

fatalities. So, we have to do a balanced approach, a, the, the moderate approach that we are taking and relying on the public, on the co-operation of, of local government and government at all levels, to make it work.

**RS:** Laura, you're, you're absolutely right, this is very difficult for people who aren't able to be at work and that's why throughout this I think all of us have had that in our heads and we have tried to protect as many people's jobs and incomes as possible and that remains at the forefront of our minds as we go through this difficult winter period. With regard to the exact level of support, I'd make two points, if I may. The first is at two-thirds we are very much in line with large other European economies, who provide similar wage support schemes. France, for example, is 60 per cent or 70 per cent depending on the sector. Germany's scheme starts at 60 per cent and goes up from there. Spain is 70 per cent and drops down to 50 per cent, I could go on but you'll get the broad picture is we are very much in line with peers. But obviously that might not be comforting to you if you're the person on the other end of that and you still need to try to make ends meet. What I'd say is we have invested several billion pounds in improving the generosity of our welfare system this year, primarily through the increase in universal credit and also local housing allowance and what that means is that not only is that system more generous, it is also responsive to people's needs. So, as people who are the lowest paid, that you talked about, see that their earnings are going down, the way universal credit works is that the welfare payments will go up to compensate for a good chunk of that and if you look at someone say, in their, pick an example, someone in their late 20s, privately renting, working 35 hours at the minimum wage, let's just say living in a city like Manchester, for example, what they would see on an after tax and after benefits change in their income would mean that they are probably just over 90 per cent of their previous income, once all those changes had worked through, so our system is designed to particularly to help those who are lowest paid to help them get through what, we hope is a temporary, but no doubt difficult period.

**Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England:** On the two you asked me, I am very confident that the measures that are currently in place are helping to slow the virus and these measures will help to slow it further. I am not confident and nor is anybody confident that the tier three proposals for the highest rates, if we did the absolute base case and nothing more, would be enough to get on top of it and that is why there is a lot of flexibility in the tier three levels for local authorities guided by the directors of public health, who are absolutely superb around the country, to actually go up that range so that they can do significantly more than the base, because the base will not be sufficient, I think that is very clearly the professional view but there are quite a lot more additional things that could be done within that with local guidance. And the central thing about this is these only work if people buy into them. I don't just mean the political leaders, although it is absolutely essential that they do and that there is as much consensus as possible, but also, everybody has got to buy into them because that is how it works, everybody doing their bit within this and therefore that is important, that we have local as well as national agreement this is what we need to do. In terms of your, your, second, your fourth question, on shielding, Jenny Harries is going to give a much longer, I think, discussion on this tomorrow, but the short version is people who were previously in the shielding group are at greater risk and we, we would advise them always to take greater precautions, but we also recognise that there were significant difficulties and often mental distress and loneliness for people who were put into shielding as they certainly perceived it and I think we're trying to deal with that in the way that we approach shielding over the next phase. But it is something where we do want people to take extra precautions where they can.

**BJ:** Thanks very much, Laura. Let's go to Robert Peston at ITV.

**Robert Peston, ITV News:** Prime Minister, are you saying that if it were not for the opposition of some mayors and local government leaders, other areas, especially in the north would already be in the very high category? And Professor Whitty, the Prime Minister said today that there are now more people in hospital than when the country was locked down on March the 23rd. People are scared and confused. We know that lockdown