

## **FM press conference – December 16**

- Prynawn da.
- When I spoke to you on Friday, I explained that if we didn't see a change in the current course of coronavirus in Wales, then a move to tighter restrictions would be inevitable.
- Since then, we have seen a sustained rise in coronavirus – in our communities and in our hospitals.
  - Cases have risen week on week.
  - One in five people are testing positive for the virus.
  - The number of people in hospital with coronavirus symptoms has risen to record levels.
    - More than 2,100 people, equivalent to five full general hospitals
  - And the number of people in intensive care with coronavirus is at the highest level in this second wave – at 98.
- Many of you will have seen the warnings from senior clinicians about the huge impact coronavirus is having on the whole of our health service.
- The situation we are facing is extremely serious.
- We must move to alert level four and tighten the restrictions to control the spread of coronavirus and save lives.
- This new set of higher-level restrictions will apply to the whole of Wales.
- This means all non-essential retail, including close contact services and all leisure and fitness centres will close at the end of trading on Christmas Eve.
- All hospitality premises will close from 6pm on Christmas Day.

- And on December 28, tighter restrictions for household mixing, staying-at-home, holiday accommodation and travel will apply.
- We have made £340m available to support businesses affected by restrictions into the New Year. Further support will be available for those businesses affected by the new restrictions.
  - We will make further details available later this week.
- This has been a such a long and difficult year. But that cannot lift the responsibility from us to act now.
- We need to take this action to save lives and control the spread of this awful virus.
- We are not alone in taking such action. Around the world, coronavirus is accelerating once again.
  - More than 300,000 people have lost their lives in the US.
  - Germany, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic are introducing new lockdowns.

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- In the run up to Christmas, we will also take some extra steps to help control the spread of coronavirus.
- Everyone who can work from home should do so now. Working from home is one of the most important contributions we can make.
- Local authorities will now take decisions about the range of services they provide, such as libraries, leisure centres and recycling centres ahead of Christmas.

- Today is the last day of school for the majority of children in Wales – most schools have decided to take the last two days of term as an INSET day.
- And we will work with local authorities and the police to strengthen the enforcement of the coronavirus regulations and guidance to make sure all the measures to keep you safe are in place.

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- Yesterday, I met the First Ministers of Scotland and Northern Ireland and Michael Gove from the UK Government to discuss the common arrangements for the five-day Christmas period.
  - We had a further meeting this morning.
- In the few short weeks since we made this decision, the situation has changed drastically as coronavirus has gripped the UK country once again.
- Later today, we will publish joint advice across the UK, explaining that a smaller Christmas is a safer Christmas.
- That a shorter Christmas is a safer Christmas.
- Here in Wales, the position is that only two households should come together to form an exclusive Christmas bubble during the five-day period.
- The fewer people we mix with in our homes, the less chance we have of catching or spreading the virus.
- None of us wants to be ill this Christmas. And we don't want to give coronavirus to our close family or friends.
- The Chief Medical Officer for Wales has provided special advice for people who were previously shielding about mixing over Christmas.

- This is available on our website and we will be reinforcing this across the UK and in Wales.
- The alert level four restrictions for household mixing, staying-at-home, holiday accommodation and travel will come into force after the five-day Christmas period.

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- This year has been unlike any we have known.
- But the new year brings with it the promise of a new relationship with this virus as more and more people receive the Covid-19 vaccine and we use the new testing technologies.
- Today, we start vaccinating people living in care homes and we will continue vaccinating the priority groups during the alert level four period.
- And in January, we will start using the new rapid-result tests to help people stay in work.
  - Serial testing will be used in schools as an alternative to self-isolation for teachers and students.
  - It is also being extended to the police and will be used to support care home staff to stay in work.
- In the meantime, we all need to make those small changes to our lives to protect ourselves and our families.
- To keep ourselves and to keep Wales safe.
- Diolch o galon i chi gyd.
- I will take questions from journalists. As usual, all the answers will be broadcast live on our social media channels.