

2020 was bad and now the government seems determined to

Published: January 13, 2026, 7:56 am

---

If there is an easier definition of successfully being in power than 'making unpopular decisions, and having the ability to justify them' then I am not sure what it is. And by that criterion Johnson is failing.

The British Medical Journal and Health Services Journal issued a rare [joint editorial](#) yesterday to express their concern about the proposed Covid lockdown easing over Christmas. In their opinion these create the possibility that 'New Year is likely to see NHS trusts facing a stark choice: be overwhelmed or stop most elective and non-urgent work.'

They concluded:

*[The government] should now reverse its rash decision to allow household mixing and instead extend the tiers over the five day Christmas period. In order to bring numbers down in advance of a likely third wave, it should also review and strengthen the tier structure, which has failed to suppress rates of infection and hospital admission.*

*This joint editorial is only the second in the more than 100 year histories of The BMJ and the Health Service Journal. We are publishing it because we believe the government is about to blunder into another major error that will cost many lives. If our political leaders fail to take swift and decisive action, they can no longer claim to be protecting the NHS.*

The science is, in that case, clearly against the government. They apparently wobbled during yesterday, wondering whether to change their advice. And then they decided to leave their plans in place, unaltered.

It is, of course, possible that the science is wrong. That is always a possibility. Extrapolations of data, and past experience, do not always successfully predict what might happen. But the US provides a somber foretelling of what is likely: the Thanksgiving holiday has given rise to a spike in cases.

I know all the issues about not seeing family. It will be a first for me not to do so. It's

hard to imagine Christmas without seeing quite a lot of brothers, in-laws, nieces, nephews and more. It's just what's always been done. And always been enjoyed.

But this year the trade off is with the chance of someone having the medical treatment that they need in the new year in an NHS already at its limits due to the stress of what has already happened, and is to come. I already know a nurse who has had to leave because the stress of Covid has been too much. She is far from alone.

The government has called this wrong. It's not following the science. It is not protecting people. It is not protecting the NHS. It is allowing short term popularity to influence its decision making at what is highly likely to be considerable long term cost. That is recklessness that should, I think, be considered criminal. And I stress, I mean that in a legal sense.

Other countries have changed their minds. They are locking down. No government in the UK has yet shown that courage, led by Westminster. All of them will pay a very high price for this if they do not.

2020 has been bad but at the current rate 2021 might make it look not so bad after all, even if vaccines really do work. The government is gambling on memory being short-term. I think they're wrong. Bad decisions always become apparent. This is an appalling one.