

# Christmas message

I am writing to wish you a happy Christmas and to look forward to a better new year. I have been keen to support those in government determined to avoid any ban on family get togethers and visits to local restaurants and cafes over Christmas in contrast to 2020. It looks as if we will enjoy some of our traditional freedoms.

I have not taken this view without considering very carefully the evidence of how we can best control the pandemic. Reliance on vaccines is our first line of defence and they seem to be working well. The gradual introduction of better drug treatments also helps cut serious case rates. I have been urging completion of more drug trials and more work on better air extraction and UV cleaning of circulating air to cut the risk of the virus in indoor public spaces. The government promise me they are pressing ahead with this. The early evidence on Omicron suggests this is for most a milder version with less infection of the lungs which has been the danger in other variants.

We are going to have to live with strains of this virus for some years to come, just as we do with flu which can also be a nasty killer for some. The U.K. government did well to back and support one of the first successful vaccines and then to roll out a large and early vaccination programme to greatly reduce the risks of death for many people. Armed with other improvements we should now let people make more of their own judgements about how to cut the risks of the disease themselves.

I am pressing the government to get on with measures to promote more prosperity, more and better paid jobs, and more U.K. self reliance in everything from energy to food. I am proposing how to cut supply shortages which lead to inflation and how to reduce the cost of living squeeze which will be bad in April without further changes of approach.

There is some disquiet about the apparent breaching of covid rules by senior officials in government. The PM is right to commission a proper enquiry and will then need to take disciplinary action if offences occurred.