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October 16, 2020

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The Independent Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE)

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## **The Independent SAGE Report 18**

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### **Emergency six-week plan for England in response to rising cases, hospitalisations and deaths – 16 October 2020**

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Submitted to The UK Government and the People of Great Britain  
& Northern Ireland by Sir David King, former Chief Scientific Adviser,  
UK Government, Chair of Independent SAGE

## Emergency six-week plan for England in response to rising cases, hospitalisations and deaths – 16 October 2020.

We wrote on 21<sup>st</sup> September that we were in a crisis and put forward a ten point plan to avoid a new national lockdown in England. The points were not implemented and the crisis has worsened considerably. Daily confirmed cases are now almost 20,000 a day – four times what they were on 21<sup>st</sup> September. Hospital admissions and deaths are three times as high [1]. Test results are taking longer, fewer new cases and contacts are being reached and those that are, are reached later [2]. SAGE noted that Test and Trace was now providing at best marginal impact on reducing transmission [3]. About a third of the population has been living under current “tier 2” restrictions since mid September. The remainder has been living under current “tier 1” restrictions since 25<sup>th</sup> September. Cases have continued to rise despite these and although cases are highest in the North of England, they are rising rapidly across the country. We do not believe the current tiered system is sufficient to reverse the growth of the pandemic.

On 21<sup>st</sup> September, SAGE scientists recommended a two week “circuit breaker” where we return to a similar level of restrictions as in late May, followed by a period of continued restrictions sufficient to keep the “reproduction ratio” R below 1 while allowing schools to stay open [3,4,5]. A new study, whose authors include members of the SAGE modelling subgroup, estimated that a circuit breaker could save thousands of lives and “reset the clock” to buy us time [6]. **We agree.** However, the time bought by a circuit breaker and continuing restrictions **must** be used to prepare for how we can re-open the economy safely, learning the lessons from this summer and autumn.

**On the next page, we set out our emergency six-week plan to get cases down and rebuild the public health and social scaffolding we need to ease restrictions safely.** In an accompanying report we set out a detailed blueprint to reform the Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (FTTIS) system to allow a gradual easing of restrictions over the next few months and avoid the need for any further national lockdowns.

### References

1. <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>
2. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/926830/Test\\_and\\_Trace\\_Week19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/926830/Test_and_Trace_Week19.pdf)
3. SAGE summary of the effectiveness and harms of different non-pharmaceutical interventions.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925854/S0769\\_Summary\\_of\\_effectiveness\\_and\\_harms\\_of\\_NPIs.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925854/S0769_Summary_of_effectiveness_and_harms_of_NPIs.pdf)
4. SAGE detailed table of impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925856/S0770\\_NPIs\\_table\\_pivot.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925856/S0770_NPIs_table_pivot.pdf)
5. Minutes from the 58<sup>th</sup> SAGE meeting , 21 September 2020  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925853/S0768\\_Fifty-eighth\\_SAGE\\_meeting\\_on\\_Covid-19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925853/S0768_Fifty-eighth_SAGE_meeting_on_Covid-19.pdf)
6. Precautionary breaks: planned, limited duration circuit breaks to control the prevalence of COVID-19,  
<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.10.13.20211813v1>

**Six week plan to get COVID-19 cases down and rebuild the public health and social scaffolding we need to ease restrictions safely**

National restrictions to rapidly reduce new cases, hospital admissions and deaths		Building public health scaffolding to support exit from restrictions	
Weeks 1 to 2 / 3	<p>Short “<b>Circuit Breaker</b>” – based on SAGE reference [3], page 6 (return to late May restrictions)</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Closure of schools to coincide with half term</li><li>- No indoor household mixing outside of support bubbles</li><li>- Closure of non-essential retail and businesses</li><li>- Reinstate 2m physical distancing</li><li>- Work at home where at all possible</li><li>- Closure of leisure and hospitality sectors (takeaways allowed)</li><li>- Closure of places of worship</li><li>- No overnight stays away from home</li><li>- All university teaching online</li><li>- Up to 6 people can meet outside in public spaces</li></ul>	<p>Financial support for all those impacted by restrictions, including original furlough scheme and support for self-employed for affected workers and businesses. This will support reopening economy once restrictions ease.</p> <p>Immediate major reform of Test and Trace, including restructuring of testing infrastructure, contact tracing and wrap-around support for isolation (details in <a href="#">accompanying blueprint</a>).</p> <p>Comprehensive reset of the Government communications strategy that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- explains why COVID measures are necessary</li><li>- is clear and consistent so that people know precisely what they need to do.</li><li>- is developed in collaboration with local government and local organisations,</li><li>- avoids blaming the public for infection</li><li>- treats the public as a partner rather than a problem in handling the pandemic.</li></ul> <p>Implement a robust regulatory framework which will ensure that all workplaces, hospitality and other public spaces are COVID compliant in order to stay open. This will involve the recruitment of sufficient inspectors to help employers and owners to put effective mitigations in place, to certify premises as compliant and to carry out regular inspections to ensure compliance.</p>	Weeks 1 to 6
	<p><b>Some restrictions remain</b> to keep R below 1 while allowing schools to open. Based on SAGE references [3,5].</p> <p>Remaining restrictions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- No indoor household mixing outside of support bubbles</li><li>- Reinstate 2m physical distancing</li><li>- Work at home where at all possible</li><li>- Closure of leisure and hospitality sectors (takeaways allowed)</li><li>- All university teaching online unless face-to-face teaching absolutely essential</li><li>- Up to 6 people can meet outside in public spaces</li><li>- Secondary school pupils to wear face coverings in classrooms</li></ul>		
<p>Further relax restrictions as soon as functioning Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (FTTIS) structure in place and case numbers reduced to below <b>5000</b> a day (<b>within 6 weeks if measures followed now</b>).</p> <p>Over time, maintain only such restrictions as necessary to keep R below 0.9 and only if FTTIS is not sufficient to do so.</p> <p>Rapid local response to new hotspots if and when they arise, led by local FTTIS teams.</p>			

# **indie\_SAGE**

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**Following the science**