

The energy shortage and cost of living squeeze

Dear Ministers

When you return from the holly and the Christmas pudding please attend urgently to the energy shortages. The gas price has shot up to very high levels and electricity is expensive. The price caps will be moved upwards sharply in April hitting people's heating and living costs badly.

It should come as no surprise. The price cap policy has bankrupted a large number of electricity suppliers. The policy of closing coal power stations, blocking more production of UK gas, failing to put in extra generating capacity other than wind and solar and relying more and more on imports was bound to lead to shortages and very high prices as some of us warned.

When thinking about how to abate the cost of living squeeze from dearer energy it is wise to remember the most basic lesson of economics. Supply and demand is balanced by market price. If something is in short supply its price rises in a free market until enough extra is produced. If something is in over supply the price falls until the surplus has been absorbed and production cut back.

If government sets a lower price than the market needs to balance supply and demand then there will be too little supply and a shortage. The government has to allow market prices to rise to bring forward additional energy. If it refuses to allow the suppliers to pass on the extra cost of the underlying energy then they will go bust unless the government subsidises them from taxes. Prices also of course hit or boost demand. On current policy energy will be worryingly dear for anyone on a lower income so government will need to boost their income somehow to make it more affordable. Taking VAT off fuel would be a welcome start.

The only reliable way to get the UK gas price down is to allow more domestic gas to boost supply. Much of this could then be offered as long term contract gas with sensible prices and price adjustments in the contract, to avoid more buying of very dear gas on an inflated spot market at times of shortage. The only reliable way to keep the lights on is to retain fossil fuel power stations as back up for when the wind does not blow and the sun does not shine, and to add more low or zero carbon generation from reliable sources that work in all weathers for the future.

There is also a crucial national security issue. Trying to rely more on gas and electricity imports from Europe gravely weakens our country. The EU is energy short and dependent on Putin's Russia. Energy will increasingly be used as a diplomatic weapon against countries that cannot be bothered to generate their own power and extract their own energy.

Happy Christmas.

No blog today. If you would like to send a comment normal service resumes tomorrow.

Will Santa come for me?

Will Santa come for me?

May you all feel the excitement of Christmas.

WILL SANTA COME TONIGHT?

“Will Santa come? Will Santa come tonight?”

“He might. He might.

If you are good, he might.”

“Can I stay up and see?”

“No. He will not come for you or me

if we do not sleep . He’s too busy to meet us all.”

“And will he come for us?

Yes if you sleep – he does not like fuss.”

Tonight, by the lights of the tree,

there is, at last, some grown up time for me.

The cake is iced. The wine is spiced .The carrots diced.

The pudding’s steamed. The brandy butter creamed.

The turkey prepared awaits. And yes, I did clean the plates.

The tree is up, the table laid,

the cards are out , though the credit card’s unpaid!

So shall I soon with gifts a plenty mount the stairs to deliver twenty?

Do I dare to tread the stair?
And will it creak? And will it creak? When can I take a peek?
I need to know if they slumber before I arrive with my lumber.
If they are still awake what dreams will go? What heart might break?
Or do they know? And is their belief just all for show?
So tonight by the magic tree there is need of time just for me.
I will wait – and struggle to keep open my eyes
And wrestle with the morality of eating Santa's mince pies.
My adult mind is full of Christmas chores
The cooking times, and the cards through neighbours' doors
The parties on zoom with friends we cannot meet
Those little things that for loved ones are a treat
I was once a child too excited to sleep
with a torrent of thoughts about what I might be given
Hoping that it was a toy beneath the wrapping – should I look? –
Not more socks or hankies, preferably something to be driven
So could Santa still come for me? Drowsily I dream as if I were eight
Hoping that Santa would not be late
Like every little boy there is of course a much wanted toy
So will Santa come tonight? He might, He might.
If you sleep well and if you believe
Only if you believe.
And only if in your family Love fills the hours you will be spending.
It could be the true Santa on the stair
Or it could be someone from an empty chair.
So will Santa come? He will. He will.
An updated version of my Christmas Eve poem

Are government and the media waking up to the energy shortage?

Yesterday there was some comment on the way energy bills will leap up in April when the price cap gets revised.

I want the government to get to work on allowing more domestic energy supply as I have been arguing for well in advance of the predictable crunch.

We will otherwise pay an increasingly heavy price for relying on imports from an energy short Europe increasingly reliant on Mr Putin's goodwill.

Covid 19 Vaccine Update from the Health Secretary

I have received the enclosed letter from the Health Secretary regarding on the latest Covid 19 vaccine update:

COVID-19 Vaccine Update – Children and Young People

I am writing to you to update you on the latest developments on our deployment of COVID-19 vaccines.

The national COVID-19 vaccination programme has been a great success with 126 million COVID-19 vaccines administered to date. The programme has prevented 127,500 deaths and 24,144,000 infections as of 24 September 2021.

The advice provided by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to the Government during the COVID-19 pandemic has been invaluable in ensuring a safe, effective, and successful vaccination programme in the UK.

As you will be aware, in response to the emergence of the Omicron variant in the UK, I accepted advice from the JCVI on 29 November 2021 that all children and young people aged 12 to 15 years should be offered a second dose COVID-19 vaccine at a minimum of 12 weeks from the first dose. In this advice, it was noted that no vaccine was at the time authorised in the UK for use in children aged 5 to 11 years.

Following a careful review of the relative balance of risks and benefits of vaccination, the JCVI have updated their advice on children and young people

issued 29 November 2021.

The JCVI now advise that children aged five to 11 years in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed (both as defined in the UK Health Security Agency Green Book), should be offered two 10 micrograms doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine with an interval of eight weeks between the first and second doses. The minimum interval between any vaccine dose and recent COVID-19 infection should be four weeks.

A new paediatric formulation of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for use in children aged 5 to 11 years old has been approved for use in the UK today (22 December) by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) after finding that it is safe and effective.

This approval was given following a robust review of safety data that shows a positive benefit-risk profile for this vaccine to be used in this age group. The JCVI will issue further advice regarding COVID-19 vaccination for other five- to 11-year-olds in due course following consideration of additional data.

Moreover, the JCVI now advises an expansion of the booster programme to include:

- All children and young people aged 16 to 17 years;
- Children and young people aged 12 to 15 who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed, and
- Children and young people aged 12 to 15 years who are severely immunosuppressed and who have had a third primary dose.

The JCVI advise that these groups should be offered a booster dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine no sooner than 3 months after completion of their primary course. Prioritisation of booster vaccination within eligible cohorts will generally be in the order of descending age groups, or clinical risk, whichever is more expedient. The JCVI will continue to review new data and consider whether to recommend further vaccination of under-16s without underlying health conditions in a timely manner.

In accepting this most recent JCVI advice, I pay tribute to the tireless work of the Committee in negotiating the emerging science and data and making recommendations that are in the clinical best interest of patients.

I have directed the NHS to plan for operationalising this advice in the new year, as our immediate focus continues to be the national mission to offer COVID-19 booster vaccinations to all adults by the end of this year.

As with all groups that have been offered the vaccine, the considerations of risks from COVID-19 have been assessed against vaccination. This means that the parents and guardians of those called to receive the vaccine can be confident the decision made by them is the right one for their child.

It is essential that we and our constituents continue to play our part in the UK's COVID-19 response and protect the country from the virus by coming forward for vaccination when contacted by the NHS. I would like to thank you

all for your efforts to encourage your constituents to be vaccinated. I wish to conclude by once again encouraging all in the UK, when eligible, to get their jab.

Yours

SAJID JAVID MP