



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

December 2020

Dear Constituents,

Earlier today, I was informed by the Department of Health and Social Care that the whole of Berkshire would be placed into Tier 3 with effect from Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December. This was in advance of Matt Hancock's statement in the House and I was grateful to have been provided with early notification. While I am clearly disappointed on behalf of every constituent and beyond, this decision has been taken on the back of the recent spike in R rate which is now ripping across Berkshire, Surrey, London and elsewhere across the South East.

Cases in the Bracknell Forest area alone have increased exponentially from less than 80 per 100,000 barely three weeks ago to 230 today and this is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate of any borough in Berkshire, with the sharpest rate of growth. On 03<sup>rd</sup> December, evidence generated locally found that 58% of all new cases were attributable to our schools but by 10<sup>th</sup> December, a similar figure was attributable to the wider community, highlighting that a wider spread of Covid-19 is now underway in other settings too. As the R rate continues to rise, it is important that everyone in the Bracknell constituency and beyond plays their full part in following the rules to ensure that the virus is halted.

Yesterday, I wrote privately with other Berkshire MPs to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to urge him to adopt a borough by borough approach for Berkshire, to ensure that any decision to impose Tier 3 is made as a last resort only, to remain mindful of the impact on local people and to keep this under constant scrutiny, with a view to continued engagement on future measures. It is clear from the latest data however that ignoring the increased risk to the public was not an option. Whilst I am acutely aware of the significant frustration, anger, anxiety and further damage to businesses, livelihoods and our quality of life in Bracknell, the decision is one that has been made by central Government and needs to be fully supported for all of the reasons affecting public health, epidemiology and NHS capacity that we know. I have also been informed today that lateral flow testing will be introduced into our schools from January and that this will endure as the vaccines continue to be rolled out.

2020 has been grim for so many but I thank you for your patience, goodwill, community spirit and pragmatism as we move into 2021. Best wishes for Christmas, New Year and for the return to normality that we all so desperately want at the earliest opportunity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Sunderland'.

James Sunderland MP  
Member of Parliament for the Bracknell Constituency  
Bracknell, Crowthorne, Finchampstead, Sandhurst and Wokingham Without