

Message

From: Whitty, Chris [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=0B3EE62E0CA04E978730B14F9B416A1E-WHITTY, CHR]
Sent: 19/01/2022 08:51:40
To: Vallance, Patrick (GO-Science) [P.Vallance1@go-science.gov.uk]; [Name Redacted] NR @no10.gov.uk
CC: Henry Cook [HCook@no10.gov.uk]; [Name Redacted] NR @no10.gov.uk; Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GO-Science) [GCSA@go-science.gov.uk]
Subject: RE: Draft Commons Statement for tomorrow as at Tues 11.15pm [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE]

Actually, one more thing. The PM may want to mention that rates are going up in primary school children, and that although this is not translating into severe cases we need to keep an eye open on it. Otherwise when it is picked up by the media it will look as if this was sold on a false prospectus.

Chris

From: Whitty, Chris
Sent: 19 January 2022 08:34
To: Vallance, Patrick (GO-Science) <P.Vallance1@go-science.gov.uk> [Name Redacted] NR @no10.gov.uk
Cc: Henry Cook <HCook@no10.gov.uk> [Name Redacted] NR @no10.gov.uk; Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GO-Science) <GCSA@go-science.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Draft Commons Statement for tomorrow as at Tues 11.15pm [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE]

Thanks [Name Redacted] NR

I think it is broadly accurate. But the 'be cautious' message gets lost at the end in my view- and this is still a very fragile improvement and a sudden shift in behaviours could easily reverse it whilst we are in winter. We should have it clearer all the way through. It's a prudent cautious improvement- and that is the PMs intended message.

I also think we should be cautious of quoting the daily case numbers rather than the ONS numbers- changes in methodology make them unreliable. I would be inclined not to use the 'less than half' number (but saying they have fallen significantly everywhere is reasonable).

On facemasks I am a bit cautious of the wording 'it will no longer be necessary to require the wearing of masks anywhere.' I think it means that gvt will no longer mandate- but will encourage in crowded indoor spaces as previously.

On a numbers point I think there are now over 16k but not over 15k in hospital- this needs to be checked against the dashboard data.

Chris

From: Vallance, Patrick (GO-Science) <P.Vallance1@go-science.gov.uk>
Sent: 19 January 2022 07:12
To: [Name Redacted] NR @no10.gov.uk; Whitty, Chris <Chris.Whitty@dhsc.gov.uk>
Cc: Henry Cook <HCook@no10.gov.uk> [Name Redacted] NR @no10.gov.uk; Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GO-Science) <GCSA@go-science.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Draft Commons Statement for tomorrow as at Tues 11.15pm [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE]

[Name Redacted] NR

I think it is an accurate reflection of what the PM said he wants to do. From the perspective of the spread of infection it will be important to give clear advice on the need for continued cautious behaviour (even if these are not to be mandated in law). I think it also implies that omicron is always a mild disease in the vaccinated – it is true that it is less severe than delta but I would be cautious about giving the message that it is a mild disease for all vaccinated people as this will not be correct. Finally I think all of this needs to be monitored and it remains possible that future variants would change the picture again.

Best wishes

Patrick

From: [Name Redacted] NR @no10.gov.uk>

Sent: 18 January 2022 23:26

To: Whitty, Chris <chris.whitty@dhsc.gov.uk>; Vallance, Patrick (GO-Science) <P.Vallance1@go-science.gov.uk>

Cc: Henry Cook <HCook@no10.gov.uk> NR @no10.gov.uk>

Subject: Draft Commons Statement for tomorrow as at Tues 11.15pm [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE]

Chris, Patrick,

In confidence - and with the caveat that this hasn't yet gone to the PM so could obviously change substantially – just wanted to give you early sight of the latest draft commons statement for tomorrow.

Very grateful if you could look through and let us have any comments.

With many thanks as ever,

NR

DRAFT COMMONS STATEMENT ON PLAN B REVIEW

Tues 11.15pm

[Word Count: 1380]

Mr Speaker, with permission I will make a statement on our progress against Omicron and the review of our Plan B measures,

so we can give families and businesses a week's notice of changes, as we have sought to do throughout the pandemic.

Within hours of learning from scientists in South Africa about the emergence of a new Covid variant last November,

this government acted,

introducing balanced and proportionate restrictions at our borders to slow the seeding of Omicron in our country.

As we learned more about this highly transmissible new variant,

we implemented the Plan B measures we had prepared precisely in case our situation deteriorated,

encouraging significant behaviour change to slow the spread of the virus and buying crucial time to get boosters into arms.

We made the big call to refocus our National Health Service,

- necessarily requiring the difficult postponement of many other appointments –

such that we could double the speed of booster programme.

And thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our NHS and its volunteers,

we delivered the fastest booster programme in Europe, reaching half our population before any other European country,

with more than 36 million boosters now in arms across the UK, including more than 90 per cent of all over 60s in England.

And taking a balanced approach, we resisted calls from others to shut down our country down all over again.

Many nations across Europe have endured further winter lockdowns.

Many have seen hospitality curfews and nightclubs closed,

capacity limits at sports stadiums,

the return of social distancing,

and, in some places, Christmas and New Year as good as cancelled.

But this government took a different path.

We kept England open.

And we supported those businesses which faced reduced demand because of the response to Plan B measures.

And while we must continue to remain cautious, the data are showing that time and again

this government has got the big calls right.

Today the number of new cases in the UK is now falling, and less than half of where it was just two weeks ago.

And while there are some places where cases are likely to continue rising,

- including in schools –

our scientists believe it is likely that the Omicron wave has now peaked nationally.

There remain, of course, significant pressures on the NHS across our country, and especially in the North East,

but hospital admissions

- which were doubling every 9 days just two weeks ago –

have now stabilised, with admissions in London even falling.

And the numbers in intensive care not only remain low but are actually also falling.

So this morning the Cabinet concluded that because of the extraordinary booster campaign

- together with the way the public have responded to the Plan B measures -

we can return to Plan A in England and allow Plan B regulations to expire.

As a result, from the start of Thursday next week mandatory certification will end.

Organisations can, of course, choose to use certification voluntarily as they could before

- and they will have the NHS Covid Pass to assist them –

but we will end the compulsory use of Covid status certification in this country.

The government will no longer ask people to work from home if they can. And employers should continue to follow the guidance to ensure a safe return to the workplace.

And having looked at the data carefully, the government has concluded that from one week today,

it will no longer be necessary to require the wearing of masks anywhere.

Mr Speaker that includes - from tomorrow - ending the need for face masks in classrooms everywhere.

From tomorrow, Local Directors of Public Health will only be able to recommend pupils wear masks in communal areas in places where there are outbreaks, and with sign-off from the Education Secretary.

In the country at large, we will continue to recommend the use of face coverings in enclosed, crowded places, particularly where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet.

But we will trust the judgement of the British people and no longer criminalise anyone who chooses not to wear one.

My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is also looking at how restrictions in care homes can be eased and will set out plans ahead of next Wednesday.

Mr Speaker, as we return to Plan A, the House will know that some measures still remain, including those on self-isolation.

In particular, it is still a legal requirement for those who have tested positive for Covid to self-isolate.

On Monday we reduced the isolation period to five full days with two negative tests.

And there will soon come a time when we can remove the legal requirement to self-isolate altogether - just as we don't place legal obligations on people to isolate if they have flu.

As Covid becomes endemic we will need to replace legal requirements with advice and guidance urging people with the virus to be careful and considerate of others.

The self-isolation regulations expire on 24th March, at which point I very much hope not to renew them.

[[Indeed were the data to allow, I would even be prepared to seek a vote in this House to bring that date forwards.]]

In advance of that, we will set out our long-term strategy for living with Covid-19, explaining how we hope and intend to avoid restrictions in future by relying instead on medical advances – especially the vaccines which have already saved so many lives.

But to make that possible, we must all remain cautious during these last weeks of winter.

When there are still 17,000 people in hospital in England alone, the pandemic is not over.

And, Mr Speaker, make no mistake, if you are not vaccinated Omicron is not a mild disease.

Just look at the numbers in intensive care in other countries where vaccination rates are far lower.

Indeed, from our own data, we know that if you are not vaccinated you are eight times more likely to end up in hospital

and that around 90 per cent of people in intensive care are not boosted.

So I urge members across the House to do everything possible to encourage any remaining constituents who have not done so – to get boosted now.

And for the next few weeks, I encourage everyone across the country to continue with all the cautious behaviours that we know help to keep each other safe,

including washing hands,

letting fresh air in,

getting tested and self-isolating if positive,

and wearing a face covering in crowded and enclosed settings where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet.

Mr Speaker, Omicron has tested us, just as Alpha and Delta did before.

But let's remember some of what we've achieved.

We were the first nation in the world to administer a vaccine,
and the fastest in Europe to roll it out.

Because outside of the European Medicines Agency, this government made the big call to pursue our own British procurement strategy rather than opting back into the EU scheme as some others urged.

We created the largest testing programme in Europe,
and procured the most antivirals of any country in Europe too,
because this government made the big call to invest early in lateral flow tests and cutting-edge drugs to protect the most vulnerable.

We've delivered the fastest booster campaign in Europe
and we're the first to emerge from the Omicron wave.

Because this government made the big call to refocus our NHS and lead that campaign to Get Boosted Now.

And throughout the last six months, we've retained the most open economy and society anywhere across our continent,

because this government made the big call
to open up last Summer when others said we shouldn't,
and keep things open this winter when others wanted them shut.

This week the World Health Organisation said that while the global situation remains challenging, the United Kingdom can start to see "light at the end of the tunnel".

Mr Speaker, this is no accident of history.

Confronted by the nation's biggest challenge since the Second World War and the worst pandemic since 1918,

any government would get some things wrong;

but this government got the big calls right.

And I commend this Statement to the House.

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