Responding to news that the Government will implement Plan B for dealing with Covid-19 and the Omicron variant, Dr Chaand Nagpaul, BMA council chair said:

“*Nobody wants to see further restrictions placed on their lives because of Covid-19, but the Government’s decision to implement Plan B today is the right one and should remain under consideration as we head deeper into the winter months.*

*“We’ve had increasingly high incidences of Covid-19 for some time now - more than 339,861 across the UK in the last seven days alone – and healthcare workers are rightly worried about the impact the Omicron variant could have on the ability for the NHS to function if cases continue to rise at the rapid rates already seen.*

*“We’re already seeing some hospitals cancelling elective care again, ambulances queuing for hours on end, and patients suffering as a result of the existing pressures on the system and the backlog. There is no slack in the NHS, so while the number of Covid hospitalisations today is much lower than last winter, we must not risk complacency by ignoring the rapid doubling of omicron cases every 2 to 3 days, which may result in hospital admissions in the weeks to come. This threatens to overwhelm the health service and could have a major impact on the NHS’s ability to cope this winter.*

*“Today’s measures - particularly those encouraging people to work from home again - are sensible, but it’s also vital that Government ensures it is made as simple and easy as possible for people to receive their booster, or even their first and second jab - especially in vulnerable groups or among those where uptake is lower.*

*“We understand why some people might feel frustrated at the reintroduction of new measures but by acting now we can save lives, reduce pressure on the NHS and avoid more draconian restrictions in the future.”*