

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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*Dear Constituent*

Thank you for your email about the temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act.

I would like to reassure you that all the measures in the Coronavirus Act are temporary, and proportionate to the threat we face. It is important that they will only be used when strictly necessary, and will only be in place for as long as required to respond to the situation. I welcome measures in place to review this act on a six monthly basis to ensure that the measures remain appropriate. It is clear that the virus will be with us for some time, and it is vital that we are able to take necessary steps to save lives.

The purpose of the legislation is to ensure that sufficient staff are available, and deployed where they are most needed, as well as supporting members of the public, containing and slowing the virus, and managing the deceased with respect and dignity.

I recognise your concerns about the power conferred by the Coronavirus Act relating to people who may be infectious. I know that most people have been working extremely hard, and making numerous sacrifices, to comply with relevant public health advice. This provision simply seeks to ensure that isolation measures can be enforced if necessary. In practice, this power would take the form of a public health officer or police officer returning people to places that they have been required to stay. For example, if someone has been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and required to self-isolate for 14 days, and then is found out and about during that time, they would be returned home. Equally, the act empowers police and immigration officers to make sure that individuals attend testing or treatment facilities as required.

I believe this approach strikes an appropriate balance as on the one hand someone with the virus was recklessly mixing with vulnerable people and refusing to stop, I would want something to be done about it. On the other hand, however, for less clear cut breaches, I would urge the police to exercise their discretion and appeal to people's sense of reason and responsibility to society. It is also important that measures like this are kept under close review by Parliament and remain temporary.

*Member of Parliament for Darlington*

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I understand that these measures may seem intimidating, and I know that the overwhelming majority of people are following guidance and obeying self-isolation instructions. However, we must be prepared to enforce these measures, to ensure that the small number of people who do not comply are not putting lives at risk by their behaviour.

As your MP, I will continue to monitor this issue and scrutinise the steps the Government is taking closely and raise your concerns with my Ministerial colleagues.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours sincerely  
Peter Gibson

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