

Coronavirus – First Minister addresses the nation

Earlier on Tuesday evening the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, addressed the nation following an earlier statement to MSPs at The Scottish Parliament.

"Let's pull together and look after each other again."

Today FM [@NicolaSturgeon](#) announced new measures to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Watch her message to the people of Scotland ↓

And see more at <https://t.co/kZjGNz2EDepic.twitter.com/DhMcXRaPQU>

– Scottish Government (@scotgov) [December 14, 2021](#)

This is what the First Minister said:

The last two years have been the toughest most of us can remember.

I can never thank you enough for the sacrifices you have made.

This winter, just as we thought we had turned a corner in the pandemic, the emergence of Omicron struck us a cruel blow.

Omicron is much more transmissible than previous strains, and it is now spreading very quickly.

We anticipate a steep and rapid rise in cases.

We don't know yet if Omicron's impact on individual health is milder than variants like Delta.

Some have suggested it might be, and let's hope so. But there is not yet strong or consistent evidence of that.

And even if it is the case, the challenge Omicron poses is real.

When we are facing, as we may be, thousands upon thousands of cases per day – perhaps as high as 15,000 or more – even if just one in every hundred of those cases needs hospital care, the burden on the health service quickly becomes impossible.

Omicron can do this through sheer weight of numbers. More people infected will lead to more people with serious illness and, tragically, more people will die.

We are also already seeing an impact across the economy, and on public services.

Staff absence caused by Covid means trains without drivers, classrooms without teachers, wards without nurses and businesses without workers.

That's why this is not a choice between protecting health and protecting the economy.

If we don't act now to protect health, Omicron will inflict untold damage on businesses and critical services across Scotland.

That's why we must act to slow it down, as we speed up vaccination.

Getting boosters into arms as quickly as possible is our top

priority.

Vaccination is our best defence. And boosters give us much more protection against Omicron than just one or two doses.

So our plan is, before New Year, to offer every eligible adult the chance to book an appointment.

If you are over 30, you can already book online.

From tomorrow over 18s can do so too.

Our mission is to get the overwhelming majority of people boosted before the bells.

In January, we will catch up with anyone who couldn't be done before Hogmanay.

My thanks to everyone doing truly heroic work to get jags in arms as fast as possible – and to everyone rolling up their sleeve to protect themselves and others.

Boosters are how we will beat this.

But in this race between the virus and vaccines, as we speed up their delivery, we also need to slow down the virus.

Put simply, that means all of us having fewer contacts with fewer people – and making sure those we do have are safer.

To help workers and customers to do that, we are putting a legal requirement on businesses to take reasonable steps to reduce transmission on their premises.

So in supermarkets, for example, you will see the return of some of the measures that were in place at the start of the pandemic.

And we are asking employers to do even more to support working from home.

We know this is worrying news for business – especially in the hospitality trade which is being hard hit as people rightly follow advice to defer Christmas parties.

So today, we have put in place a package of financial support to help them.

And we are making more money available to ensure eligible people can claim isolation payments. No one should find themselves unable to afford to do the right thing, to protect themselves and others from Covid.

The reality, however, is that our resources are limited. The UK government holds the purse strings, and only they can put in place critical support such as furlough.

Alongside the Welsh and Northern Irish governments, we are hoping they will do more.

My biggest request today is to all of you.

Please believe me when I say I would not be asking you to sacrifice more, if I did not think it essential for the health and well-being of all of us.

We are not banning household mixing in law, as we had to do before. We know the impact of this on mental health.

And I am not asking you to cancel or change your plans for Christmas Day, Boxing Day, or whenever you have your main festive celebration.

But in the run up to, and in the aftermath of Christmas, I am asking – I am appealing – to everyone to cut down as far as possible our contacts with people in other households.

My key request to all of you today is – as far as you can, please minimise your indoor social interactions with other households at this time.

And, if you do plan on socialising – either at home or in indoor public places – please limit the number of households represented in your group to a maximum of three. And test before you go.

We are asking this because Omicron is so infectious. Our experience says if it gets into a group of people, it will infect many of them. So limiting numbers helps us restrict its spread.

Speaking to you in these terms is the last thing I wanted to be doing a few days before Christmas.

We've all had enough of this.

But the threat from Omicron is severe. And we must respond seriously.

This is another difficult juncture in the course of the pandemic – but vaccines and home testing do put us in a better position than last year.

And wearying though all this is, we are not powerless.

So let's pull together and look after each other again.

We know what we need to do.

Keep windows open.

Wash our hands.

Wear face coverings.

Limit our contacts.

Test before we go anywhere.

And get vaccinated.

Thank you – for everything.

And in sending you my Christmas wishes, let me more than anything wish for all of us a happier and brighter new year.