

Vaccine Passports are an Unfortunate Inevitability – Conservative Article

By Kieran Burt, Lucy Severn and Abi Clargo - 4th February 2021



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Now that countries have started to vaccinate their populations, there is a sense that this dystopian nightmare of the pandemic will end. Life will slowly return to a normal-ish pace; soon the government should be able to take its nose out of our everyday lives.

However, it won't. Instead of continuous cycles of lockdown, once the vaccine has reached the general population, vaccine checks will be introduced. This will come in the form of digital vaccine passports, which will entail a serious privacy violation and the potential of clamping down on our fundamental freedoms.

These digital documents will create a divide within society; those who have got the vaccine and those who have not. This will then create an underclass of those who cannot participate in normal life, such as going to bars and restaurants. [Anna Beduschi](#), an academic from Exeter University, echoes my point when she says that these documents would be "used to determine the degree of freedoms and rights they [individuals] may enjoy".

Going back to the workplace might be contingent on having the vaccine, just as [Pimlico Plumbers is showing](#). They are adding a clause in their contracts which essentially states that no vaccine means no job. This is not a pleasant future. This is elitist.

The passport is unpleasant. As mentioned, it will exacerbate further inequalities in society. [Uptake among vaccines](#) and [trust in government](#) is in low within ethnic minorities. And trust in the vaccine is also the [lowest](#) among minorities. Minorities also happen to be the [worst hit](#) by the pandemic. These people will be very sceptical about getting a vaccine even if it means signing up to a passport scheme. Establishing more government control does not increase trust, it will worsen it. It will also exacerbate other [health inequalities](#) which the pandemic has already highlighted.

This is also not just about trust in government. If a passport is pursued it will inevitably have to be a technological solution. Trust in technology is also [low](#), so questions about privacy must be

answered. [Privacy watchdogs](#) have already come out against such passports. They warn that these will disrupt social cohesion and turn immunity into a characteristic like race or gender. Another concern is whether governments will be allowed to keep data on who is vaccinated and, if so, how long for?

People will be punished because of their lack of access or lack of trust. In turn, businesses in those areas will also be punished, right at the time where they need to open up.

Trust in government is at an [all-time low](#). Instead of introducing conditions for people to re-enter society, we should trust citizens to realise the benefits of the vaccine and get it on its own merits. There are less intrusive methods of encouraging vaccine uptake, and those must be pursued instead.

Vaccine passports represent strong government overreach. In France, a bill was proposed saying that an [unvaccinated people's movement could be restricted](#) in a "sanitary emergency". This would create a "future framework" for other health crises. Several other EU countries have announced their interest in [vaccine passports too](#). Although there are currently "[no plans](#)" to introduce such a passport in the UK, it has not been ruled out.

To me, this sounds like the creation of a bio-security state. In this state, our health data will be used by the government to limit access for some sectors of society because of a deemed health risk to others. This is mandatory vaccination taken too far.

I believe that vaccines are the best way to combat disease. I also believe that, at birth, vaccines should be made compulsory. This is because it is easy to see if a parent hasn't taken their child for their MMR or any other jabs. And if they haven't then there should be a fine. But their fundamental right to societal access should not be restricted.

Sooner or later, vaccine passports will be introduced. It is inevitable. Once other countries start to do it, others will follow to not be discriminated against. The WHO and Estonia have already started working on a [globally recognised vaccine passport](#).

Instead of making the vaccine to a rewards system, a marketing campaign needs to be rolled out in order to promote higher up-take. When they are eligible, politicians and celebrities should visibly take the vaccine. Furthermore, fake information regarding the vaccine should be clamped down on.

Johnson's government has done it before, with its campaign around Brexit. Recently, I've seen some harrowing posters about rule-breaking. These, alongside information campaigns, are no doubt more effective than simply ignoring the population's concerns. They must do it for vaccinations as well. I would also encourage more visible explanations on why the vaccine is safe, and how it works. These should be in an easy and digestible format, such as video.

There is more that can be done to encourage up-take, instead of draconian measures and big government. Once this is over, people will want the government to take a smaller role in their lives, not an even worse curtailment of our freedoms.

Written by Senior Conservative Writer, Kieran Burt

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Point of Information

Incentives for the Covid Vaccine is the Bare Minimum – A Liberal Response

I largely disagree with Kieran's article except for the really valuable point he raised about minority groups being the worst affected by Covid yet have some of the lowest trust in the vaccine. This issue will only become more salient and pressing as the vaccine rollout continues to ramp up. And the government should see this challenge as an opportunity to earn more trust through the speed of actions taken by the government. Moreover, a disincentive system, such as fines, disproportionately target those from a lower economic background anyway.

So, controversially, a 'reward-based' vaccination system may be part of the recovery. But it must be accompanied with thorough, digestible information about the vaccine.

Where my opinions differ from my colleague is that making a vaccine mandatory in order to grant specific freedoms is not new or groundbreaking. It's part of living in a society where your actions, conscious or otherwise affect others.

In California, for example, as of 2019 it became a requirement for children to have five different immunisations before entering kindergarten. They must also have a further two more before 7th grade. Moreover, this idea of a 'bio-security state' is overdramatic and fear-mongering. And the government already uses our health data to restrict access to services. For example, men who have sex with men were only able to give blood three months ago.

Offering incentives or disincentives for vaccinations is the status quo, and Covid should not be treated any differently.

Written By Junior Liberal Writer, Lucy Severn

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Not an Inevitability, but an Iniquitous Potential – A Labour Response

As Kieran suggests, it would be naïve to think that the world will quickly go back to normal after the pandemic. It'll probably be a long time before this is the case. Naturally then, people are looking at how we can prevent a resurgence in coronavirus cases across the globe.

How does this relate to vaccine passports? Well, of course they are an option, but I wouldn't say they are an inevitability. There are far too many issues to overlook.

Before I get into my position on vaccine passports, I have to say that I disagree with what I interpret as the underlying premise of Kieran's article. Maybe I've interpreted it with too much pedanticism. But I can't ignore that seemingly one of his biggest concerns is how vaccine passports will reflect on the government and the public's respective trust in them. I do recognise that a strong democracy relies on public trust. In my opinion, however, this debate should be more centred around the morality of preventing travel of anti-vaxxers and minorities with accessibility issues.

Is it right to disfavour the unvaccinated based on either a belief or their lack of options?

Now I am not defending anti-vaxxers. Not at all. I think there are many people who have almost jumped on the conspiracy bandwagon of false information. However, I respect that some of these people have based their decision on the fear and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. This was an unexpected virus that killed so many loved ones across the globe. So asking them to trust in a vaccine that they potentially don't fully understand is perhaps a little too much at the moment. We need to respect that this is a valid reason for some, regardless of our own beliefs surrounding the vaccine.

There's an existing counter-argument here. How is the COVID-19 vaccine any different from those we already need to travel to many countries across the world? For many, it's extremely different

because of the far-reaching impact of the pandemic itself. Of course, this has motivated many to want a vaccine. Myself included. But we can't ignore the flip side.

For that reason, I agree with Kieran to an extent. A rewards system for becoming vaccinated is not the best way forward. I too would suggest that we work on eliminating people's fears, removing the conspiracies that currently surround them. Greater transparency of information will allow people to further understand the vaccine and its potential impact. Arguably, this is a better way of encouraging mass vaccination, rather than preventing travel. It's much more carrot than stick.

Written by Chief Labour Writer, Abi Clargo

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Hello, my name is Kieran Burt and I am going into second year at Nottingham Trent University studying Politics and International Relations. I first developed an interest in politics through reading the Dictator's Handbook by Alastair Smith and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, when I was 16, and have furthered my interest by studying politics at A level and now at university.

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I'm Abi! I am a liberal, political enthusiast from the Welsh valleys. Since I was young, I have been captivated by politics. I used to spend so much time watching the morning news before school, and have paid close attention to political campaigns for as long as I can remember. It was a lot later that I decided I wanted to pursue politics academically. Now, I have just finished my second year studying Politics and International Relations at the University of Exeter.