Greens call for 'sensible measures' to stem surge in Covid cases

5 July 2022

- **Reintroduction of mandatory mask wearing on public transport and in crowded indoor venues while case rates are high**

- **Reintroduction of free Covid tests**

- **Introduction of statutory sick pay for those who test positive**

- **Retention of special paid leave for NHS staff off work with Covid-related sickness**

The Green Party has called for urgent measures to be introduced to help stem the latest wave of Covid infections. Greens have called for the reintroduction of mandatory mask wearing on public transport and in crowded indoor venues and free Covid tests, along with statutory sick pay for those self isolating due to a positive test.

The call comes as Covid cases jumped by 32% in a week, with an estimated 2.3 million people, or one in 30, having the virus. Almost 9,000 hospital beds were taken up with Covid patients on 30 June [1].

Co-leader of the Green Party, Adrian Ramsay, said:

"A policy of 'living with Covid' shouldn't mean throwing our hands in the air and accepting that millions of people have to catch it, which is what is happening at the moment. Hospital admissions are surging and many workers, both in and outside the health service, feel compelled to go to work even if they have symptoms.

"Reintroducing mask wearing on public transport and in crowded indoor venues alongside free testing and statutory sick pay for those who test positive are sensible measures in the short to medium term to help contain the rapid spread of the virus."

The Green Party's Health, Social Care and Public Health spokesperson, Dr Pallavi Devulapalli, who is a GP, added:

"While the current vaccinations are successful at preventing serious illness for the majority, they are doing little to prevent the spread of the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants. We need urgently to introduce a series of measures to help prevent our health services becoming overwhelmed and to prevent a situation where the most vulnerable are faced with the prospect of getting infected or forced to go back into a self-imposed lockdown in order to protect themselves. The more cases there are, the more people there will be needing hospitalisation and potentially suffering long Covid. We also know that a high number of cases leads to a greater chance of mutations and new variants.

"It is also vital that the government shows its support and sympathy for NHS staff and the huge pressures they are under by retaining special paid leave for staff off work with Covid-related sickness [2]. To withhold sick pay at this time feels like a slap in the face, especially since NHS staff have experienced real term wage cuts since 2010 [3]."

Notes

1. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-62030083

2. https://inews.co.uk/news/health/paid-covid-leave-rules-for-nhs-staff-scrapped-in-england-as-cases-soar-1719806

3. https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/resource/chart-of-the-week-real-terms-nhs-staff-pay-from-2010-to-2020

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