

# PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 19 July 2021

Good afternoon, today we've reached the fourth step on our roadmap and I know that with cases increasing steadily and with more and more people being asked to self-isolate, there will, of course, be those who would rather that we waited weeks or months longer and kept social distancing and all the restrictions that we have been placing on our lives.

And so I want to remind you all why I believe that taking this step now – however difficult it seems – and the logic remains the same that if we don't open up now then we face a risk of even tougher conditions in the colder months when the virus has a natural advantage and we lose that firebreak of the school holiday.

And there comes a point when restrictions no longer prevent hospitalisations and deaths, but simply delay the inevitable. And so we have to ask ourselves the question: if not now, when?

And though both hospitalisations and deaths are sadly rising, these numbers are well within the margins of what our scientists predicted at the outset of the roadmap. And so it is right to proceed cautiously in the way that we are.

But it is also right to recognise that this pandemic is far from over. And that is why I'm afraid it is essential to keep up the system of Test, Trace and Isolate. I know how frustrating it is for all those who have been affected – or pinged and I want to explain that people identified as contacts of cases are at least five times more likely to be infected than others.

And even if they have been vaccinated there is a significant risk that they can still pass the disease on. And so as we go forward I'm afraid the continuing sacrifice of a large minority the continuing sacrifice of those who are being asked to isolate remains important to allow the rest of society to get back to something like normality.

And, at this stage, it is simply a consequence of living with Covid and opening up when cases are high in the way that they are.

As you know we will be moving on August the 16th to a system of testing rather than isolation for those who are double vaccinated by which time we hope that the wall of immunity in our country will be even higher.

And, in the meantime, I want to assure you that we will protect crucial services including the staffing of our hospitals and care homes, the supplies of food, water, electricity and medicines, the running of our trains, the protection of our borders and the defence of our realm, by making sure that a very small number of named, fully vaccinated, critical workers to leave isolation solely for this work. But for the vast majority of us, myself included, I'm afraid we do need to stick with this system for now. And, of

course, the only reason we are able to open up in this way at all, is that we have vaccinated such a large proportion of the population – and at such speed.

It is phenomenal that every adult in the country has now been offered a first dose. But unfortunately that does not mean that every person over 18 has yet had a first dose.

So far 96% of over 50s and 83% of 30-50 year olds have taken up the offer in England. But there are still 35 per cent of 18-30 year olds – 3 million people – who are completely unvaccinated.

And though we can see the enthusiasm of millions of young people to get their jabs, we need even more young adults to receive a protection that is of immense benefit to your family and friends – and to yourselves.

And so I would remind everybody that some of life's most important pleasures and opportunities are likely to be increasingly dependent on vaccination. There are already countries that require you to be double jabbed as a condition of quarantine free travel and that list seems likely to grow. And we are also concerned – as they are in other countries – by the continuing risk posed by nightclubs.

I don't want to have to close nightclubs again – as they have elsewhere – but it does mean nightclubs need to do the socially responsible thing and make use of the NHS Covid Pass which shows proof of vaccination, a recent negative test or natural immunity – as a means of entry.

As we said last week, we reserve the right to mandate certification at any point, if it is necessary to reduce transmission. And I should serve notice now that by the end of September – when all over 18s will have had the chance to be double jabbed – we are planning to make full vaccination the condition of entry to nightclubs and other venues where large crowds gather.

Proof of a negative test will no longer be sufficient. Let me stress – we want people to be able to take back their freedoms as they can today.

We want this country to be able to enjoy the fruits of our massive vaccination campaign. But to do that we must remain cautious and we must continue to get vaccinated.

And that is why we are asking you to come forward and get your jabs now.