

23 October 2020

Open letter to all residents of South Yorkshire

We are entering a new phase in our efforts to overcome Coronavirus. As we do, I am writing to make a direct request for your help and support – to rally together once again and follow the latest guidance, so can we protect our NHS and each other this winter.

From Saturday 24 October, all four areas of South Yorkshire (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield) will be under the Very High Alert level of Coronavirus restrictions – also known as Tier 3.

I understand the weariness with which many of you will have heard this news. After the progress we made over the summer, the return to stricter restrictions is deeply frustrating. Many of you will be fearing for your families, your livelihoods, your future. Some of you will be wondering if these measures are worth it.

Those feelings are understandable. But we should be under no illusions. These measures are needed. The scientific advice is that they can help. We still have a difficult path ahead, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. These restrictions will help us reach it sooner, and at a lower cost.

From last week, it was clear we had to act. The number of people being admitted to our region's hospitals was rising sharply. Our communities now have some of the highest numbers of cases in the North, and infection rates are still going up. The virus is spreading from young to old.

It's tempting to ignore what will happen if we don't act. It's tempting to think that because new restrictions are not a silver bullet they are not worth the disruption. We don't have the luxury of easy choices. But I have no doubt this was the right one to make. The alternatives carry far too great a risk of causing more deaths, and ultimately more harm to our economy.

I have been working flat out with South Yorkshire's local councils, our NHS, and the Government to ensure that we have what we need to get the virus under control. Local lockdowns can buy time, but it must not be wasted – and that means fixing the failures that allowed things to reach this point, especially around test and trace.

Of course, this is not just about public health: we've also secured significant extra funding to support our businesses and workers. I'll be working to get more.

But I need everyone to do their bit. This is not just about keeping yourself safe. It's about doing right by your neighbours, your friends, your community. It's about doing right by our NHS. We owe NHS staff – and other front line workers, from retail staff to bus drivers – a deep debt of gratitude. The best way to express it is to follow the rules. If we don't, we risk their sacrifice, and ours, being in vain.

That is why I am asking people in South Yorkshire to tap again into the grit and character which have got us through so many difficult times before. Together, we can and will get through this.

Thank you.



Dan Jarvis MBE MP

Mayor, Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority