



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health & Social Care
Department of Health & Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

14 December 2020

Dear Matt,

Re: Tier Restrictions – Formal Request for Bury to be placed in Tier 2

As the Members of Parliament for the Metropolitan Borough of Bury we write to request that the Bury MBC area be removed from its current Tier 3 status to Tier 2.

With reference to the 5-key metrics upon which this decision will be made, we address each in turn.

1. Case Detection Rate in all age groups

Based upon the latest figures provided to us by Bury CCG up to the 3rd December, there has been a significant drop in case detection rates in all age groups save for the over 90s since the week ending the 29th October. For example, the detection rate for the age group between 60 and 69 was 483.7 on the latter date, but this has now reduced to 171.3 as per the 3rd December.

As this data is not current, this clear downward trend would suggest that case detection rates will be even lower as at the 16th December

The 50 to 59 age group had a case detection rate of 766.1 at the 29th October but this had reduced to 161.5 by the 3rd December.

The 70 to 79 age group had an infection rate of 248.8 at the 29th October but by the 3rd December this had reduced to 157.8.

In all age groups save the over 90s the clear evidence is that case detection rates have decreased substantially and there is nothing to suggest that this downward trajectory is not continuing.

Our cases for the entire Borough, per 100,000 have come down significantly from their height of 601.2 on week ending the 5th November to 224.6 as of the 3rd December. This is due to the hard work and sacrifices made by people within Bury and we are confident they will continue to do everything possible to ensure case rates continue their sharp and consistent falls.

We ask that you consider data within a local context also. Church ward has had consistently low transmission rates throughout the pandemic but in the week up to the 3rd December it recorded the



highest number of new cases within the Borough at 53. However, 35 of these were accounted for by a large outbreak in a single care home within the ward. Therefore, this spike should be seen in isolation and not a trend suggesting an increase in new cases generally within Church. The new regime of vaccinations and lateral flow testing will clearly give increased protection for residents and staff in such settings and this isolated incident has clearly had a disproportionate impact on the infection rate for the whole Borough. We have not been informed by the Director of Public Health within Bury that there has been any more such isolated outbreaks within care homes with high case numbers since the 3rd December therefore common sense would dictate infection rates for a ward such as Church will now be substantially lower and in line with the existing trend of low case numbers for that area.

Sedgley ward which previously had high rates of transmission is now seeing continuous decline in cases and East ward that recorded the highest number of cases the previous week has also seen a decline in cases.

We also wish to bring your attention to the fact that in the week up until the 4th December, 87 new cases were recorded within schools. We believe that approximately 50 of these are accounted for within one setting. We have not be informed of any similar large scale outbreaks in an educational setting since the aforementioned date and again we must ask you to view the disproportionate impact this outbreak had on Bury's total infection rate and we believe is not representative of high infection rates within household settings in the community. The transmission rate within the 10-19 age group has come down from 455.4 on the 29th October to 188.5 on the most recent figures, even taking into account the single isolated large-scale outbreak referred to above.

2. Case detection rates in the Over 60's

As referred to above we have seen a decline in case detection rates for all age groups over the age of 60, save for the over 90s.

We would ask that you view these clear sharp and consistent falls within the over 65 age groups to be a reliable and welcome trend. The week up until the 4th December saw an increase in positive tests for care home residents to 48, but 25 of these are related to a single out break in Church. This isolated spike is not representative of a general trend, as previous weeks have shown lesser numbers and we reiterate that single large outbreaks which have been contained should not impact which Tier Bury is placed in. Save for one-week, case detection rates in the over 65 age group within the Metropolitan Borough of Bury have shown "sharp and consistent falls" as confirmed by our local Clinical Commissioning Group.

3. How quickly the cases are rising and falling

As confirmed by data supplied by the CCG within Bury, daily Covid cases peaked on the 2nd November at 229 declining to 34 cases on the 6th December. Therefore, we have seen a consistent decrease in new daily cases over 5 weeks. There may well be days when there are slightly more or less cases, but the data shows a sharp fall over a significant period of time.



It is inconceivable that conclusions could be drawn from individual days where new cases may be higher during this period, the consistent downward trend should be the determining factor and there is nothing to suggest this fall will not continue up to and after the 16th December.

4. Positivity in the General Population

In line with point 3, the data shows a steep fall in the positivity rate within the general population from a high of around 20% at the end of October this has more than halved on the most recent figures. Again, and in line with all other data Bury is showing a sharp and consistent fall in positivity rates over a sustained period of time.

5. Pressure on the NHS

Having discussed this issue with the Chief Officer at Fairfield Hospital on the 14th December, he confirmed a reduction from 140 Covid positive patients to 40 at present, and the percentage of people contracting Covid within the hospital setting has reduced from 30 % to 10 per cent. Therefore, my local hospital is not facing unsustainable pressures and is dealing adequately with Covid positive patients whilst opening and providing a wide range of non-Covid related care for both elective and non-elective procedures. Throughout the whole pandemic period urgent care has provided a normal level of service.

With the reducing number of cases within Bury these pressures will continue to ease and we are in no different a position to the normal and annual pressures faced by the hospital.

There is no evidence at all that other NHS facilities are facing unprecedented demand that they are unable to cope with.

In line with every other hospital in the country, Fairfield is experiencing challenges through staff absences. However, this is not simply related to Covid transmission with absences accounted for by such matters as schools self-isolating and the linked child-care responsibilities to shielding due to staff or family members being clinically vulnerable. These issues are however not impacting on the appropriate care being provided to patients within the hospital setting.

We would further bring your attention to the extremely low rates of Covid transmission detected within hospitality settings in Bury. Indeed, we argue that these incidents are so rare that they are statistically and clinically irrelevant. For the Tier 3 restrictions to be justified there must be some evidential base to show that pubs, restaurants, cafes and other hospitality settings within Bury provide a real risk of increased case numbers.

One can hypothesise on any matter but there is no evidence at all to show opening hospitality settings within a Tier 2 environment within Bury would provide any form of extreme risk to health outcomes for local residents within the Borough. This lack of evidence can perhaps be accounted for by the thousands of pounds spent by local business to make their premises Covid secure and the levels of adherence to social distancing rules by people within these settings.

We are unaware of any significant outbreaks emanating from restaurants at all and none at all from cafes. At the date of writing we have only been informed of 2 pubs where Covid positive residents have visited, but no confirmation this is where transmission took place and approximately 3 food



outlets but again there is no evidence that transmission actually took place there. This does not account for the many, many hospitality venues within the Borough who have no recorded link to Covid 19 at all.

Bury has been in the most severe restrictions for all but 3 weeks since the first lockdown. This is negatively impacting many resident's mental health and severely increasing isolation and loneliness with the clinical and social cost this brings.

The residents of Bury have put in herculean efforts to bring the Covid 19 infection rate down within their Borough and they are succeeding as shown by the clinical data. If Bury remains within Tier 3 this will negatively impact the non-Covid health outcomes of many of our constituents and be an absolute catastrophic blow for jobs and businesses.

The hospitality sector faces impending financial disaster if as a bare minimum the Borough is not placed in Tier 3. The evidence shows that pubs, restaurants and cafes within Bury are Covid secure venues with miniscule rates of transmission, indeed we do not believe it can be argued conclusively that there is definitive evidence of any new cases linked to a hospitality setting within our Borough.

We implore you to put our Borough within Tier 2 restrictions as this would be consistent with the medical and clinical evidence which shows that those who are most at risk from Covid 19, in the various vulnerable categories face a near non-existent risk to their health outcomes from hospitality settings re-opening in the Covid secure manner they have done throughout the pandemic.

We look forward to your decision over the next few days.

Yours Sincerely,

Christian Wakeford MP
Member of Parliament for Bury South

James Daly MP
Member of Parliament for Bury North