

We need an exit plan from CV 19 restrictions

In the world of the government advisers the UK has to carry on with major restrictions on our freedoms to contain and reduce the incidence of the virus. They want us to do this until a vaccine is available that works well and is accepted by the bulk of the population.

They do have to tell us that of course the present vaccines in trials may turn out not to be effective, or may show side effects that are unacceptable. There may be long delays in developing a successful vaccine. Even when one is available it will take time to produce enough of it and vaccinate enough people with it to allow removal of the controls.

That is why I have been urging Ministers to have a Plan B, a plan for relaxing controls when there is no generally available effective vaccine. Some scientists think Sweden shows that the virus stabilises or wanes after a period of time, as more people have immune systems capable of warding it off without vaccine intervention. Others have a number of proposals to improve treatments, help containment and protect the vulnerable better, so more people can resume a normal life.

We now seem to know the most vulnerable groups are the elderly and those with other conditions like diabetes and obesity. It is possible to devise ways to offer all those most at risk better safeguarding whilst allowing the rest of the population to behave more normally. All those who wish to shield themselves should have access to support to make this possible for them.

Many of the deaths we experienced in the spring came in Care Homes. There could be stronger rules preventing the return of patients from hospital with CV 19, tests for new residents and regular tests for Care Home staff. It would be best if people can keep in touch with their families through on line systems and the phone. Of course people will also want some face to face meetings. These can be organised in gardens, with suitable ways of keeping warm on colder days, or in large meeting rooms with a good circulation of air designed to avoid contamination.

It is important to ensure good infection control in hospitals, preferably by having designated CV 19 hospitals with other hospitals virus free. I await progress reports on a range of possible treatments that some doctors claim can make a difference.

We need a message of hope. There does have to be plan to get us out of lock down whilst avoiding deaths and helping people take sensible precautions to control the disease. We must not allow a large number of good businesses to be written off because they are not allowed to trade at all or under such constraints that they are not commercial.

I am trying to persuade Ministers they need a new plan to restore our liberties.