

Statement in response to the Prime Minister's announcement on 21/02/2022 removing all Covid measures

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Joint Statement from Long Covid SOS and Long Covid Kids in response to the Prime Minister's announcement on 21/02/2022 removing all Covid measures

Today's announcement from Boris Johnson is yet another blow to those who are living with the long term effects of Covid-19.

Covid-19 continues to pose a genuine threat to many people. The cost of the 'pandemic within the pandemic' of Long Covid is likely to impact the NHS and our economy more seriously and for far longer than acute Covid. Long Covid devastates the lives of people of all ages and affects at least 10% of all those infected. The latest data from ONS show that 1.3 million people in the UK are living with this condition including 117,000 children, and there is currently no treatment. More than half a million have had life-altering symptoms for a year or more.

The Prime Minister's decision will lead to uncontrolled transmission of SARS-CoV-2. We have no indication that the proportion who go on to develop Long Covid is any lower with Omicron and we are now seeing a new, more transmissible and potentially more harmful variant circulating in the UK. No doubt there are yet more variants ahead of us and there is no evidence that they will be less dangerous to health. Without free testing, contact tracing and surveillance we will be unprepared and unable to tackle future variants which may be more resistant to vaccines. Scrapping the legal requirement to self-isolate and support payments for those who do, leaves us with fewer tools available to fight the rapid spread of Covid-19, as SAGE have already warned.

Long Covid has never formed part of policy making decisions during this pandemic, despite repeated requests on our part both in writing and in person to ministers. People with Long Covid need to protect themselves from reinfection, which can seriously exacerbate symptoms. They and the millions of clinically vulnerable will effectively be forced to shield and become prisoners in their own homes. Since we do not know who will get Long Covid, or how long those living with Long Covid will remain sick, all members of society remain vulnerable.

Lyth Hishmeh from Long Covid SOS said: *"It is not within the remit of politicians to declare the end of the pandemic and we are glad that Boris Johnson acknowledges that it is not over – it is in fact still raging worldwide. But abandoning all public health measures and putting the responsibility on to individuals will result in a complete loss of freedom for many and will ultimately come at a huge cost to society and the economy."*

Sammie McFarland CEO of the charity Long Covid Kids said: *"We don't have the data to understand the*

impact of repeat infections on children and young people in their formative years; in truth we don't yet know how repeat infections will affect the long term health of the rest of the population"

