

I need to hear back from you on this as a matter of urgency. We need a quick, clear and unified response from all agencies, and I will support you in the strengthening of restrictions required in London.

I have copied this letter only to the Secretary of State for Health and Edward Lister.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London