

## FM press conference script – September 17

- Prynawn da.
- Today we conclude the latest three week review of coronavirus regulations in Wales.
- Last week, I set out the latest modelling information we have about the likely course of coronavirus in Wales over the coming weeks.

[SLIDE ONE ON]

- I want to begin by sharing some of the figures we have which show how the virus has progressed over the last three weeks.
- At the last review, there were around 415 cases per 100,000 people. Today the rate is closer to 490 cases per 100,000.
- As you can see from this slide, we have seen rises in the average number of hospital admissions for suspected and confirmed Covid-19, the number of people in critical care with Covid-19 and, very sadly, deaths.
- I talked last week about the immense pressure our health and care services are under – these pressures are intensifying as pandemic and emergency demands increase.

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- You can help our NHS by not going straight to A&E if you need help but using some of the many other services which are available.
- This week, the UK scientific committee SAGE has published its advice.
- It suggests up to 7,000 people in England could need hospital admission every day.

- It also made it clear that taking early action is the most effective way of containing the current wave of infection and minimising its impact on the NHS.
- Sir Patrick Vallance, the UK Government’s chief scientific adviser, said: “You have to go earlier than you think you want to; you have to go harder than you think you want to.”
- It is against that background that, while the Cabinet has concluded we can keep Wales at alert level zero for a further three weeks, if we are to continue to do so into the autumn, we must take five decisions now.
- These are:
  - Starting the vaccination booster campaign
  - Offering vaccines to 12 to 15-year-olds
  - Reinforcing the importance of working from home
  - Raising awareness and enforcing the law about wearing face coverings in indoor public places
  - Introducing the Covid Pass
- I will take each in turn

[PAUSE]

- The best way to protect ourselves is by being vaccinated.
- So the first measure we will take is to press ahead with the autumn booster campaign. This started yesterday – frontline NHS staff in North Wales were the first to receive it.
- People living and working in care homes and frontline health and social care staff will be offered the booster as the programme is extended throughout Wales over the weekend and next week.

- Boosters will be offered to everyone over 50; all frontline health and social care staff and all those over 16 who have underlying health conditions, at least six months after their second dose.
- If you are offered the booster, please take it – it will give you further protection against this virus.
- The second action is to offer 12 to 15-year-olds vaccination. Letters will start being sent next week, inviting them to be vaccinated.
- They will be offered one dose of the Pfizer vaccine and we expect to start the programme by 4 October. This will give families time to talk about vaccination.
- We will also redouble our efforts to encourage everyone who hasn't yet been vaccinated to do so.

[SLIDE TWO ON]

- This slide shows how successful our vaccine programme has been since it started in December. It shows first and second doses.
- The success is in large part thanks to everyone who has worked so hard in the hundreds of clinics and mass vaccination centres and behind the scenes. It shows how positive people have been about vaccination.
- In most age and priority groups, more than 90% of people have had two doses of the vaccine.
- But as we move into the younger age groups, take-up is lower and slower – about 30% of 18 to 39-year-olds have yet to be fully vaccinated.
- We started vaccinating 16 and 17-year-olds in the summer and are making good progress.

[SLIDE OFF]

- I've said this many times, but it is never too late to be vaccinated in Wales.
- The vaccine is our best defence against this awful virus.
- It has prevented thousands of cases of serious illness and deaths this year – having high levels of vaccination will prevent high levels of serious illness in the winter.
- There are a number of measures beyond vaccination, which we can take to keep Wales safe and keep Wales open.
- The third step we will take in this three-week cycle is to reinforce the importance of working from home.
- If you don't need to be in the office, please work from home whenever you can.
- In England, working from home is part of Plan B – here is part of our Plan A and in line with SAGE's advice to build up our defences early.
- We will also be stepping up awareness and enforcement of the many other measures we have retained in Wales to help keep people safe – including ensuring the rules about wearing face coverings in indoor public places, such as shops and public transport, are understood and followed.

[PAUSE]

- I want to turn now to the fifth and final measure.
- The Cabinet has been considering vaccination certification for some time now.

- Only allowing those people who can prove they have been fully vaccinated access to events and services raises a series of ethical, legal and technical questions, not least because it excludes all those who cannot be vaccinated.
- The Cabinet has decided not to introduce vaccine certification in this cycle.
- But we will make the existing Covid Pass compulsory for everyone attending:
  - Nightclubs and similar venues
  - Indoor non-seated events for more than 500 people. This would include conventions and concerts
  - Outdoor non-seated events for more than 4,000 people
  - And any setting or event for more than 10,000 people, such as a rugby or football match.
- The Covid Pass confirms your vaccination status or that you have had a negative lateral flow test result within the past 48 hours.
- The Covid Pass is different to vaccine certification in a number of important ways.
  - It allows people to demonstrate their Covid status in other ways than just through vaccination. It also shows lateral flow test results.
  - It is freely and widely available now.
  - And venues and events can easily read the Covid Pass with existing technology.
- The system has been used by many festivals and concerts over the summer, including the Green Man and when Elbow and the Manics play at the Motorpoint, in Cardiff this weekend, the audience will be asked to show a Covid Pass to enter.
- We will make the Covid Pass compulsory from 11 October and will work with venues and the events sector to prepare for its introduction.

[PAUSE]

- We want to do everything we can to keep Wales open and to keep Wales safe.
- These measures are examples of what SAGE calls “low cost” interventions, which may be enough to prevent the need for tougher restrictions later on.
- We need everyone’s help to bring coronavirus under control.
- Together, we can do it.
- Diolch o galon i chi gyd.
- I will take questions from journalists. All the answers will be broadcast on our social media.