



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Maggie Throup MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Vaccines and Public Health*

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Iain Stewart MP

By email to: iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk

22 March 2022

Dear Iain,

Thank you for your correspondence of 12 January on behalf of a number of your constituents, about COVID-19 vaccination status certification. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I am grateful to you for sharing your constituents' concerns.

Since 27 January it is no longer mandatory for venues to require attendees to demonstrate their COVID-19 status. However, some venues or events may still choose to require proof of COVID-19 status as a condition of entry to reduce risk for attendees and staff. People will be able to show their vaccination status, a recent negative test or exemption using the NHS COVID Pass.

From 1 April, the Government will remove the current guidance on domestic voluntary COVID-status certification and will no longer recommend that certain venues use the NHS COVID Pass. The domestic NHS COVID Pass will remain available within the NHS App for a limited period, to support the use of certification in other parts of the UK. The NHS App will continue to allow individuals to access their vaccination status for international travel, as well as their recovery status for travel to those overseas destinations that recognise it.

There are three options available to individuals for accessing their NHS COVID Pass. It can be accessed through the NHS App, the NHS website at www.nhs.uk or a letter from the NHS that can be obtained by calling 119. Recent test results can be shown on the NHS COVID Pass or as a text or email notification from NHS Test and Trace.

The Government has introduced a way for people to apply for medical exemption from either vaccination or vaccination and testing. This will ensure that those who are not able to get the vaccine or take a test for medical reasons are not disadvantaged. Those who participated in a formally approved COVID-19 vaccine trial in the UK can already demonstrate their exempt status using the NHS COVID Pass.

The possible reasons for medical exemption are limited. People can apply by calling 119 and requesting an application form, which should be sent to the GP, specialist clinician or midwife named on it; they will then review it.

As set out above, the vaccination records contained in the NHS COVID Pass can be shown as proof of COVID-19 status when travelling abroad. Certification through the NHS COVID Pass for travel can also be acquired by proof of a positive NHS PCR test. Certification lasts for 180 days from the date of the positive test and must follow completion of the self-isolation period.

Before travelling abroad, people should check the entry requirements for their destination, as requirements for testing and vaccination can vary from country to country. Further details on entry requirements can be found at www.gov.uk by searching for 'coronavirus travel advice'.

Further guidance on using the NHS COVID Pass for travel abroad and at venues and settings in England can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-covid-pass.

On 31 January, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced the Government's intention to revoke the regulations making vaccination a condition of deployment in all health and social care settings, subject to consultation and the will of Parliament. This decision was taken in the light of the latest scientific evidence, considering the need to achieve public health and safety with the minimum number of restrictions. The Secretary of State's full statement can be found at www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-on-vaccines-as-a-condition-of-deployment.

When the Government first consulted on vaccination as a condition of deployment in the NHS and social care, the evidence showed that vaccine effectiveness against infection from the dominant Delta variant was between 65 and 80 per cent, depending on which vaccines were used. When the Government extended the regulations to health and care settings in November, the Delta variant represented 99 per cent of infections. Omicron has now replaced Delta as the dominant variant, at 96 per cent of cases. The latest evidence suggests that the risk of presentation to emergency care or hospital admission for Omicron is approximately half that for Delta.

The UK's vaccination and booster programmes are world leading. Over 31 million boosters have now been administered in England, and over 38 million in the UK, providing a high level of protection. This, coupled with lower levels of hospitalisation and mortality, suggests the population as a whole is now better protected.

Uptake of the vaccine by care workers and NHS staff has also been very positive. By 13 January, 94.3 per cent of NHS staff had received their first dose, and 91.5 per cent both doses, of a COVID-19 vaccine. In social care, 95.7 per cent of all care home workers had received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and 94.7 per cent were fully vaccinated.

The changes in the pandemic as a result of the Omicron variant, and the continued success of the vaccination programme, mean it is right that we revisit the balance of risks and opportunities that guided the Government's original decision last year.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maggie Throup', with a stylized flourish at the end.

MAGGIE THROUP MP