

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: 21 November 2020 11:51
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on scaremongering stats

Hey – think it is fine, just tweaked the quote slightly to add ‘continue’ and took out ‘coming weeks’ as in theory restrictions may change dec 2

Send to [REDACTED] please

Cheers,



Department
of Health &
Social Care



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 11:42
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on scaremongering stats

Hello,

Would you be able to review the lines below:

Deadline: ASAP
Media outlet: Mail Online
Journalist: Ross Clark
Cleared by:

Issue

The CO's Rapid Response Unit has flagged growing engagement with a [Daily Mail](#) article claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been twisted to create fear among the public (6.6k interactions).

Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

The piece claims that:

- In a July report commissioned by Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance, scientists estimated that there could be 119,000 deaths if a second spike coincided with a peak of winter flu. Yesterday, that figure stood at 54,286 – less than half that.
- During the ‘Halloween horror show’ press conference used by Sir Patrick and Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty to scare the Government into implementing a second lockdown, one of their slides suggested that daily Covid-19 deaths could reach 4,000 a day by December.
- contrary to what the Government experts would have you think after they last month published a chart that gave the impression that hospitals were close to overflowing, when at least half didn’t have a single Covid-19 patient.

It also questions the accuracy of lateral flow tests, claims that excess deaths stats are being exaggerated, and says that ICU beds are not at capacity.

Media handling

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, the RRU recommends that the DHSC press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact, and if possible, include a government line in the article. We recommend issuing similar lines to those drafted in response to the 31 October press conference data sets used to justify a second national lockdown.

Lines to clear

A Government spokesperson said:

“It is completely incorrect to suggest the government is manipulating the data or making decisions based on wrong or outdated information. National restrictions have been introduced to save lives.

“It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part stay at home ~~over the coming weeks~~ so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.”

Background:

- The full slides from the latest coronavirus press conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slide-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-20-november-2020>
- Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>



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of Health &
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