



PAUL HOLMES MP
Member of Parliament for Eastleigh

26 May 2020

Statement from Paul Holmes MP on Dominic Cummings

I have over the last few days faced some hostile criticism for not instantly providing my view on whether Mr Cummings should have resigned from his position, but I do not believe in giving my opinion with half-assessed facts. I wanted some time to look into this myself with all of the evidence and information that I could garner. Over the weekend I have raised this issue extensively with the Government, sought to establish the facts, and put my constituents' views across robustly.

I know that the last few months have been tough for everyone in the country and in the Eastleigh constituency. Over the last few weeks my team and I have assisted thousands of people in need of urgent help, in clarification of the guidelines, or to access support for their families or businesses, and we have always done our best to do this as efficiently as possible. I know that many have had to make sacrifices to follow the guidelines that Government has set out. You have done the right thing and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for being so responsible.

On 24th March at the daily televised press conference, in response to a question about what parents should do if they are both sick with COVID-19, Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jenny Harries advised the public that "clearly if you have adults that are unable to look after a small child, that is an exceptional circumstance." This was, if I have established the facts correctly, a week before Mr Cummings travelled to County Durham. His explanation for undertaking his lockdown in County Durham is the welfare of his young son, and he isolated with his family for 14 days. It is also clear that Mr Cummings did visit Barnard Castle, and he has now given a full account of his actions and his reasons for doing so.

Whilst I have sympathy with this, and it appears to be consistent with Dr. Harries' statement, I accept the criticism that this is at the very limit of what the guidelines permitted and is likely to be highly controversial. I can also say to you that I would not have taken these decisions myself in these circumstances, and that these rules now need to be clarified so that others do not misinterpret them.

Though I well understand much of the anger there is about this at the moment, bearing in mind the sacrifices we have all been asked to make, I do strongly oppose the behaviour of some who have sought to harass and intimidate Mr Cummings and his family. There is no justification for it. This does seem to have been part of Mr Cummings' calculation when he decided to travel to Durham.

I have been contacted by a large number of constituents on this matter and I want you to know that I have read each of your emails and considered your views carefully. Many people have legitimate concerns about what has gone on, and so do I.

Though I believe his actions were motivated solely by the desire to protect his family, I believe that Mr Cummings has made errors of judgement, and I would have responded differently given the guidance that Government has issued.



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I don't think that the handling of this situation over the last 72 hours has been the Government's finest hour, and I believe that the questions posed to Mr Cummings should have been answered earlier. I have raised both my concerns, and my constituents' concerns about his conduct with the Government and will continue to do so over the coming days.

This is my assessment of the situation as it stands, and sadly I do think that this situation has undermined the wider messaging around this public health emergency. However, the fact remains that we need to continue to follow the health advice to keep people safe.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Holmes." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

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