

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:43
To: Press Office News Desk <pressofficenewsdesk@dhsc.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Thanks

From: Press Office News Desk <pressofficenewsdesk@dhsc.gov.uk>
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:41
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED]

Sorry should have said earlier but [REDACTED] cleared the line separately and it has gone out.

However, if we have any follow ups we can of course include some background on that.

Thank you,



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:38
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi,

Don't we want to add something about lateral flow even if it's just in the background.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:50
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED] – grateful for clearance on this as CO have reported higher levels of engagement

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 12:39
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED]

Would you be able to review the lines below:

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

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 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:

“National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

“We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home 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>



Department
of Health &
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