



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 701/2020

Date: 8th October 2020

---

### **Chief Minister's Script – COVID-19 Press Conference**

Good afternoon.

Welcome to this live press conference from No6 Convent Place.

We are not planning to start daily press conferences again.

But I wanted to address you this afternoon given the increase in numbers of COVID-19 active cases in our Community.

Today the number of those active cases is 64.

That number is higher than at any other time during the Spring or early summer.

Even when we went into lockdown we had numbers lower than that.

But now we better understand this virus.

And our Health Authority is better prepared to deal with the virus.

Of all those who are presently actively contaminated with COVID-19, only one person is presently admitted in St Bernard's Hospital.

But that is an elderly patient.

In fact, in their late eighties.

And it was therefore a great risk as a result of infection for that person.

In fact, however that person is actually well and awaiting discharge.

But that does not mean that we can relax in the face of these increasing numbers.

We have to remain very vigilant.

We all have to ensure that we are not a vector for transmission of this disease.



That means following the basic rules of hygiene, social distancing and mask wearing.

It means getting the flu vaccine so you avoid confusing symptoms.

It means allowing your children to get the flu vaccine for the same reason.

It also means helping us with contact tracing.

When our Contact Tracing Bureau calls you, please be helpful and truthful.

There is no blame in having contracted the virus.

It is good to be told you have it or you may have it so you can take the necessary measures.

That's what can help us to stop the virus at you.

And please be as open, honest and frank as you can about who you may have been close to and who you may have unwittingly and unknowingly infected.

We need your help.

The people you have been with will need your help.

Without your information, they may go on to infect family members.

They may infect a loved one who, through age, infirmity or otherwise is more susceptible to the virus.

They may infect the person who may turn out to be the first mortal victim of the virus in Gibraltar.

So please, help us, help us to identify persons you may have been in contact with once the Contact Tracing Bureau gets in touch with you.

Your answers make the difference for your contacts or your contacts' contacts and loved ones.

And let's understand that we have been very lucky in Gibraltar to date.

We must expect that as the numbers of persons infected rises, we should expect that the virus may affect a person who is less able to resist it.

We know more about how we must treat the virus.

But we must still understand that the over 70s and the immunosuppressed are still very much at risk of death from this virus than others are.

That is no different in Gibraltar from anywhere else.



So please, if you are over 70, continue to exercise great care in your social interactions.

I know there is great sacrifice in not living life as normal.

There is huge pain in not seeing children, grandchildren and other loved ones at all or as regularly as we would like.

There is a great sense of loss in not being able to hold loved ones close.

But that pain is temporary.

The loss of life is forever.

Do not tempt fate.

So please, please follow the rules and the advice.

We do not want to proceed to a second lockdown in Gibraltar.

We do not even want to get to the stage of a second lockdown of our over 70s in Gibraltar.

So please help us by following advice on when to go out and how to interact.

If you are over 70, go out as little as possible.

Make use of our Golden Hour and Silver Hour regimes.

And wear masks as required.

I know they may be uncomfortable.

We do not want to require you to wear them more than we are advised is strictly necessary.

That is why our regime is not as strict as elsewhere.

But where – with a heavy heart - we have legislated to require mask use, you must follow the rules.

In particular, remember that you **MUST** wear a mask when **COLLECTING** children from school.

Collection is the time when more people accumulate.

That is why we have not legislated for masks on drop off at school gates.

But we have legislated for masks at collection times.

That is now the law and you help us and you help yourselves and others by following the law.



Please do so.

In fact, you may find it strange that I am asking you, please, to follow the law.

Of course, the law is the law and it must be followed by compulsion of law.

And that is not a set of laws that we have made lightly.

But I am asking 'please' because this is about our whole community continuing to work together to slow the virus and keep it away from the most vulnerable.

To keep our GHA able to treat and deal with those who may need care.

And these restrictions in Gibraltar are designed to deliver the controls we need, whilst still allowing you to continue living life, even if not entirely normally.

That is why we have not closed bars or restaurants.

We will do so again only if we have no other choice to deliver controls in a more measured way.

And that is why your phone app, your honest cooperation with the Contact Tracing Bureau and wearing your mask and following other key rules is essential.

It is not just our numbers of active cases that is higher than in the spring and summer.

It is also our testing.

We are now testing in the region of 700 people a day.

We expect to ramp that up even further now to closer to 1,000 a day and beyond.

Already we are testing much more than just about any other nation.

We are close on 500% more tests per 100,000 head of population than the United Kingdom on a daily basis.

The last accurate testing statistics published in Spain are for the 3rd of October.

On that day Gibraltar conducted 1,200% more tests than Spain per 100,000 head of population.

And I don't say this to gloat or to show off.

COVID is not a competition.

I say that to give you confidence in our numbers.



I say it to show you that the numbers of active cases here is more likely closer to correct than may be the case elsewhere.

So our numbers of active cases are a more accurate and precise figure than you are seeing in any one of those other countries.

Indeed, our figure is one of the most precise and accurate figures in the world.

And I can announce today that we will be introducing a new cycle of testing in our schools.

A fortnightly cycle which will permit us to carry out an extra one thousand tests every two weeks in the schools.

And using a new saliva based test which is not intrusive and which will be more easily deployable.

A new test and a new cycle of tests with a clear purpose:

To keep our teachers and our school staff safe.

To keep our schools open.

To keep our children in education, which is the best and safest place for them to be.

And with that level of testing, that precision in our numbers, and YOUR cooperation with our Contact Tracing Bureau and our rules on masks, social distancing and hand-washing, we can stave off stricter measures.

We can stave off another lockdown.

And we can stave off – insofar as possible – any fatalities.

But it requires your help and cooperation.

It requires your support.

And it requires your involvement in the work of all of Team Gibraltar.

These are far from normal times.

But every rule and law passed.

Every measure and decision taken.

And every restriction and nuisance imposed.

Every one of them is designed to help us all to get back as soon as safely possible to the total freedom we so cherish and fight for.



I know that all our shop keepers, all our restaurateurs and all our people generally are desperate to return to normality.

And we are too.

We have no desire to stand in the way of that normality we all hanker after.

But I am asking you for your help.

Because with your help following the rules we have been advised to set, we will get through this quicker.

It is that simple.

So please conspire with us to get rid of the virus and get back to normal, instead of conspiring against us or thinking that we are conspiring to control you.

We are not.

Neither with vaccines, mobile phone masts nor apps, nor anything else.

There should just be one conspiracy in town today:

The Team Gibraltar conspiracy against COVID-19.

So thank you to all those of you who have already done so much to comply with our rules.

Thank you to all those of you who have lost so much but have continued to trade and do.

Thank you to everyone in public service and the private sector for keeping our economy going.

As the autumn sets in, with winter already within sight, and with the extra burden of Brexit negotiations, my team and I will be 100% concentrated on COVID and BREXIT issues.

We will not be able to attend to much more.

But I know you will want us to concentrate on these huge challenges above all else.

And I know you will want to help too.

And you will, by doing your little bit.

Wearing your mask when you have to.

Washing your hands as often as possible.



And keeping your social distance as we are advised is necessary.

Take your share of responsibility for the well-being of our nation.

Be responsible.

Act responsibly.

That is what you can now do for Gibraltar.

Step up.

And don't let your country down.

Thank you very much for taking time this afternoon to listen.

We will provide for further live press conferences when necessary.

Now I will take questions from members of the press.

ENDS