

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE1908: Review the impact of vaccine passport regulations, lodged by Jeff Bell.

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petitioner is calling for a regular review of the vaccine certification system which was introduced by the Scottish Government on 1 October 2021.

The vaccine certification scheme requires people to show proof that they have been fully vaccinated (or are otherwise exempt) to get into certain late-night premises and large-scale events.

The policy objectives of the scheme are¹²:

- Reduce the risk of transmission of Coronavirus
- Reduce the risk of serious illness and death thereby alleviating current and future pressure on the National Health Service
- Allow higher risk settings to continue to operate as an alternative to closure or more restrictive measures
- Increase vaccine uptake

The petitioner argues there is a lack of evidence that vaccinated people cannot transmit the virus to others, and therefore passports will not mitigate the spread of the virus.

The Scottish Government published the [Covid Vaccine Certification Evidence Paper](#) on 29 September 2021. This paper sets out the evidence in relation to certification and informed its decision to proceed with the scheme.

¹ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Mandatory Vaccine Certification proposals](#) (9 September 2021)

² [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Vaccine Certification update](#) (23 September 2021)

The paper acknowledges there is a lack of sufficient data to conclude whether fully vaccinated people with breakthrough infections can transmit the virus. However, it does state that it reduces transmission because vaccinated people are less likely to contract the virus in the first place and that:

Vaccine certification is a far less restrictive measure than re-introducing capacity limits on venues, early closure times or complete closure of events.

In line with the Covid legislation, the Scottish Government is required to review the regulations every three weeks, and they must only remain in place whilst they are necessary and proportionate.

In [a letter to the COVID-19 Recovery Committee](#), the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for COVID Recovery states they would 'look at a range of data to determine whether the regulations continue to be required'.

However, in response to the Committee's suggestion that the Scottish Government should publish evidence of the impact of the scheme on rates of transmission, the annex to the letter states:

Information about positive case rates are published. As is the position with all restrictions, it is not possible to establish the individual impact of this scheme on changes in transmission of the virus.

The range of data which will be considered to determine whether the regulations continue to be required, includes the current state of the pandemic, the trends and anticipated pressures such as winter, as well as any surges in infections arising from events such as COP26 and the festive season.

The COVID-19 Recovery Committee undertook three evidence sessions with a range of stakeholders throughout September, focusing on the impact on business, equalities and human rights issues, as well as immunological and behavioural effects. The committee continues to monitor progress with the scheme, including by taking evidence from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for COVID Recovery every fortnight.

Key Organisations and relevant links

Scottish Licensed Trade Association*

Scottish Professional Football League*

Ada Lovelace Institute*

Scottish Human Rights Commission*

Professor Stephen Reicher, University of St Andrews*

Night Time Industries Association (took legal action against the Scottish Government)

*Indicates witnesses who gave evidence to the COVID-19 Recovery Committee in September 2021.

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01/11/2021

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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