

Emails from members of the public re COVID

Sent: Sunday, March 6, 2022 2:42:38 PM

To: Cllr Jane Hanna <Jane.Hanna@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Subject: Lifting of Covid Precautions

Dear Councillor Hanna,

I am emailing to convey my concerns over the lifting of National and Local Covid restrictions and the subsequent consequences for both vulnerable and general public. Can I ask that you speak on behalf of the vulnerable and circulate this letter to your colleagues and respond to my questions listed further below.

Nature and other high impact scientific journals have population studies that have evidenced Covid even in mild cases carries an increased risk of serious disease including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory, neurological and mental health.

A recent night out after 2 years of hospital advised shielding, has resulted in me catching Covid. None of my family who were also on the evening out caught it. We are all fully vaccinated. The difference between us, is the fact that I am classified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, whereas they are not. I am not obese, elderly, infirm, or from an ethnic origin. Just a mum in her mid 40's desperate for some normality.

As a result of catching Covid, I am now suspended from the transplant waiting list for a minimum of 4 weeks. I now deeply regret listening to the government public communications – which do not include an independent public health/scientific statement in support of this decision, or an equalities impact statement.

I am especially concerned about the unintended impacts of the lifting of all restrictions at the very time when public communications are understandably dominated by the Ukraine war. I have seen a video from the Director of Public Health advocating a cautious approach. This is welcomed, but it is against a backdrop of such a strong public narrative that Covid is over, along with the lack of any funded support for people on low incomes to stay at home and isolate.

My initial thoughts surrounding the removal of precautions are:

1. A fourth vaccine is restricted to a very small group at a time when vaccines are known to be waning and when the science is clear that no assumption is valid that a future variants are milder. What are the timescales for the fourth booster in Oxfordshire?
2. Who will have access to the free lateral flow tests – all vulnerable, or just those in a small defined group?
3. How many tests will be available per week. If less than 7, it may restrict social mobility – many vulnerable people work, care, or have an active family.
4. Are there any plans to listen to and involve people who are 'vulnerable' in local public health planning, with a view to increasing community resilience to Covid and other potential infectious disease.

5. Pharmacy delivery's are not available for certain refrigerated medications/drugs. Is there a way to continue precautions in healthcare settings and pharmacies?
6. There has been reduced transmission in the number of colds and winter flu cases over the past 2 years, as a result of mask wearing. Is it not sensible for businesses trying to rebuild, to minimise staff absences, by giving staff and customers the ability to make informed choices and take proportionate actions to reduce risks of spreading future infection.
7. Public indoor spaces are essential for basic inclusion in society. They are required for democratic, health, care, education, public transport and work. Is it possible for measures to be in place to encourage audiences, staff and venue users to continue to wear masks?

Surely, a cautious approach, alongside clear communication and guidance, should reassure and increase footfall (revenue), to services. And, help prevent more cuts and staff absences.

Yours sincerely,
<name withheld>

Sent: Sunday, March 6, 2022 8:14:34 PM
To: Cllr Jane Hanna <Jane.Hanna@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Subject: End of Covid restrictions concerns

Dear Councillor Hanna,

I am writing as I would like to express my concerns around the end of Covid restrictions and the impact this will have on so many people in our community. For the many who are classed as being Clinically extremely vulnerable and were advised to shield at the start of the pandemic, I believe the government's advice is still to take precautions to minimise the risk of exposure with guidance to reduce the time spent in crowded places and asking visitors to take a LFT before visiting you. Now anyone who tests positive legally doesn't have to isolate, we could be more exposed to the virus when we go out and when LFTs are no longer provided for free, this extra precaution will be very difficult to apply.

I am classed as being CEV due to being on medication that suppresses my immune system because of Inflammatory bowel disease (Ulcerative colitis) and arthritis, both linked to an overactive immune response in my body. Prior to Covid, this was kept under control and I was able to continue to live a normal life. I work full time, have a young family, friends and a busy and fulfilling life. I work in schools and Covid has made this feel like a risk but since the end of any legal restrictions, I feel as though the risk is even higher. I know that the pupils have been told they no longer need to test and for now schools are requesting that they stay off if they have any symptoms but will testing still be available for children and young people if they have symptoms and will there be ongoing testing of school staff?

My other concern is around health care settings and I would like to know if the continued expectations will be for everyone to wear facemasks, most especially the healthcare staff who are treating you and also will social distancing continue in

hospitals and GP surgeries. Will the staff who work there, be testing regularly to ensure they don't put vulnerable patients at risk?

The data and monitoring of positive cases will be very unreliable if people are not asked to test regularly and I wonder if more local information will be available to the public on hospital admissions and cases within the community? Going forward, will we have any way of knowing if we've mixed with someone who is contagious? Will CEV still be given free tests? Will we be given extra test kits for our families? Who will be classed as CEV?

While there is such a high and uncontrolled level of cases within the community and the reduction in regular testing, lots of people are feeling isolated and there is a disparity between the protection offered to those who are vulnerable and those who are not. This has a huge impact on the mental health of so many people and I refer to the Office for National Statistics most recent analysis of CEV, including their behaviours and mental and physical wellbeing which states that 47 % are still worried about the effect of the Covid on their life and 68% no longer shielding but taking extra precautions.

[Coronavirus and clinically extremely vulnerable people in England - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Coronavirus and clinically extremely vu...](#)

Could a more cautionary approach be taken in Oxfordshire in order to continue to offer an inclusive approach to all and to make all of our community feel safe and supported?

Yours sincerely
<name withheld>