

# My speech on the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps and Other Provisions) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021, 16 June 2021

It is time to trust people more. It is time to control people less. I would like to praise Ministers and officials, and particularly all the scientists, medics and researchers, who have worked so hard to ensure that the UK is a leader in vaccines—supplying one of the best vaccines to the world, getting it out early and making it available for all of us, and ensuring that we had bought in other vaccines that became available so that we were in a position to protect our population well and relatively early compared with other countries. I pay tribute to all the work by the NHS and the medics to understand how to treat the disease better and how it is transmitted so that we can take better actions to give people greater security.

I say now to all those experts, the NHS and the Government, “Share what is relevant with the rest of us—the public—and let us make more of our own risk assessments.” We are now saying to people that there are two major ways in which we can all protect ourselves against the possibility of getting this disease, or a bad version of it. First, we are making two jabs available to all adults who want them, and the figures so far show that that gives them a much better probability of not catching the disease at all and very strong protection against a serious case of it, which is what we are mainly worried about, as we are trying to stop people dying or struggling in intensive care, and to stop that pressure on the NHS and all the suffering that it produces.

We are also saying to people, “If you’re still worried about the residual risk or if you really don’t like vaccines, you can self-isolate.” I hope that the Government will continue, as an employer and as the Government, guiding others in the economy to say that we should be generous and supportive of anyone who really does feel that they need to protect themselves against the virus by self-isolation, but I think that we are now well beyond the stage where we have to isolate practically everybody else to some extent when so many people now have protection, are making their own risk judgments, and want to get on with their lives.

In the room, when assessing the data, it is important that we look at all the data about jobs, livelihoods, incomes, family stress and mental health pressures, because this policy is creating all of those. The Government can do more. They should be helping the private sector to manage air flows, air extraction, ultraviolet cleaning and so forth to make it safer for many more social contact businesses to reopen and have a reasonable number of people enjoying their services. I think that more could be done on ensuring that all our health settings have really great infection control, because we do not

want any more slippages from health settings themselves.

I urge the Government to think again about an idea they looked at early on but did not develop, which is in the large populated areas, particularly the conurbations, to have isolation hospitals that deal with covid and other variant infectious diseases well away from general hospitals. We add to the pressures and the likelihood of cross-infection if we have a general hospital taking in a very infectious disease.

There is now huge scope to get a really good economic recovery to save jobs, create new jobs and get pay up, to have many more transactions in the economy. To do that, however, we need to relax and to trust the people more. I think my constituents are ready to make decisions about their own lives again and many are very frustrated that they are not allowed to. We have all this great advice and knowledge. Let us not get too gloomy and let us not lock everybody up again.