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Matt Hancock
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
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By email

Dear Secretary of State,

At yesterday's daily press briefing you discussed the potential need for local lockdowns in response to flare-ups of the Coronavirus in particular settings. Such a lockdown would clearly have implications for people's rights as well as welfare, and so it is vital that there is clarity around who is making decisions about when and how such restrictions would be imposed and then lifted.

You stated that:

'We have a system that we're putting in place with a combination of Public Health England and the new Joint Biosecurity Centre, along with the local directors of public health who play an absolutely crucial role in the decision-making in the system.'

This raises many questions. At present, although we know that Tom Hurd will head up the Joint Biosecurity Centre, he is not medically qualified and so will need considerable support in making these decisions. I have not been able to find any information about who else will form part of this body. Please could you let me know its membership and also how its members have been selected, by what process and based on what medical expertise?

Please could you also make public the process by which this Joint Biosecurity Centre will be politically accountable? How can elected representatives scrutinise its decision-making? What will the relationship be between its members and officials of Public Health England? You say that local directors of public health will 'play an absolutely crucial role in the decision-making in the system' but how will their expertise be balanced against the priorities of national government, and what is the role for local councillors?

Concerns have also been raised about the storage of personal identifiable information collected on the contacts of people with coronavirus, including those who are showing symptoms. Please can you explain why this data needs to be kept for five years and how this is consistent with GDPR?

You will understand that the government is asking citizens to sacrifice considerable freedom for the common good. This will only be possible if they and their elected representatives are able to understand on what basis, and by whom, this sacrifice is being requested.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Bartley". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Jonathan Bartley

Co-leader

Green Party of England and Wales