

COVID-19 Recovery Committee

11th Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Thursday, 18 November 2021

SPICe: issues paper

This note highlights some issues Members may wish to take account of when considering the public health regulations, and the Ministerial Statement on COVID-19 (including the government's second three weekly review of the vaccine certification scheme).

The note firstly highlights some issues relating to vaccine certification, provides some background on the Covid Recovery Strategy, and draws attention to some of the questions posed by members of the public in the Committee's engagement activity.

Vaccine certification scheme – 3 week review

At the point of the first three weekly review the First Minister reported to parliament ([26 October 2021](#)) that "no immediate changes are being proposed to the mitigations that remain in place".

The Committee had [written to the Scottish Government on 30 September](#), requesting that the Government report back on a number of issues, and on a number of specific indicators. The [Government wrote back to the committee on 28 October](#). In its response the Government:

- Indicated that an update of the [Strategic Framework](#) would be published shortly, which would explain the government's approach to managing the pandemic over the late autumn/winter period
- Described some of the indicators that it is, and would be, using to underpin its decisions on restrictions; and on the indicators which would determine the continued requirement for vaccine certification said that "It is not possible to set those out definitively; ... [and] will depend on a combination of measures

for example, case rates, pressure on the NHS, vaccination rates and impact on businesses”

- The Government also indicated that in terms of evaluating the impact of the vaccine certification scheme on rates of transmission “, it is not possible to establish the individual impact of this scheme on changes in transmission of the virus”.

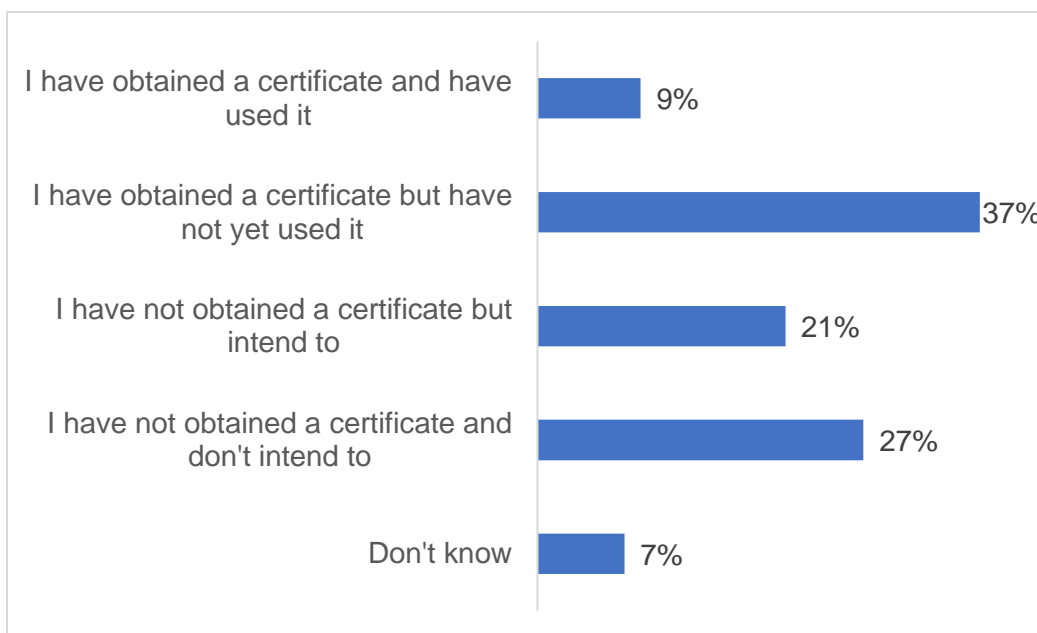
[On 9 November](#), the Deputy First Minister said provided an update to parliament on the latest Covid situation and said that “some scenarios for what may happen next are very concerning”, and that “we cannot rule out strengthening the baseline protective measures”. The Deputy First Minister indicated the government had been considering measures related to vaccine certification, ventilation, home working, and face coverings.

The First Minister is due to provide a further update at the three-week review point on 16 November.

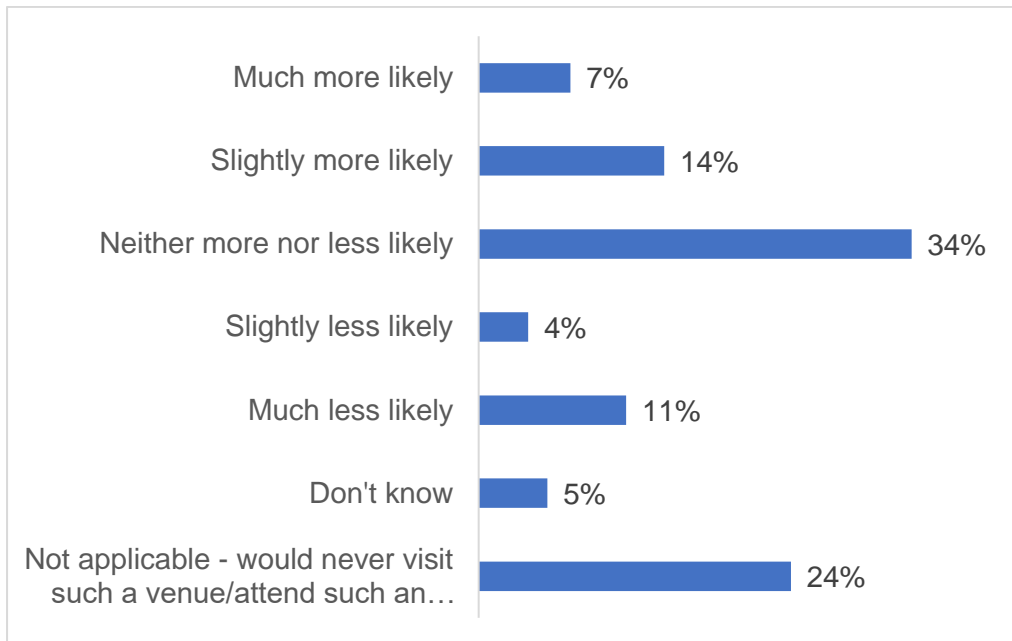
The Deputy First Minister wrote to the committee on 12 November indicating that data on the number of *people* reporting inaccuracies with their vaccination record, but data had been provided on the number of *cases* under a subsequent FoI request. The letter linked to some further sources of data. Some of the data from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey is included in the separate Issues paper for the panel.

Members may also be interested in a brief selection of insights from the government’s [polling data on coronavirus](#) (as at 19-21 October)

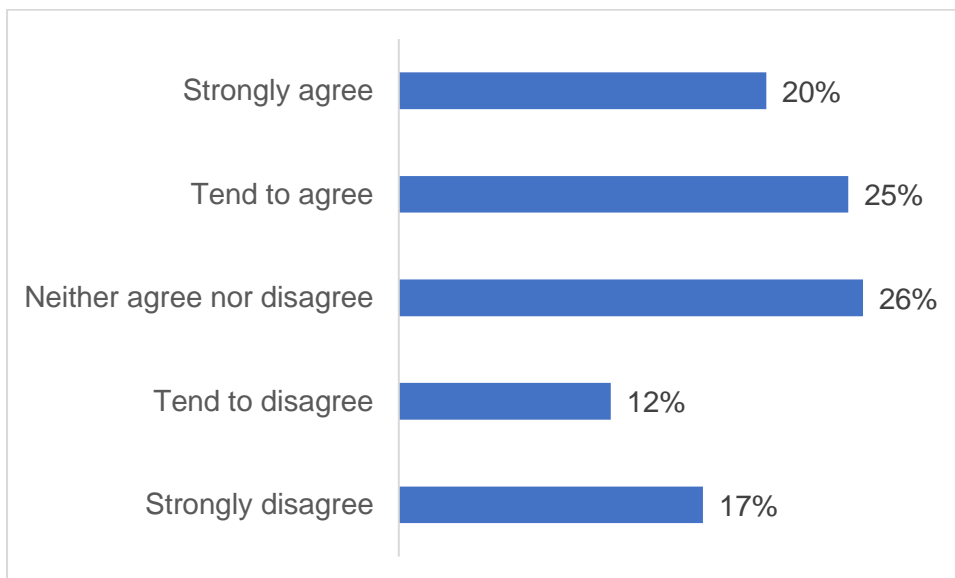
Polling on vaccine certification:



Will the introduction of the Covid vaccine certification scheme make you more or less likely to visit a venue or attend an event that requires such a vaccine certificate for entry?



I would like to see the scheme rolled out to other types of venue and events



Vaccine Uptake

Members have previously raised issues of vaccine uptake in relation to race and ethnicity, and deprivation. PHS are next planning to publish data on vaccine uptake

by equality groups on 24 November. The [equality impact assessment for the flu and covid winter 21/22 vaccination programme](#) identified the following actions:

Race and Ethnicity

- informed consent materials are available in 25 different languages on NHS Inform and in accessible formats such as Easy Read, BSL and audio:
- a QR code on all vaccination appointment letters which takes people to this information so they are fully informed ahead of their vaccine.
- [use of] trusted voices, such as community leaders and influencers.
- £80,000 SG funding to organisations working with minority ethnic communities to help inform and promote the programme. Activities undertaken include the facilitation of focus groups, provision of translations, hosting awareness-raising events and the development of tailored resources for certain communities.
- Close working with BEMIS the national umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland.
- Development of the COVID-19 Vaccine NHS [Scotland Explainer Video](#) was informed by third sector and community partners. ... is available in 19 languages and a range of formats.

Deprivation

- Health boards [have provided] vaccination clinics and pop up clinics within familiar local settings in deprived communities.
- Biological age in the most deprived communities is significantly different from in the most affluent communities, [and the] onset of 'diseases of old age' is around 15 years earlier. Therefore an age based approach may disadvantage people from the most deprived neighbourhoods. JCVI advice allows for local flexibility to mitigate health inequalities.

Some issues to consider

Members may wish to consider some of the following issues, some of which may also arise from discussion with the first panel, in relation to the hospitality and leisure sectors:

- **The evidence basis for decisions on the vaccination certification scheme, including the public health impacts and the business impact**
- **The evidence base for decisions on other public health measures, such as on face masks, ventilation and working from home**

- The effectiveness of support provided to business in the most affected sectors, to date, including the roll out of the £25m fund to improve ventilation in high risk settings
- Issues relating to the implementation of the vaccination certification scheme, and lessons learned
- Given the findings of Professor Peterson’s research that LFTs may be more accurate than previously thought at detecting when people are most infectious, what are the implications for the government’s approach?
- Progress in delivering the vaccine programme for people living in areas of deprivation, and by race and ethnicity.

Statistics Update

SPICe will provide a note of the latest COVID-19 statistics as a later paper on Wednesday 17th November.

Some questions from the public

This is the fourth week of running the online engagement tool “Your Priorities” for the committee. By the time we ‘closed’ this week’s submissions on 12th November, we had received 55 questions from the public to date. Fifteen questions have been raised in previous Committee meetings so far.

Full details of the questions are available on the [consultation website](#). The questions have been analysed and grouped into themes. In some cases, the issues raised in the questions have been combined to produce broader questions the Committee may wish to put to Scottish Government Ministers.

Access to Vaccine/Booster:

- Why are people having to go on 20, 60, or even 90 mile round trips to access the booster? People in Dunbar are being asked to travel as far as Livingston to receive their booster. ([Soorat, East Lothian](#))
- Why were many people sent invite letters to attend for booster but on arrival told we were not eligible? ([Mark, Argyll & Bute](#))
- Why are we relying on letters and long queues in phone lines to access the vaccine, without an online booking system as seen in England? Whose idea was this and why was it chosen? ([Lesley, South Ayrshire](#))

Booster and Flu Jag issues:

- Why are people having to wait until they get their booster before they receive their flu jab? (Some people are not due their booster until December and they feel this will be too late for the flu jab when they normally receive it at the end of September beginning of October) ([Anonymous submission](#))
- Why has the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland chosen to vaccinate the over 50s with the winter flu jab in 2021 before the under 50s who have a serious underlying health complaint? What is the rationale for a healthy over 50 year old receiving their flu vaccination BEFORE a 22 year old who suffers with severe asthma and an autoimmune condition? Normally, the latter would have been vaccinated early in to October, nearly November and still no appointment. Is this a game of roulette with people's health that the Government and NHS are playing? ([Cheryl](#), Aberdeenshire)

Vaccination Uptake

- How long will our vaccination last? – How often will we need a booster in the future and how will we know when are due another injection? ([LD Advocacy, Western Isles](#))
- What can Ministers do to encourage health boards to actively partner with their local voluntary and third sector to help ensure the vaccine programme is fully inclusive of and accessible to marginalised populations including patients who are frequently 'missing in health', including homeless people, people whose first language isn't English, people living in poverty and people with serious mental health issues? ([Voluntary Action Scotland](#))
- A number of people have asked why the vaccination programme is not mandatory/compulsory? (Multiple Submissions)
- Why is it so difficult to obtain a medical exemption to vaccination due to concerns about allergies or family history of clotting? ([Eliza, East Ayrshire](#))

Vaccine and Women's Reproductive Health & Breastfeeding

- A number of people have been in touch regarding women's health and the vaccine, some are asking if fertility impacted in any way by having the vaccine? ([Anonymous, North Lanarkshire](#))
- Others have asked if breastfeeding women will be eligible for the booster vaccine? And if Health and Social Care Partnerships/ Midwives have appropriate information and training on eligibility for the vaccine? Parents have highlighted inconsistency in knowledge and understanding across HSCPs in Scotland in relating to breast feeding and vaccine eligibility. ([Multiple Submissions](#))

Vaccine Certification Accessibility

- How is the Scottish Government ensuring the vaccination certificate/passport is accessible for those with sight loss? What assessment has been made on

the impact of public health measures, such as social distancing and lockdown restrictions, on those with sight loss? ([Sight Scotland & Sight Scotland Veterans](#))

- Why were Scottish people not given a (physical) vaccine card to prove they had received their vaccine and stating what vaccine they had received, like our English neighbours received? ([Anonymous submission](#))

Vaccine Certification– Inconsistency

- Why have we introduced vaccine passports and yet for so long allowed people to mix without them? At times like the euros there was no requirement and yet now indoor venues are being asked to introduce them - with schools back and university students mixing why should a select number of venues be asked to introduce a scheme which is clearly flawed and without scientific merit when taken as an isolated measure? ([Mike, Perth & Kinross](#))

Increasing Restriction Levels

- Why were restrictions lowered so soon after cases started to fall? Surely this would have only increased the rise like we are seeing now? ([Anonymous submission](#)) Why not return to stronger mitigation measures, especially as cases are increasing and many cases could lead to Long Covid? ([Graham Checkley](#))

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15 November 2021

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