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All-Party Group on Coronavirus – Oral Evidence

Transcript by Communique Communications Ltd

4th May 2021

Layla Moran MP

Welcome everybody, good morning, to the All-Party Group on Coronavirus Evidence session on vaccine passports. We are really grateful for all Parliamentarians joining us, but especially grateful for of course our panellists. We will have two sessions in the first session we will be looking at the epidemiology public health aspect of this and in the second session we will be looking more at its effect on industry. Each session will last about forty-five minutes.

So, I will start by first introducing our esteemed panellists. First, we have Professor Stephen Reicher, member of SAGE sub-committee advising on behavioural science, Professor of Psychology at the University of St Andrews and an independent member of SAGE. Welcome back Stephen, it's great to have you with us. Thank you.

We have also got with us Professor John Drury, professional psychologist specialising in the collective behaviour at the University of Sussex. Welcome John, thank you for joining us. And also Doctor Tolullah Oni, Public Health Physician Scientist and Urban Epidemiologist, a Clinical Senior at research Fellow at the Units Global Public Health Research Programme and also a member of independent SAGE. So, thank you all three for joining us.

And I will start by asking a question of all of you. As always please don't repeat if possible what others have said if you agree with them. Definitely tell us if you disagree with someone, with what they said. First one, just to be broad, what is your core understanding of a vaccine passport both internationally and domestically and should we even be considering this? Perhaps I could start with Stephen.

I'm afraid to say you are on mute Stephen. Sorry.

Professor Stephen Reicher

You would have thought I would have learnt by now.

You can be a Professor and not know how to turn on your microphone.

So, the first thing is in many ways I think part of the problem we have is that we have conflated all sorts of very different things leading to a very confusing debate in the... so sometimes people refer to vaccine passports, which are contingent upon perhaps having one perhaps two jabs. Sometimes people are talking about tests, which can be lateral flow or PCR. Sometimes people are talking about evidence of antibodies that you have had an infection in the past. So that dimension is very different and the other dimension on which things vary is what the so-called passports will be used for. Will they be for the international travel. Will they be a matter of restricting what we might call exceptional activities, such as going to a football game, will they be used to restrict everyday activities like going

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to a bar going to a restaurant. Will they be used to restrict essential activities like going to a supermarket or going to your job? And these have very different implications that are understood in very different ways by people.

So, I think what we need is to be precise in what we are talking about and in what is being proposed. Because I think one of the critical issues, for me one of the most critical issues is how are they understood by people. Are they understood as a measure which is there to help them, to open things up, to look after their health or are they seen as something which in effect imposes particular things in particular, are vaccines going to become compulsory because once things are seen as compulsion they are seen as something that is done to you rather than for you and can generate resistance? And that takes me to my second point. In many ways if everybody was vaccinated, we wouldn't need a vaccine passport we could presuppose that you are vaccinated and so in many ways a vaccine passport well here I am specifically talking about vaccines are a response to failure. They are acknowledging we are not getting enough people vaccinated and if on top of that the sense of compulsion puts people off, not only historically but there is contemporary evidence as well suggesting that particularly for people who have doubts who are hesitant the sense that this is compulsory could actually lead people to be more alienated then they become a real problem. For me I think the key issue that most of us would accept is to reopen our society the critical issue is to up the rate of vaccination and that depends upon community engagement if a particular intervention, a particular form of vaccine passport creates alienation and undermines the level of vaccine take up then its counter-productive then that limits our ability to make people safe and limits our ability to re-open a society at every level.

Layla Moran MP

So, what just to follow up on that and I will come to the other panellists. So, what kind of vaccine passport would not illicit that negative response you are talking about?

Professor Stephen Reicher

Well on the whole when you look at the evidence and in fact, I was talking to some colleagues who had just completed a very large poll of 17,000 people are working on the analysis even as we speak, so preliminary results. But they merge with results people get elsewhere. So, things like travelling internationally is on the whole seen as something which is not a necessity. It is for some people by and large it isn't, and therefore people accept that it might not be unreasonable to have vaccine passports and we are used to it, of course, going to some countries require a vaccine passport. It gets more controversial when you get into the realm of things like going to a football game, going to an event, going to the pub, going to a restaurant. In particular if you look at going to a pub or going to a restaurant, the figures suggest that it varies between different groups. So, groups which have more of a history of if you like of troubled relationships with Government and the State are more suspicious. So younger ages groups see vaccine passports to go to the pub to go to a restaurant to go to non-essential shops, they see them as more of an attack on liberties. Black people see them as more of an attack on liberties. 47% do compared to 33% of white people. Younger people see vaccines as in effect as compulsory when you make them necessary for going to the pub and to restaurants and so upon.

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And again, so do black people. So, 59% of black people see it as in effect compulsory when necessary, to go to the pub and go to restaurants whereas amongst the white population it's 37% so the danger is we are alienating precisely those groups where vaccine take up isn't high and we should be doing more to engage with them. There is also incidentally a difference between countries so many people use international comparisons. And people may raise, for instance, the Danish Corona Pass which is talked about quite a lot but one critical factor there is Denmark is a high trust society, some 75% of people trust others and trust the State and don't question vaccines, see them as done for us, don't see them as an act of compulsion imposed upon you. Sadly, in this country levels of social trust have fallen to about 35% and so there is more suspicion and that is why it is so dangerous to do things which lay into those suspicions, lead people to see vaccines as something that is an act of compulsion imposed upon them and therefore alienate them precisely where we need to be getting such people on side and getting them to get vaccinated.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you, Stephen that really is very helpful. John, what's your opinion.

Professor John Drury

So, thanks. First of all, I agree with what Stephen has said but my comments to this question and the other questions today are based upon three sorts of evidence. The first is a rapid review of studies was carried out and the end of last year. Going back over the last year or so the studies that have looked at public responses, possible public behavioural responses to passports and various thoughts. Over thirty studies included in our review.

Secondly there is the evidence from existing schemes, so Steve mentioned Denmark, which is most well documented, is Israel. And the third source is what we know from what is already happening in the UK with testing and vaccination which informs possible passports. So, three points in response to the question.

So these schemes are intended and if they work will make enable more safe access and more activities for more people but by definition they exclude people and it is likely that some groups will be excluded more than other groups And as Steve said, there is public there is a lot of evidence that public do support them for some areas of activity international travel. Live events I'm not so sure but we can come on to that but certainly not for others like going to the pub, going to the shops and certainly not for work.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you very much John. And Tolullah. What' your opinion.

Dr. Tolullah Oni

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Thanks. Firstly, I agree with what's been said so far but I want to contextualise it from a public health perspective in terms of infectious disease control so contextualise the discussion of vaccine certificates and vaccinations within that context. So, what are we are trying to achieve, essentially trying to reduce the risk of infection, the risk of transmission, the risk of exposure? We know that those are premised on three factors so characteristics of the host, so the human beings themselves, the agent, so the virus and the environment. And that is the triangle so when we are thinking about infection control, we are thinking about it all the time. I say that because it is important to contextualise our vaccines the vaccinations within that so the vaccinations are a key part of the host aspect, having hosts that are immune but have demonstrated protection against severe disease against reduced risk of transmission, the critical role that vaccinations play. But it is also important to contextualise the context of the environment, right, so the exposure, the risk of exposure as well as the characteristics of the virus as well in terms of how it mutates and the different variants and how that impacts on the immunity of the host as well as the environment and transmissibility.

Now I say that because when we talk about certification, first question we are asking is where does where do vaccinations sit within that and we know that vaccinations play a really critical role, and they are key in our armoury but not a silver bullet so then we are thinking about how does that complement strategies to reduce exposure risk and make spaces safer. What strategies can we put in place to reduce the risk of the agent mutating in ways that it can evade our the progress we have made with the vaccine. And then we are secondarily, what contribution does the vaccine certificate make towards that.

And the challenge is, at the moment the way things stand, is that scientific perspective there are a lot of uncertainties around, a wide variation in the effectiveness of different types of vaccines, durability of immunity, the emergence of variants and the variability and effectiveness against those is unknown. And even when we are talking about the domestic use, I think it is important to contextualise, my colleagues have mentioned talked about international and domestic. We also have to contextualise the fact that because when we are talking about domestic use, we are not just talking about vaccinations received in this country by residents of this country so day to day you know is this is a hub so you have people who would have been vaccinated elsewhere with different vaccines with different certification so actually also when we are talking about domestic use it is important we would have to recognise those challenges would need to be navigated. So ultimately, thinking about the primary goal of reducing infections, reducing transmission, and reducing [inaudible 0:17:16] mortality it is really important to contextualise within that.

Layla Moran MP

So, I'm just trying to summarise here. So, if the argument is that vaccine passports help the public health response to this virus or at least mitigate some of the risks against opening up with a public health response, what I am hearing from you is that kind of the jury is still out on that or are you even more sceptical than that and saying actually that it is still quite risky, and we shouldn't do it. What is your opinion on where we are with that scale or actually this is a great idea and we should do it and the Government has got it right or actually it really shouldn't be because it is not the right approach? What what is your view if I could try to pin you somewhere on that spectrum.

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Dr. Tolullah Oni

Sure. So, I think the timing is really critical . So, my position will evolve with time, so we are talking about where we are at the moment. And where we are at the moment is that we are still rolling out and doing a really good job at that still rolling out vaccinations across eligible adults. We still have significant pockets of populations that where uptake is not as high as it could be, and it would need to be. We are still at a point where we are not, despite the fact we are going we are going into summer and we can be pushing things outside we are not doing well enough in thinking about the standards and support for the standards we need to place around ventilation because you know the primary rate of transmission is aerosol and there is strong evidence to support that. So where we are at the moment my position would be that given where we are at the moment the strategy, the most effective strategy at the moment would be optimising those controls that we know are are would be effective so supporting those the community effort and thinking creatively about how we can address the vaccine in equity within the country thinking about strategies to make public spaces safer so increase confidence and pushing activities outdoors even as we go to summer and then a few months down the line, if we are at the point where we are saying everybody is vaccinated who can be where we are saying we are doing all we can to keep indoor spaces safe by putting in these ventilation, we are doing all we can to support global access to reduce the risk of emergence of agents, so I'm going back to the triangle of the agents, the environment and the host then we are in a better position to say OK, what are the critical issues we would need to address certification to make sure that support in being able to show evidence of vaccination because we do want everybody to be vaccinated who can be.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you. Baroness Brady.

Baroness Brady

Thank you Chair. Morning everyone. I just really want to understand if I have understood you correctly Stephen. Are you saying that vaccine passports become irrelevant for domestic use if the vaccine uptake is high or infection is low? And Tolullah, to your point, are you saying that now is not the right time regardless for vaccine passport to be produced if you are saying that and you're saying you want to wait a few months, how long do you think we ought to be introduced for.

Professor Stephen Reicher

Do you want me to start and then go to Tolullah?

Baroness Brady

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Yes please.

Professor Stephen Reicher

So logically if everybody is vaccinated, you don't need a vaccine passport because you know people are vaccinated. You need vaccine passports, only when there is limited uptake and if the suggestion of a vaccine passport for basic activities reduces the proportion of people who are willing to get vaccinated then it becomes counter-productive. Now the evidence I was talking of and as I say this is data being analysed at the moment so it is clearly needs to go through peer review and so on, but it is telling us over all that will vaccine passports affect your willingness to take the vaccine it does not have a negative effect. However, that's the entire population including those who have definitely made their minds up that the population that matters is of those who are hesitating so don't say definitely yes and don't say definitely no. And if you look at those, the ones we need to persuade to get vaccinated then actually the suggestion of a vaccine passport for these every everyday activities, going to the pub and so on reduce the uptake and they reduce that willingness more in more marginal communities or communities which are, that have a worse historical relationship with Government and with the state. Black populations and so on.

So, it does look from the evidence that we have that the critical populations who you want to get on board you are actually pushing away in this sense and therefore you are undermining our key strategy to get people vaccinated. Also, if you don't have people vaccinated the problem isn't simply in pubs it is everywhere and therefore you are creating greater problems in society as a whole so I would echo what Doctor Oni has been saying, which is right now I think the key strategies we need is to get everybody vaccinated and to make spaces safe. And vaccine passports generate heat, controversy, division at a time when we need clarity, we need unity and we need everybody singing from the same hymn sheet. So, in some ways I find them counter-productive but in some ways, they are a distraction. They are not helping us move forward at this point in time.

Baroness Brady

Thank you, Doctor Oni.

Dr. Tolullah Oni

Thank you for that question and your question speaks of the exact challenge as one thing we have learnt through this pandemic is how quickly science and knowledge evolves and the importance of evolving with it and recognising what we know now and what will emerge. So, the question you have about how long certifications would last for, I don't know because we don't have information yet on how long immunity will last with vaccination, whether that varies with different vaccines. We don't know whether that varies with different predominant variants and so that information will emerge in the coming months because we will be getting to a point where we will have vaccinated [inaudible 0:24:31].

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We've had for a longer period than we followed up doing the trials. So as that it emerges, we will get a clearer picture whether, whether vaccination certification would be feasible in the context of how long immunity lasts for, how specific they would need to be to different vaccines and for where different ways of circulating variants that are dominant. So, all that we don't have at the moment so my short answer is I don't know and that is part of the challenge and whilst on the other hand we have some clarity of interventions that we know are effective and we know that we could be doing more of so in the context of prioritising that is why I don't think it will be a priority for the moment.

Baroness Brady

Thank you very much.

Layla Moran MP

Caroline Lucas.

Caroline Lucas MP

Thank you Chair. To come back to Tolullah, if I could start with you. Some people would say that vaccine passports would protect us in future lockdowns. I wonder what your response is to that and in particular how the passports, if they were to be introduced, should fit alongside other suppression policies.

Dr. Tolullah Oni

Thanks, the lockdowns we are all tired of them aren't we and that really is not the intention. If we get back to the first principles what we are aiming to do is reduce infections, reduce transmissions, reduce ill health and reduce deaths. So, if we work through that and we are in a pandemic, so I am afraid we can't talk about local without talking about global as unless we assign ourselves to being cut off from the World, which we cannot do. So, the first thing, and this is how I would think through it, at the global because we are in a pandemic, we have the current vaccination access both being inequitable and inefficient and we can do a lot more in this regard because we can't cut ourselves off, we have to accelerate our efforts to address the vaccination, vaccine access globally. So that's the first thing.

Locally, I think vaccines do play a critical role in controlling this pandemic, but as I referred to earlier, which can't really be considered as silver bullet because it's part of the toolkit here in reducing the infection. What else is part of the toolkit, well, if we are resuming activities over the summer well how do we reduce exposure, we increase ventilation particularly indoors, we can put in place standards in place for ventilation as that's where the risks are greatest. As we continue, we are likely to have local outbreaks and depending on the emergence of new variants, which may or may not be more infectious

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or may or may not be more transmissible, which may or may not evade immunity we would need a really strong system of being able to quickly identify cases to trace who they have been exposed to, to isolate with support for cases and contact. That will be really critical in avoiding a lockdown as the reality is, as long as there is a pandemic there will be infections going on and as long as we are not cut off from the world, we will get new cases going through. So, the critical thing is how do vaccines keep a greater proportion of our population immune, and we can really augment that by ensuring we prevent transmission by having a strong tracing system in place.

Caroline Lucas MP

Thank you. Can I see if Stephen or John had anything to add to that?

Professor Stephen Reicher

Well I guess, well the first point is there is a danger of being terribly parochial in the way in which we look at the pandemic. And let's not forget that last week was the ninth straight week that global cases have gone up. It was the worst week in the history of the pandemic, nearly 6 million people were infected and there were as many infections last week as there were in the first five months of the pandemic. So, we are far from out of things and as Tolullah says, this is something that goes around and comes around. We were a little bit complacent back a year ago when we saw it in China, well that was a long way away, and then in Italy, well that was still abroad, and then it came here. And it can again come here. So, we can't be complacent.

And the other thing is, let us not forget that two months ago the Prime Minister of India was saying well it was all over, we've got on top of the pandemic and if you are complacent then it can come back and bite you very badly. So I think the first point to be made here is yes things are going well here and we should be delighted at that but we must not make the mistakes that people have made elsewhere, including in countries where there has been high levels of vaccination such as in Chili. So we have got to deal with the global pandemic, and if there is one thing we can do in the pandemic it is to waive patent rights, because there is capacity around the world to manufacture vaccines but people can't because they are not allowed to. So, it's not just a matter of re-distributing the vaccine, we can't produce enough but that's ridiculous then to leave those factories lying empty. In Bangladesh, for instance, there is capacity, they have good vaccine capacity to produce enough vaccine for perhaps two and a half times their population, but they are not being allowed to do so. In many ways that is a vast scandal, millions of people are going to die for lack of the vaccine. And talking domestically, vaccine passports aren't going to stop the possibility of a new lockdown, vaccination is. So I come back to the point that if vaccine passports get in the way of vaccination they don't reduce, they increase the probability of a new lockdown but on top of that, again it is critical to make the point that vaccines on their own are not the whole story. They are a magnificent part of that story; we wouldn't be able to do what we might do without them.

However, number one, let's not forget that only a quarter of the population who have had two vaccinations. Let's not forget the fact that there can still be circulation of the virus that can do a lot of harm and generate new variants that could undermine the vaccine. So, we we need to suppress

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infections, so again I think there is very simply things we could be doing. We should be making sure that all spaces are safe, and people know they are safe. If you got to Pennsylvania in the US, they have a self-certification scheme, it is all online so you can see it, where each business can self-certify as meeting Covid standards and anybody can then go on the internet and look at what bars and restaurants around them have got proper ventilation and have proper safeguards. That increases confidence, that increases safety and increases footfall. We should be thinking how can we ensure spaces are safe. How can we give grants to businesses and in fact to homes for ventilation in the same way we used to give insulation grants? How can we help people keep themselves safe? Safe spaces. Then on top of that, as we open up more and people can circulate more it becomes ever more critical that if people become infected then they have got to self-isolate. And people still are not self-isolating as they practically can't do it. We can see positive schemes that give people those support which are very effective. You can see it in New York, but you don't need to go to New York, you need to go to Newham in London, and you can see those schemes working there. If you give people the support they need they will do the right thing and for the life of me I cannot understand why we are spending £37 billion on test and trace and not spending the money necessary to do the simple first thing on public health that if people are infected remove them from the train of transmission. There are lots of things we can do to bring the rate of infection down to keep us safe and to make sure that we don't have to go into restrictions and into lockdown.

Caroline Lucas MP

Really powerful. Thank you very much for that. Chair, I know you want to move on, but John, I've left you out.

Professor John Drury

Briefly, just to add to that, there is evidence from repeated surveys, very big sample showing that the one area of mitigation that is failing is find test trace isolating support and it is financial reasons. These are the reasons. It is the poorer at-risk people that are going out to work, going out of their homes when they are expected to self-isolate. That is the big gap to be fixed if something needs to be fixed or changed.

Dr. Tolullah Oni

Can I just add to that important remark because when we talk about that support sometimes we forget with vaccination access and access to vaccines in this country because its free we sometimes neglect the less obvious financial barriers to getting access, so whether or not you have a vaccination centre close to you that you can get to, whether or not you take a day off work to be vaccinated without having to take a day's leave so there are these visible barriers I think it is important, particularly in certain areas where there are more levels of deprivation and we don't dismiss people as being

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vaccination hesitant or sceptical and make sure we are actually addressing the visible and visible barriers of getting a vaccination.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you. I need to point out that we have theoretically twelve minutes left and five sets of questions to get through, which I don't think is going to happen. So, I do propose that we stretch it ever so slightly but ask panellists but also questioners to keep them very tight and a lot of things we have mentioned are things that have been explored in other sessions. Please keep it very centred on the vaccine passport issue and we will of course take all recommendations and all evidence we have heard in nearly a year now. So, if I could now go to Lord Strasburger.

Lord Strasburger

Good morning Chair and of course panel. We have already explored the psychological implications of the use of vaccine passports, but could they also generate a false sense of security for individuals entering risky premises and are there implications, long term societal implications from turning our society into a checkpoint society for everyday activities. I think I will go to John first if I may.

Professor John Drury

Thank you very much. Well vaccines themselves and passports can both create a false sense of reassurance if the communication or information around them isn't there. We already have some evidence of that. I mean in this rapid review I mentioned at the beginning there is a couple of studies, one of them looked at testing, and found that it is only a minority but a minority of people who get negative test results then go on to increase interactions with others which they are not supposed to be doing after the test result. And we saw after the first tranche of vaccinations in the UK, many people, there was a survey carried out, 40% of people over 80 were going out having ignored some of the restrictions and we saw in Israel that there was sudden spike in infections that was apostatise by people feeling falsely reassured. Part of the issue is communication, I mean I've had very variable reports from those people who have had those vaccinations and whether they have been getting any guidance on how they should behave after having had the vaccination and pretty psychological society produce some fantastic guidance. I mean some people do get the little booklet, if you look in the back of the little booklet it says carry on wearing a mask, carry on social distancing but some people don't get that booklet. We are only just getting the data now, there was the ONS data we got just over a week ago showing that vaccination does likely reduce transmission to some degree, but we are only just getting that evidence, so it is important to communicate what vaccination mean, and that it doesn't work for two weeks and so on I don't think there is enough communication about that given the celebration around the vaccination programme itself. And whether we turn into a checkpoint society I can't really comment except kind of speculatively that I that I guess to the extent that passports are seen as a way of monitoring that it does create the impression that we are not trusted, and that could be damaging on relations. I don't have any evidence on that so that is just speculative.

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Lord Strasburger

Thank you, John. Stephen, would you like to chip in.

Professor Stephen Reicher

So, number 1, I agree with John but if the rollout of information had been as good as the roll out of the vaccine we wouldn't have seen the bumps along the road and we wouldn't have some of the problems we have now. For instance, all the controversy about Astra Zeneca and the side effects would not have happened if as advised we would have had great clarity at the start telling people. Inevitably there are going to be side effects and adverse effects, but they are far outweighed by the benefits. As I say it shows us that the behavioural science and the communication must always be integrated with if you like the life science and the medicine. The two go really well, and if the two have gone well together then our response has gone well together. On the point of checkpoint society, again I could speculate but I have no more expertise than anyone else. The important thing however I think lies in the realm of perceptions. People, I think, are prepared to put up with exceptional small rules and regulations in a state of exception, and the pandemic is a state of exception. If, however they think those exceptional rules are intended to roll over beyond the state of exception into you know our everyday world then not only will it be unhelpful, but it will also undermine the extent to which they are willing to adhere with those restrictions in the pandemic. So, I think that it is another reason to make clear that this is not about compulsion, this is not about undermining civil liberties, this is absolutely about peoples' public health and is another basis for being worried about covid passports.

Lord Strasburger

Thank you. Tolullah did you want to say something?

Dr. Tolullah Oni

I just want to look ahead at the future as well because one of the things we have learnt from this pandemic is the importance of a trust in society before a health emergency. So, if we are talking about and intervention that could potentially alienate and aggravate levels of mistrust, we need to be thinking about that not just about this pandemic but what is to come. This is an exceptional situation and by no means the last health emergency we will face, so the work about building that community trust for the future starts now and this is what we are doing. So, we are building trust for this pandemic but also future health emergencies. So, we need to be very careful about compromising trust that is only very slowly and painstakingly being built during this pandemic.

Lord Strasburger

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Thank you that is a very good point. Back to you Chair.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you very much. Philippa Whitford.

Philippa Whitford MP

Thank you Chair. If I could go to Stephen and then John and Tolullah can add if there is anything additional. Stephen you suggested that vaccine passports come close to making vaccination mandatory which the UK has always avoided and just picking up Tolullah's point about the impact that could have on the vaccination uptake in the future, so do you feel that vaccine passports shouldn't be introduced domestically to avoid alienating the groups you mentioned which might have lower uptake and are you anxious about the discrimination or exclusion of younger adults who might not be fully vaccinated until September or October.

Professor Stephen Reicher

As I say, for me it is very much a matter of perceptions as I speak as a psychologist. And it is the perception that something being compulsory which will render it as counterproductive. And that's why this isn't an issue of philosophy, not an issue of ethics it is an issue of empirically looking at the communities we need to get vaccinated and asking what the impact will be. The empirical evidence does suggest that those communities with a history of a lack of trust in our institutions are more likely to perceive vaccines as compulsory. As you may know, there was a report, I think it was in 2020, of a committee of the Lords and the Commons on racism, which showed a deeply depressing statistic that 60% of black people in Britain consider that the NHS pays less attention to their health than that of white people. We have a historical experience of being treated differently and a historical mistrust and we have to acknowledge that in asking what the impact of these measures will be. The evidence does indeed seem to suggest that those communities that we need to draw in, and those communities that we need to persuade that this is being done with them and for them begin to perceive this is being done to them and imposed upon them, and that then makes things counterproductive and makes things counterproductive moving forward because one of the great dangers as many people have pointed out recently, the money running the trust and others is there is a real danger that this pandemic will become a pandemic of inequalities, with certain pockets of marginal communities and deprived communities in which people are more exposed and people are less vaccinated and in fact it is not an issue of for instance age or ethnicity, the two intersect.

So, if you look at figures for levels of vaccination it is much higher for white groups and black groups and all age groups but differential amongst the 80s are about 20% the differential for 50s to 54s, which is the last group for which we have full data, is about 30% so we have got to be very careful not to exacerbate that and not to increase issues of inequalities through measures that exacerbate mistrust. And I just want to make one point, in Israel a lot of people talk about the green pass and they talk

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about the impact of the green pass. Looking at the data actually when people were asked the green pass did not have not have much effect on willingness to have vaccine update, the things that did work were community engagement like going to communities, taking vans to people, taking Tolullah's point on the practicalities, taking in experts who could go into people's houses explain things to them, deal with their concerns so absolutely community engagement becomes more and more critical to deal with the pandemic to make sure we don't have pockets of this deprivation and yet again I come back to my point of concern with vaccine passports is precisely at the moment where we desperately need that engagement it can foster a greater degree of alienation and that is not going to help anybody.

Phillipa Whitford MP

Particularly as you say we are trying to win the hesitant vaccinated rather than to drive them away. We are very short of time; I don't know whether John or Tolullah have a short comment that want to add to what Stephen has said.

Professor John Drury

Just briefly the evidence on uptake in relation to whether passport services are an incentive or disincentive vaccination does depend, survey does show that it depends on the type of activity allowed so if it is for international travel and care homes it is going to motivate people, but it does interact with population. There was a report from Denmark yesterday, and Denmark is a country most ahead in terms of this system and there is a quote from somebody suspicious of people already suspicious and people we want to persuade, and the quote is 'what they are doing right now is forcing you to take a vaccine'. That is how it was perceived and as Steve says that is how its perceived.

Layla Moran MP

So, can I just interject, to make sure I am absolutely clear about this, one of the arguments for the vaccine passport, possibly the strongest, that it is incentivises people to take the vaccine. What I am hearing from your evidence is that we risk the opposite happening.

Professor John Drury

It's not just the strongest argument, I mean it's just one main benefit, a side effect. The rationale has always been in terms of making more space, more places available for more people. It was thought of as a possible green pass scheme in Israel but as Steve says it is not even being properly imposed over there so it is one possible benefit, but it hasn't been the main rationale.

Phillipa Whitford MP

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Is it not more, that it's instead of waiting until September or October, when as Stephen said we expect the vast majority of people to have been vaccinated and wouldn't need the passport, it is trying to accelerate the economic opening without waiting for that?

Professor Stephen Reicher

Can I just respond to Layla's point? There is a very traditional well known psychological process known as reactants that if you take away people's autonomy, if you force them to do something they will reassert their autonomy even if that means not doing things that they would otherwise want to do. And any parent knows that as if you say to your child you must go to bed, and even though they are desperate to go to bed and their eyelids are drooping they are going to stay up to assert their autonomy. And that is not just true of children, that is true of all of us therefore that's why it can undermine an activity that you would otherwise do and that's why you are making something compulsory, or at least doing something that leads to the perception of compulsion can actually undermine activities that otherwise people would do and might even want to do. So my answer to your question Layla is it is debateable how essential the criteria was but I think it certainly is true that when you come to incentivisation then vaccine passports precisely for those groups who are hesitant, right, so the groups you are trying to persuade probably are counterproductive and the evidence I am seeing at the moment is saying they are, particularly for those marginal groups like the black population in the UK.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you so much. Barbara Keeley.

Barbara Keeley MP

Sorry Tolullah was trying to add a comment.

Layla Moran MP

Sorry, yeah, we are already over time everybody. So Tolullah if it is vital go for it but otherwise, we need to move on.

Dr. Tolullah Oni

It is a point that hasn't been raised as we have talked about unintended consequences and alienating based on peoples experiences around age and race and people's experiences with the NHS. I just wanted to add an additional unintended consequence, also experiences of how these things are also enforced. Right, so even in the context of legislations of something that seems fairly innocuous we know from people's experiences that they are not equally enforced. Right, so you have you know

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differences in experiences by age and race as well so that's another potential area for divisiveness not just in having to have the vaccine passport but actually how access is enforced so I just wanted to highlight that.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you, really appreciate it. Barbara Keeley.

Barbara Keeley MP

Chair, well I just want further clarification really. Professor Reicher talked about the impact of vaccine passports on hesitant groups if they were introduced for everyday activities and Layla's just clarified that but let's just get to the point is there a different reaction for different uses because I think you talked earlier on that there is an acceptance for international travel but not for everyday activities. Is that true of hesitant groups as well as across the population. And an extra point, will Covid certification that includes prior Covid19 infections actually encourage to any extent deliberate exposure to the virus so you know that people can get a vaccine passport based on the fact they have had it.

Professor Stephen Reicher

Well the answer to those two questions as we are limited to time. Number 1, yes and number 2 I don't know.

Barbara Keeley MP

Yep, OK.

Professor John Drury

Number 2, yeah there is evidence from the survey. Five out of six surveys have looked at that questions and found that that the minority of people might self-infect in order to get a Covid passport and that was more likely amongst younger groups and people in mcjobs. However, that is simply report data and hypothetical question, whether it will happen in real life I don't know. That's in the review I shared earlier.

Barbara Keeley MP

Yeah. Tolullah, anything to add?

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Dr. Tolullah Oni

No.

Barbara Keeley MP

Ok, thanks.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you so much. Simon Russell. Lord Russell.

Lord Russell

Just very quickly, on the basis of what we heard, if you had to synthesise that into one or two sentences, which is if the Government asked you what you thought should actually happen now with vaccine passports, what would you say? Stephen first.

Professor Stephen Reicher

I would say, right now, I would say concentrate on increasing levels of engagement and vaccination in those communities where it is relatively low and concentrate on making spaces safe and giving people the information on what spaces are safe.

Lord Russell

Thank you. John?

Professor John Drury

Yes, if society is happy to go ahead with the impacts known and the expected inequalities. I can't see how those inequalities can be fixed within a passport scheme.

Lord Russell

Thank you. Tolullah?

Dr. Tolullah Oni

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Yes, I think very similar to Stephen. I think purporting local communities and increasing vaccination and including enhancing access, confidence, and convenience [inaudible 0:52:49] observed. Support with enhancing tracing and supporting isolation and encouraging activities outdoors especially as we are moving into summer. Making riskier indoor spaces safe with standards and supporting businesses in increasing ventilation or air cleaning. Think those would be the priorities and then giving the broader global context as well. Supporting the global, improving the global vaccine inequity.

Lord Russell

Thank you.

Layla Moran MP

Well thank you panel. We pulled it back at the end and we are only six minutes over, so I am incredibly grateful to everyone who has asked questions and of course to the panel for answering questions. So, Tolullah, to John and to Stephen you are always very welcome to stay for part 2 where we are going to be talking to industry reps and but equally you are very busy people. So, if you would like to step off, we shan't be upset by that. Thank you so much for your incredibly inciteful, as ever, contributions. Incredibly helpful so thank you.

So now I will move to the second half of our panel today. And I am just going to find the papers. Oh, here they are. So, it is with great pleasure that I introduce Bill Bush, welcome Bill. Bill is the Executive Director of the Premier League, former Senior Advisor to prime Minister and to the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport. Thank you so much for being with us. We really appreciate it. We also have Henk van Klaveren, Head of Public Affairs at the Airport Operators Association, the AOA. The AOA is the trade association for UK airports and is the principal body engaging with the UK Government and Regulatory Authorities o airport matters So welcome to you too. And finally, we have Paul Nuki who is the Global Health Security editor at the Telegraph, a senior British Journalist who has extensively covered the Coronavirus pandemic, including the use of Covid Passports in the travel industry so welcome all of you. And I will start with a general question to all. In your opinion is it safe for mass gatherings and international travel to commence this summer, and if so, how important are vaccine passports to get a return to international travel or mass gatherings. Perhaps Bill could we start with you.

Bill Bush

I was hoping to come third! I am quite happy to kick off.

Premier League is what it is. We are a football competition. We have 380 matches a season. We have two match rounds at the end of this season at the end of May where we have been given permission to have some fans back but at a restricted capacity. So, a maximum of 25% or 10,000, whichever is the lower. And actually because of the nature of the stadium, some are much more, much better ventilated for example than others got much better transport facilities and so on. The actual capacity

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will be under the restrictions, we will be down to about seventeen, eighteen percent or so, at which point a number of clubs will be losing money on staging the event so it will be done for football and connecting with the fan reasons rather than as a commercial enterprise.

Our season starts again in August, when obviously when substantially a larger proportion of the population will be vaccinated and obviously, we all hope prevalence numbers will fall. Partly perhaps because ventilation is so much easier in the summer, but we hope as a winter sport for longer term reasons too. Our approach to this is an ideal outcome would be for full reopening to take place because prevalence is so low that it is unnecessary to go any further in terms of social distancing, lockdowns or any combination of the two. We do support some form of certification for our events, and I can speak as well for major sporting events and major commercial entertainment industries because we have been discussing this matter with them extensively over the last few months. We do think the system ought to be a universal one, vaccination alone would not be sufficient because of its divisive in nature and any way vaccines are not fully effective in themselves and there are problems with younger people and those who can't be vaccinated for medical reasons. A universal system which is being used to some extent in travel and at schools is testing, and we are well aware of course that lateral flow testing, self-administered is not that effective, it has some positive impact but not to our standards. So, our approach would be, or what we want to know for the large number of people that attend football matches is that the prevalence is low and those attending can feel reasonably safe from the people that they will mingle with, and they themselves have been tested or vaccinated and pose a low risk. Not merely to the people in the stadium at the event but in travel to and from, in the high streets getting refreshments etc. as they approach the ground and leave it. If we cannot increase the capacity beyond the 17% I mentioned earlier then the economics of the commercial entertainment industries is completely destroyed and we are substantial employers. The Premier League alone employs about 100,000, often in relatively low-income jobs in hospitality and security and stewarding and so on. We are an important part of the earnings of the demographics who serve our events. We are the ultimate gig economy from the 19th century onwards. Clubs play once every ten days in season; we don't provide continuous employment to a high proportion of our employees. And so, we are faced with social distancing with all the restrictions of personal freedom and restrictions on economics and employment and so on that go with social distancing. Lockdown, which is disastrous for commercial entertainment, we can see that suffering they had had and the losses they have made. Without furlough, high unemployment would have followed. Or we have low prevalence which may be a very long-term objective given what we just heard about problems around the world. Or we go to some sort of managed living with Coronavirus circumstance, in which we believe provided testing can be delivered for a wide arrange of populations, providing they know it is purely voluntary, and if they wish to go to an event, it's a way of increasing capacity so more fans can attend. The testing is burdensome, it is also expensive, it has to be paid for by the event attender and so vaccination confirmation, provided it is provided voluntarily can be a substitute for requiring testing evidence. This enables those who want or need or prefer testing rather than to disclose their vaccination status know there is a system they can use. For a major sporting event, say 50,000 turn up, if all 50,000 have to be tested then the infrastructure is only really there for self-administered testing and so it makes sense, logical, practical sense for everyone to be required to test except for those who can demonstrate they have had a vaccination. And obviously it is easy or easier for us to say that when the main point that would become necessary for us is August 14th when our season starts, when vaccination will have

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much better penetration. We do understand that the summer sports looking at the challenges of this summer with a partially vaccinated population don't have our timeframe to be worried about.

Layla Moran MP

Bill, can I do a quick follow up, so the costs of testing is borne by the event rather than the state. I did not realise that was the case. Did I understand that correctly?

Bill Bush

It could of course be borne by the State. I think though in the long term if testing is going to continue then either State needs to say living with Coronavirus means having a substantial capacity, therefore the State will invest in it for the long term. That clearly would erm...

Layla Moran MP

What is the situation right now? As you understand it.

Bill Bush

Very few fans are attending, I mean when they do attend later this month. I'll come back to the events research programme in a moment but for the reality of sports, it is only two match rounds from 18th May until 23rd May where attendance will be allowed and that will be full social distancing, without testing and without any other certification. The events research programme which is underway now is a very carefully controlled and managed set of exceptions to that rule, and you may have on television that the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield had the, I think nine hundred people capacity, no social distancing but they had three tests. Attendance involved three tests. And you can see how that is both a time burden to get that done, the financial burden has to fall somewhere, either on the individual or on the State.

Layla Moran MP

Have you been told when to expect the results of that?

Bill Bush

It will be late in May, too late for us if you like, but in time for summer sports, and football included because there is a major international, the Euros, to take place with a number of matches here in England and in Scotland.

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Layla Moran MP

Thank you very much. Henk?

Henk van Klaveren

So, the airport operations association we represent UK airports and I think that from our perspective international travel this summer should be done on a risk base proportional approach. We support the idea of a traffic light system as the Government has set out. I think we have some concerns around the barriers still in place for travel for affordability of people to make use of that, but we do think that low risk countries, with low prevalence and high vaccine vaccination programmes underway should be possible to travel to over the summer. I think there really important economic and social reasons for the restart of aviation. About 4.6million jobs rely on aviation and tourism in the UK. But more broadly the range of companies that benefit from aviation, for visiting their clients opening new markets, particularly in a lot of other places, the personal touch remains an important one. And if we want it to be that outward looking Britain then we do need aviation and international travel to restart. I think a lot of focus in the media has been around holidays, but around a quarter of travel in 2019 was for visiting friends and relatives and there are millions of people out there in the UK at the moment who have relatives abroad, they may be close relatives: parents, grandparents; children; parents; siblings, that people haven't seen for at least twelve months. The travel corridors were helpful but were only to a limited number of countries and people may not have had the opportunity to see really close relatives. We want to be able to facilitate the holidays; we want to be able to facilitate the business travel and we want to be able to facilitate visiting friends and relatives.

Layla Moran MP

Hang on, on the vaccine passports point specifically, what is your sense of the timeline, when are they are going to be introduced and how are airports adapting to consider the international vaccine passports specifically.

Henk van Klaveren

You may have seen the European Commission's announcement yesterday. They are proposing that travel could be possible and there would be different regimes in place for those who are vaccinated and for those who are not vaccinated. In other words, vaccine passports are an inevitability. Countries will require them in one way or another. Some may not but a large number will for people arriving in the country. So, whether we have a view on whether they are the right thing or not for travel is actually, we just need to adapt to the reality that they are happening. The timeline in the UK, we heard the announcement last week, that the NHS app would be used in England. I think we have a number of points around that in that we need to ensure there is a four-nation approach, not just an England only approach. I think the Welsh first Minister was very strong on his views that it should be a four-

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nation approach. Over the weekend Scottish organisations have also come out for that four-nation approach to restarting travel and to use a single portal or app for enabling people to prove their vaccination status. But it is not just about vaccination status. We have seen that people will require proof of testing even if they are vaccinated. Again, that depends on the different entry requirements of different countries. Some require both.

Layla Moran MP

And Henk, if you probably know more about the detail of it than we do. Is it lateral flow testing or PCR testing or either or both that you are aware of will be the type of testing accepted?

Henk van Klaveren

That depends on the country. So different countries have different requirements. Some require PCR test, some require two tests, so for example a PCR and then a confirmation lateral flow test for travel. The Netherlands is such an example although they are relaxing that rule currently to fly to the UK because of our low prevalence they are being more relaxed about those rules. There are other countries that are actually saying lateral flow is also fine and then potentially a test upon arrival, similar to the UK system. But it really varies from country to country.

The NHS app, if it does indeed is used for that process as vaccination proof does need to include test results. Apparently, as we understand the proposals, does not but there are a number of industry apps out there is travel pass, the World Economic Forum's common pass. There are a number of solutions out there that combine both vaccine proof and test certificate proof or Covid-19 proof. The European Commission's Digital Green Certificate will certainly include all three of those. If the UK Government app to be aimed, you know a useful tool it needs to include similar measures. If not, it needs to be able to allow these other apps to pull out the vaccine data, to be able to be integrated in the industry solution. In terms of how it works for travel, it depends. The vaccine certificate will probably be useful in a digital format of boarding in the UK airports and upon return, the border force in the UK and Home Office made it very clear it will not accept these digital solutions. They will require at the moment paper-based solutions to prove what you have put into your passenger locator paper form. They are working very hard to try and digitalise the passenger locator form to ensure you can use it if you for example to get through the E-gate upon your return but that is not currently possible and indeed it needs to be possible and it needs to be possible really rapidly as the queues at the moment are unacceptable from a welfare perspective but also from a safety and security perspective. Other countries may or may not accept these digital versions at the border but again that will vary from country to country.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you very much that was very helpful. Paul, what's your opinion? Is it safe to travel and go to mass events at the moment do you think?

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Paul Nuki

I think a lot of it depends on the pilots they are running and the results, I think that is going to be absolutely crucial. I think it is very important to note on those pilots that everyone has to have a negative test before entering so it seems to me extremely unlikely that the pilots will conclude that a negative test or a vaccine certificate is not required. That's the logic of things. And that given, it seems to me that we need a system, as the gentleman before was making clear, that is administratively simple, and secure, and when I have travelled recently to Africa and back it is pretty evident that the system is anything but that. It is chaotic, its insecure, it makes very little sense, or it made very little sense to me as a consumer, and I think that unless that system is built to provide consumer confidence that it will unravel very quickly, and no one will pay any attention to it.

So, in many ways I think the challenge ahead is a delivery challenge is you like, an administrative delivery challenge. You know can they get these apps built in time. You know can they sync them to reliable data in time. And my big worry at the moment is that that doesn't look very likely and I think that the split between private and Government provision of test results, of vaccine results, is likely to make things much more difficult if we proceed with them. At the moment if you get a test, PCR or lateral flow, through the test and trace system, most of that now seems to be digitalised, it is held on a central system somewhere. And one can imagine that being pulled up into a central app. But at on entering the company, when I came back from Africa, you can choose between any provider you fancy on the internet and you sort of wave something at them that you've booked an appointment when you come in. But those results are not put into a central system it would be virtually impossible within the time period that we are talking about that they could be. So, it seems to me that there is some real delivery focus that Ministers need to think about.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you very much. Baroness Brady.

Baroness Brady

Afternoon everyone. I think both Henk and Bill have both said vaccine passports are going to happen, but we haven't heard how they are going to happen and in what form they are going to take. And I am asking if you have any information on that but also the consequences of data sharing with whatever form is going to be used and who is going to manage that and under which jurisdiction is it going to be managed. Perhaps to Henk first.

Henk van Klaveren

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So, because it is international travel, it is quite a complex question, and I will try and answer it as best as I can. At the moment we are not fully aware of the way the UK approach will be but as I understand it will be the NHS app that you can currently use to book your GP appointments. I have the app, I can see the first dose of my vaccine on that app. It is registered on the date I had it. It is about turning that into something usable for travel, so that could be in the same way you use a boarding pass, that you check-in and create a QR code that you can store in your phone's wallet, you can then show to the relevant people. That could be one way of solving that. I think the question about data sharing is the real key one and particularly when it comes to test results etc. You don't want to show your entire medical record, which is on the NHS app, you just want to show your vaccine or your test and how do you show it.

Now in the NHS system, the data sharing is already in itself a complex matter because of the various parties involved in the vaccination effort but I think Government is looking at that through Public Health England. Then it becomes the next stages to ensure say that four nation approach for the three other health systems are also sharing into the process so that as a consumer you don't need to download different apps depending on whether you are travelling from England or Scotland for example, which people do. So that then, so the way we see some other places going, the European Commission is currently setting out its approach to regulation, that should be on the books by 26th June and currently there are a number of trials ongoing around the Digital Green certificate. This will also use a form of QR code, most likely on your phone, but they have a different shelf-life. A vaccine QR code is essentially for a longer period of time because your vaccine is not changing but for every test you would have to generate a different QR code that would have to be scanned by the airline or at the border in the relevant system to check that you have got the right information there. The industry apps really are about voluntary data sharing. I am as a consumer downloading the travel pass or the Common Pass [inaudible 1:15:21] or one of the other solutions out there and I am authorising for certain data to be shared. There are a number of trials ongoing with those apps. Those apps tend to mirror the European app in the sense that they include vaccine, tests and Covid status, in terms of whether you have had it or not.

The UK one is currently only the vaccine one which I said is currently an issue. I think that sort of tries to answer your question but I know that I haven't fully done it but that is because a lot of it is in development. The European side of things will be finished by 26th June and it may be possible for non-EU citizens and only EU residents, that are country nationals, to be able to use it and to access it and be able to enter into the EU with that app. Exactly how that is working out is currently under development.

Baroness Brady

Thank you and before I go to Bill and if Paul wants to add anything, just a yes or a no please Henk. Given the problems we have seen with the contact tracing app, how confident are you in the ability for this to be developed by the summer?

Henk van Klaveren

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So, on the NHS app itself, I'm, as I say have already got the app and already got the first dose of the vaccine in the app. Turning it into something that is accessible is in my view, and I am not technically an expert, should be a relatively simple technical step. Whether they will be able to integrate a test result on it, I'm not as confident at the moment particularly as Government haven't said it will do that.

Baroness Brady

Well it won't work if they don't. OK Bill over to you.

Bill Bush

Obviously, delivery of the system is... it all depends on delivery. They are working very hard. About data handling and this that it is perfectly appropriate in the current circumstances for data to be handled for individuals by the NHS. We do not want to handle any of that data at all. The ideal system for us would be checking if information is held by our clubs organising their venue, and access to their venue. All the ticket system needs from a health point of view is a simple green light, red light, and that green light could be generated by confirmation of a vaccine, confirmation of a negative test within the relevant time period or confirmation of antibody status. The venue need not know which of those three questions was answered which turned up with the green light. So, the NHS app as it were was a matter for Government. We want data to be handled there rather than volunteered by individual consumers. The two systems talk to each other with a very simple QR code base system, which simply says yes or no. And only with a yes does the club tick it and the given status to the authority to allow entry, it's like its greyed out until the computer says yes at which point it becomes an actual functioning ticket. The way we are now is long way short of that capacity that capability.

Paul Nuki

I agree entirely that has to be the aim that whatever the venue, whether it is a passport checkpoint or into football stadium entry point, it needs to be a QR code that says yes or no, there is no doubt about that. I also have the NHS app; I would advise everyone to try and download it. It is a complicated process. It takes at least 24 hours verification at the moment. If 60million people, try to do it at once I recon it would extend to a month or two. And even once you have got it all downloaded and you can access all your vaccine data, it certainly is not in that format that is going to give a football stadium manager or a club manager a quick yes or no. And having worked a little bit on technology in the past, I know it's not a simple process, I know it's a doable process, but it is not a simple one, particularly when you are dealing with an app like the NHS app which contains all sorts of information about your previous prescriptions and diseases as well.

Layla Moran MP

Great, thank you very much.

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Now we go to Barbara Keeley.

Barbara Keeley MP

Well thank you Chair. Well it's a question to Paul Nuki again. You've been among the community of Journalists travelling during the pandemic, you have touched already on your experiences of arriving in the UK, you said it was chaotic, insecure and makes little sense to the consumer. Would vaccine passports, in your view, improve that process and you know potentially what else alongside them would stop it being those things?

Paul Nuki

I think so. I shy away from the term vaccine passports; I think the term Green Pass or Certificate is better as it encompasses the option of a vaccine or a negative test result. But again, I think the key for me as a consumer as it were if you know you have gone to the trouble of becoming vaccinated or gone to the trouble of being had a test, you really then don't want a four-hour queue at the airport where the authority is unable to quickly decipher whether what you have done is correct or not. I think this is the point the gentleman was making about a QR code which shares quickly to the terminal or the authority a yes or no. Just in the same way as you approach an airport initially with a boarding pass, you know you scan that boarding pass and it says yes or no and the gates open or they don't. You really want this digital solution, this green pass to be as efficient as that and that is a real technical challenge for the Government, I think.

Barbara Keeley MP

And do you see that happening in the timeframe that we need it?

Paul Nuki

I would be really delighted if it did happen, but the timeframes are very short now. People are booking flights in large numbers to travel early June, to Europe and beyond, so you know maybe but there is a lot of work to do in a short period of time and I think also the, you know how these systems work with our partners around the world is very important. Europe is developing a system, it's some way down the line now. We have got to make absolutely sure our system at a minimum works with that system and is not a sort of parallel thing of duplication because that would undermine confidence, I think.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you very much. Baroness Masham, are you there? No. Back to Barbara Keeley.

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Barbara Keeley MP

Thanks Chair. Well from your experience how does the UK's monitoring system compare to other countries. You've mentioned other countries you have flown in and out of. How does our monitoring system compare to that?

Paul Nuki

Well, so at the moment, when I last travelled everything was on paper. You get a test here, the doctor or the organisation sends you a result and you print it out. Very insecure. You could run it through your computer and put another name on it if you like. So, at the moment it is just based on trust. Certainly, in the UK at the moment that is the case in and out. In Cote D'Ivoire, where I was in West Africa, they had a more sophisticated system for departing the country. So, you got a test there through a central government set up and rather than giving you a piece of paper they either texted or emailed you a QR code that is then scanned at the airport and compared with the name on your passport. So, you couldn't board a plane in Code D'Ivoire with a simple forgery. And it was also a system that meant the system flowed much better.

Barbara Keely MP

Interesting to hear that thank you.

Henk van Klaveren

Can I just come into that from an operational perspective? I think that there are two things that we need to differentiate here. I think the NHS based approach is really about proving vaccine status abroad. It is for UK citizens to show that in the UK they have had the vaccine they potentially ideally for travel outbound that they can upload certificates they have had the requirement for the destination country. That is separate from how we enter the country at the moment.

The UK is not proposing travel passports in its Global Travel Task Force, which is England only I hasten to add, Scotland is not currently opening up. There are no differentiators in the GTT Report for people who have been vaccinated. Everybody in being treated the same. Everyone is tested upon arrival in all the tiers. And there are more tests if you are in the amber tier. And hotel quarantine if in the red tier countries. So, there is a kind of you have to do a test before you go, so you have a kind of people clear at that point of the virus and then a test upon arrival to confirm you continue to remain infection free. There is no differentiation there for the vaccination at the moment. That could come in at a later stage, there are review points for that but that is the status at the moment. In terms of how that then operates at the border, the NHS app would then not be needed because you don't need the vaccine status. What it's really about is about the right test result and have you filled out what is currently known as your Passenger Locator Form, which sets out where you have been, what you have done, test results you have booked in the UK to do. That is all a manual process at the moment. It's 100% manual checks at the border which is why you see significant queues. But in addition to the checks at

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the border the airline is also required to check it. They get significant fines of up to £2000 per passenger, per Passenger Locator Form failure or and a further £2000 if the airline hasn't checked the appropriate test certificates are in place. So, there is a double checklist, the airline that can't allow you to board unless you have the right required documents, haven't filled them out correctly and then there is the check at the border which is all manual. We do want this to be digitised. And it has to be digitised to manage travel. Even at the moment with percentage points on the normal travel that you would see it is unable to manage it. We see queues out on to the tarmac in certain airports because the Border Force is simply not able to cope with the limited resources that they are putting at the border and the lack of e-passport gates. They need to staff every desk, open every e-gate in order to allow this to happen. To do that they need to digitise the Passport locator Form and the test result better. They are working on that, but it is a slow process. They're aiming to have the e-gate upgrade that is necessary to allow this digitalisation to happen completed by the Autumn. And the Autumn is a preposterous deadline. It needs to be before the summer and but that is a real significant challenge given the resource available and the process required to be able to do this. So, I think we need to separate those two things out when discussing vaccine passports here because the NHS app will not solve the border.

Layla Moran MP

If I can just interject for one second. You said there was a review date for the erm...

Henk van Klaveren

Yes, as part of the Global Travel Task force there are several review dates. One is 28th June and then there is one on 31st July and then there is one 1st October. By the 1st of October where the review is done not so much on the countries that are on the list but on measures that are on the measures on each of the tiers in place. Again, I stress this is England only. Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland there is currently no roadmap on how international travel will start and similarly there is no approach on the four-nation basis for the vaccine passport which has to be the case.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you very much. Baroness Finlay.

Baroness Finlay

Thank you. I think I should start where you left off Henk and ask you about Covid Passports and certification for this international travel inbound as it isn't just the passport it is the other factors and I wondered what you feel the airports should be doing now to keep people coming in from low risk countries separated from those coming in from high risk countries and also separating out those who do not have the adequate paperwork from those who do to avoid the crowding. By having everybody

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in an internal area we heard in our first session you can get cross pooling of variants which may or may not respond to the vaccination programme that has been in the country anyway and therefore heightens the risks. So, what should airports or ports, immigration points specifically be doing differently.

Henk van Klaveren

I think there is one thing to bear in mind to the background of this question which is Government has presumably got the data for amber countries currently, but they are not amber, but they will be amber in the future. They are the kind of two- and eight-day tests. It would be very interesting to see how many people actually test positive on day two or eight of arriving. We haven't heard anybody, again not because Government hasn't announced it not because the data isn't there about how many people have tested positive in managed hotel quarantine and I think that the number is very low. Now the reason I think is for that is that actually travel is very arduous at the moment, people are only doing it for essential journeys and you are finding that it is particularly from red countries it is only the UK nationals and UK residents that can return. It is very small numbers of people travelling because of the significant requirements in place and those that do have to have a test before boarding and that is then checked by the airlines before they are allowed to board. In terms of what we can do in the border halls, I think there are two elements to this. We will see mixing of passengers for one reason only. A number of red list companies, the majority of them, have a flight ban on them. If you are a UK national wanting to return to the UK, as it is your right as a UK citizen, you have to fly somewhere else. You have to fly via a different airport, and you have to fly in with other people from other parts of the world. So, the mixing is already occurring relatively early on. But again, these people have been tested earlier on. Then the likelihood of them having the virus is significantly lower than they would if they were untested. At the airport, what needs to happen is you know. Airports are working their absolute hardest to try and manage these queues. But if you go to the sheer length of these queues of six to seven hours you run out of space there is very little you can do. What needs to happen is that Border Force needs to actually put what resources it has at the border to ensure they can manage the passenger numbers coming in. There are not many people travelling so it should be a highly manageable thing to do. That means that all the desks need to be opened, which they currently are not, and there needs to be e-passport gates in order to alternate significant numbers of these processes. Sorry yeah.

Baroness Finlay

I am just concerned that people need to be trained. Being an Immigration Officer isn't just being a supermarket delivery person. There's a lot of training needed. And the laws around immigration are really complex.

Henk van Klaveren

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They have the staff. They have had a huge Brexit uplift for a start, which then those people are by and large still in the Border force system. They are choosing not to fully staff the border and that is because of the exact details you would have to ask the Border Force but there is a process whereby they reduce the number of Border officials at the border from a Covid perspective, despite the fact that airports have to have things in place, they have screens, screens have been around desks for a long time not least because of to protect the staff from you know perhaps an irate passenger disappointed with the decision that the Immigration Officer gives them. The staff is there, the resource has not changed, it's just Border force have decided not to fully staff each desk at the moment. So, these are entirely possible to do I think if the processes are adapted to allow for that to happen.

Baroness Finlay

Ok then so just looking at passports for mass gatherings which may be slightly different. And Paul can I ask you whether your travel experience bears out what we are hearing from Henk in terms of passports and the requirements to link the data for vaccines and testing to the passport and where the delays are.

Paul Nuki

Absolutely my experience matches that description. When I arrived at Heathrow having travelled from the Cote D'Ivoire via Brussels it was just chaotic. You arrived at a huge arrival hall, filled with people, really packed and people in close proximity and in an unventilated environment for a long period of time. You couldn't hope to tick more Covid boxes, and the bottle neck was exactly what Henk was saying that there were too few people checking people's paperwork and the paperwork that needed to be presented wasn't a simple digital pass which pinged yes or no. So yeah, it's problematic from a health point of view and from a consumer confidence point of view. And also, I think you know that it is important you know summer is coming up fast but this issue with travel is going to last probably for three, four, five years and we need to build a system which is equitable and functional over that period otherwise we are really going to become one part of a two or three tier world.

Baroness Finlay

I am going to ask Bill then is anything transferable from tis travel to mass gatherings to make things easier and faster.

Bill Bush

Completely agree that digitalisation is at the heart of this. The way a football match works is people know the kick off time, they turn up and even when you try and stagger arrivals you have still got to get a large number of people in a fairly limited geographical space and then disperse them afterwards and so if a high proportion, doesn't have to be 100%, have some sort of very clear digital system which

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is, as Paul said, goes ping and lets you in then that would disperse the crowd or channel the crowd very quickly. If people were worried about the equity of that then people who don't have smartphones and so on, a small proportion, it could only be a small proportion could then be handled probably by prior arrangement. So, you don't have people leaving their phones behind and thinking they will just get through on a paper system so that's some people, a small minority, can be handled on paper or less than fully digital system. As I described earlier, the system that would work for domestic events, bearing in mind you are not dealing with international problems which Henk and Paul have mentioned, is one is where a simple green with a proper ticket for the event should be able to be combined digitally without much data handling to allow that ping to happen and to allow for that person to move smoothly through into the venue.

Layla Moran MP

Can I just interject as I say we are already a little over time? I'm keen to continue but I would like to also ask panellists if that is OK. We will aim to wrap up in about ten minutes or so and we have got another four questions left so do the maths, so please keep it tight. Back to you Baroness Finlay.

Layla Moran MP

Just wanted to ask Henk why the Border Force are responsible for all this paperwork, why not another group of people because this is about test and trace paperwork almost.

Henk van Klaveren

This is the UK Border regime. They are responsible for who the Government can let in. It is ultimately a Border Force decision. There are questions around you know, what first of all it would not be appropriate for airport staff to do it. We do not have the authority to do it. We cannot make someone show something plus if they don't have the required documents, what's an airport staff member supposed to do with that situation. It really has to be a Border Force role. They need to check that everybody meets requirements.

Baroness Finlay.

Thank you. Thank you Chair.

Layla Moran MP

Lord Strasburger.

Lord Strasburger

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Good afternoon. Last week this committee heard evidence about large scales appearance of fraudulent test certificates and vaccination evidence at the border of British airports, and it was apparent the staff there did not have the skills or the information to be able to distinguish between a fraudulent document from a genuine one, does that concern you because before you tell me the digital one will solve it I will say to you that there is a number of very qualified people who could knock up an app to mimic one of the many apps you've mentioned already to get around that. So, it is a concerning issue. So, what is your response to that. Shall we start with you, Henk?

Henk van Klaveren

Yes, I think that the skills that border Force have to stop the right certificates or not is really a matter for Border Force and I think there is a role for Government to ensure that they have the resource as well as the training necessary in order to be able to do this. What I would also say is we want people to have confidence in the system, we do think that some sort of digital solution by our trust providers will provide that role. Ideally, certain industry led initiatives do and can integrate into the airline processing system and reduce the risk potentially of people mimicking as you say. Ultimately, I think this is a matter for the Government to decide how they want to ensure that the system they have put in place is safe. In the same way that an airline staff, say someone tries to get through on a fraudulent passport and the airline staff cannot spot that and they're not penalised for that because ultimately, the Border force are the people with the right skills to be able to verify the document and ensure it is valid. It remains a Border Force responsibility.

Lord Strasburger

Thank you. Paul, what's your experience of this issue?

Paul Nuki

Well I don't doubt that I would be extraordinarily easy to fraud something at the moment and I don't think one can blame Border force unable to spot it. I mean the system at the moment asks you to have a test from anyone of 101 different providers, all on different paperwork and none of them very secure so the chap or woman at Border Force he/she could have no idea and the only way they could possibly double check is to spend a couple of hours to phone up to see who has put their signature on it. Somehow deciphering if they're a real person or not. So, the answer must be a more streamline system, so a small group of approved providers who are simultaneously making their data available to a system visible to Border Force. I do think that one area is very obvious where they could improve, I mean a lot of the queues I was standing in were held up because the UK have a requirement that you have organised tests for day two and day eight after your arrival in the UK and they were trying to establish whether people had booked these tests. Now if the Government had required those tests to be booked through the NHS system then I could see very quickly you could have a QR code that said yes, they have got the test booked through the NHS system. But as things stand you can get those tests booked anywhere, there is no alternative but to, I mean I scrolled through my phone and showed

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them the email from test provider saying I would turn up whenever you know but everyone had a different method of proving they had booked the test. It is a little chaotic and obviously it is not secure.

Lord Strasburger

[inaudible 1:43:44]

Henk van Klaveren

...introducing. There is a question about the role of the State, as Bill talked about, about the cost of testing and whether there is decision to be made by Government as to where costs fall but ultimately the idea of having the tests in the UK, to stress your point Lord Strasburger around if people have perhaps not had the right test or been infected after they have done the test to ensure you still catch those people. Those tests are there for a reason and part of that risk-based approach. Now if Government are saying that it is essential to do that, they may wish to consider whether they take part in the NHS process indeed from an outbound perspective actually allowing the NHS to do tests for that as well, allows you to integrate significantly easier into an app as you don't have to work with third party providers and integrate that data. There is a very simple solution to that. The only issue you have is there are four NHSs in the UK.

Lord Strasburger

Bill, I don't know if we need to rouble you with this one or not? The concern is with airports there are people arriving from 100 or more different countries with different standards which Border force are trying to understand and decipher but you don't have that problem in the football industry.

Bill Bush

We have it to a much lesser degree. We still have it though. Of course, most the attendees are season ticket holders , they have identities which are established with the club so that helps. When it comes down to it, proof of identity whether its passports, driving licences or welfare state information you know where your National Insurance number and so on can be used but the systems can only really work if there are streamlined and there is compliance by the vast majority. The airport scenario versus a domestic venue, the scale of challenges is much smaller once you are in the domestic environment.

Lord Strasburger

Thank you. Back to you Chair.

Layla Moran MP

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Thank you. Caroline Lucas.

Caroline Lucas MP

Thanks Chair. I wanted to ask you about employees and whether you think employees at airports or at mass gatherings should be required to have vaccine passports or immunity passports? Henk, do you want to start with that?

Henk van Klaveren

I think that airports will follow the Government guidance on this. There is the side to that as to whether it's necessary, but we will work with Government around that guidance. Airports are looking after their staff. Many have testing facilities on site for the general public as well as for travellers that are also being used by staff. So, we are putting the resources and the systems in place to protect our staff and to ensure they can do their jobs properly. If the Government, then decides that vaccinations play a role in that we will work with the Government on that.

Caroline Lucas MP

You don't have your own view; you know some may say it would be a keyway of keeping staff safe.

Henk van Klaveren

It is a similar argument played out in the care home sector. There are, this is an argument that goes over a range of sectors. The Government taking a decision on this would be the best solution to avoiding us having the debate over which sector and each individual sector having its own opinion on it.

Caroline Lucas MP

Ok, do Bill or Paul have an alternative view on that?

Paul Nuki

I would note that New Zealand, I think just yesterday, said that various customs workers had to lose their jobs as they weren't vaccinated, so they have made it mandatory. I am not sure I would do that here, but I would certainly say from a health point of view you would have been very ill-advised if you were working on the frontline at an airport without being vaccinated. I would major on that message, I think.

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Caroline Lucas MP

And presumably for seaports as well. I have heard stories about cruise ships coming in.

Paul Nuki

Absolutely. I think anyone who is working on, whether it be a bus or front of house in a pub, you are coming into contact with many, many people, many strangers, and you have got to think about protecting yourself and that is very evident re. the death rates unfortunately.

Caroline Lucas MP

Would you go as far as making it mandatory. It could mean, if you applied it retrospectively, it could mean that people lose jobs through that.

Paul Nuki

I don't think that the history and the culture in the UK lends itself to making things mandatory. I think that is just a peculiarity. In the States they do have a history where you know you have to have your children vaccinated to go to school in most states. So, one has to look at the cultural history of the country and I don't think we are a country that is tended to do that. If you look right back, perhaps the first smallpox jabs were, a long, long time ago.

Caroline Lucas MP

Bill any final point on that one?

Bill Bush

We would obviously follow the Government Guidance on this. Obviously from Employer Liability point of view, taking care of the welfare of employees was to make sure that transmission risk was as low as possible to protect them, the staff, and in our case the fans in the stadium in hospitality and so on where there is close contact. We wouldn't want I think to see any one mechanism being isolated as compulsory, so making vaccinations compulsory would have all sorts of difficulties which have been well aired. We could foresee a future, and we would not resist it if Government said staff had close contact with each other and members of the public should have lateral flow tests before commencement of their shift to make sure prevalence is as low as could be reasonably achieved.

Caroline Lucas MP

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Thank you very much.

Layla Moran MP

And last but not least, Lord Russell.

Lord Russell

Yes, thank you very much. So, it has been a fascinating two sessions and we have covered some of the ethics and the unintended consequences of perhaps going for a Covid passport but particularly I this session it seems to be with the Border Force, to do with digitalisation and to do with having a more coherent testing regime, seems to have jumped out of it. Given all of that, I'm going to ask each of you what would you say to the Government, in your view, is the absolute priority to help the country but also to help your sector to get things sorted out. So, Bill can I start with you?

Bill Bush

I think the Government has a very hard balance to achieve, and there are difficulties whichever route you take. If you go for the kind of free for all hope, then there are obvious risks in a world where the pandemic is still raging to go for that. Social distancing and lockdowns are both socially and economically really harmful and so we would argue that some form of Coronavirus status verification, properly managed, in both terms of inclusion but also the technical operation of the system could well be a necessary fallback if a low prevalence in society doesn't get us there, we have the alternatives of pretty much closing down large chunks of the economy again, and the social and economic harm that causes. But we would love to work with Government working towards prevalence solution rather than depend on a single magic wand such as a vaccine passport, we think that would be too narrow and too prescriptive it needs to be broader based than that.

Lord Russell

Henk, please, if you could tell us what you think.

Henk van Klaveren

Yes. We need to start international travel for economic and social reasons that I eluded to at the start. For the outbound side of things, I think the key, if we are going to have some kind of vaccine certificate will be required by other countries so there needs to be something in place. That needs to be on a four-nation basis and needs to integrate test results. Without it I think it would be very difficult for individual to achieve what they want to achieve. For the inbound perspective, we need to ensure we can manage the border appropriately. That requires a step change in Government's approach to the border and really wrapping up preparations for ensuring we can have the restart of international travel

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through digitalisation and integration of various requirement currently into a much more user friendly and operationally sound solution.

Lord Russell

And Paul?

Paul Nuki

Yes, I would say, you know, full steam ahead on creating a fully digital Green Pass that wraps in both vaccines and tests. I would do it with a view for it running for five years, perhaps even more. If I was advising the Government, I would say having built this enormous, and now very successful test and trace system, let's use that as the spine for this thing because spinning it off to parts of the private sector now are just going to complicate matters. We built this system, tests are very cheap and easy to access, let's use it and if we want to include private sector providers then let's include them in that at the other end. It is the test and trace system that is building their mentally coherent system and we are not starting as a fresh.

Lord Russell

Thank you very much.

Layla Moran MP

Thank you all. We have gone significantly overtime. I beg your forgiveness but given how important this is I think to society it was right to hear the full answers from everybody. So, Bill, Henk and Paul, thank you so much for your time. Thank you as ever for parliamentarians for your questions. Thank you to all of you who have been watching from home. Thank you. We will be back in a couple of weeks' time and I have no doubt there will be many issues that have been covered today in a very wide range discussion which we will come back to. So, thank you very much everybody and have a good afternoon.

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