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[UK Parliament](#) > [Business](#) > [Committees](#) > [Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee](#) > [News Article](#)

No justification for Covid passports, say Committee

12 June 2021



The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee call for Government to abandon unjustified plans and says they have not made the scientific case, in its report on Covid 19 vaccine certification published today.

- [Read the report summary](#)
- [Read the conclusions and recommendations](#)
- [Read the full report: Covid-Status Certification \[PDF 480.97 KB\]](#)
- [Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee](#)

Proposals for a Covid-status certification system to be used domestically have been slammed by a cross-party group of MPs, with them calling for plans for their introduction to be scrapped.

Government has so far failed to make the scientific case

Covid-status certification would certify as Covid-safe people who have had the vaccine or a negative test. The Government began a review on the idea in March to decide if they were an appropriate tool to help reopen the economy. A decision must be made by Monday over whether the next phase of lockdown easing – originally planned for 21 June – should go ahead. Today's report casts fresh doubt on the notion that Covid passports could play a role in that.

In its report, the Committee said that the Government has so far failed to make the scientific case in favour of the system. The Committee found little evidence that the introduction a Covid-status certification regime would actually increase public confidence.

Furthermore, the Government came under fire over their choices on which locations would and would not be included in the programme. The Committee heard that in terms of transmission, small, enclosed spaces where people congregate posed the greater risk than events like football matches which people attend less regularly and are out in the open. However, the

evidence obtained over the inquiry suggests that pubs and restaurants are among those being considered for exemption, while football grounds would be included. The Committee labelled such decision-making as “largely arbitrary”.

Disproportionately discriminate on basis of race, religion and socio-economic background

Among MPs’ concerns was that the scheme would “disproportionately discriminate” on the basis of race, religion, age and socio-economic background. In effect, many from these groups could be excluded from participation in parts of the economy and society as it reopens under a certification system.

The Committee also questioned the value of establishing a certification process given the likely cost of doing so and the success of the vaccine rollout. The efficacy of the vaccine on new variants too means that any potential benefits will only decrease as the number of people currently vaccinated against it rises. 61% of the UK have so far received one dose of the vaccine and 43% have had both jobs.

Concerns over data protection

Any system of Covid certification also raises issues concerning privacy and data protection, the report warned. Witnesses to the inquiry told the Committee that not only would the database carry sensitive personal information linked to medical records but it could also be open to hacking. Considering their resemblance, MPs also brought attention to fears that the certification system could provide a back door for the introduction of ID cards.

Weighing up costs and concerns of a certification programme, with Michael Gove’s own assessment of the argument as ‘finely balanced’, the Committee said that there is no justification for the introduction of a domestic Covid passport system.

William Wragg MP, Chair of PACAC said:

“We recognise the need to formulate an effective lockdown exit, but Covid passports are not the answer. We are entirely unconvinced by the case for their introduction. Although it is a tool that is being sold as and built with the intention of being for the universal good, it has the potential to cause great damage socially and economically.

As vaccine uptake statistics indicate, any Covid certification system will be a discriminator along the lines of race, religion and age.

Finally, the success of the vaccine rollout and their efficacy calls into question the value of a certification regime. It would be established at great cost for rapidly diminishing returns.

Frankly, the Government needs to scrap any idea of introducing Covid passports. They are unnecessary and there is no justification for them in the science and none in logic.”

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