



Doctors of the World's Covid-19 Vaccine Project

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[Doctors of the World UK](#) (DOTW) has launched a Covid-19 vaccine advocacy project to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the vaccine, regardless of immigration status. As well as producing translated Covid-19 information resources, DOTW will play a proactive advocacy and coordination role in relation to the roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine programme.

The project aim is to ensure that the vaccine programme is equally available to all in the UK, regardless of immigration status.

In late 2020 the UK government began making Covid-19 vaccinations available to the UK population. It is essential that all people are included in this programme, regardless of immigration status, both from a public health perspective and a moral one.

Migrants, refugees, people experiencing homelessness, sex workers and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the UK have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, being at increased risk of contracting the virus, experiencing worse health outcomes and facing more barriers to healthcare services. Central government response to include these communities in public health measures and social safety nets has been woeful. The direct and indirect impact on people has differed depending on where they are in the immigration system and their other characteristics, but has been documented in various reports and media coverage (see DOTW's [Covid-19 Rapid Needs Assessment](#) and the [Impact Assessment Framework](#) commissioned by Migration Exchange for more on different cohorts).

The roll out of vaccines will be predominantly via primary care so it will be important that everyone is registered with a GP. There are well-documented issues with [GP registration](#) for people subject to immigration control and other marginalised populations. GP registration challenges have been compounded during the pandemic, as people have been dispersed from their normal source of healthcare, registration process move online and people seeking asylum and people experiencing homelessness have been temporarily accommodated in hotels and remote disused army barracks. Fear of charging, data-sharing with the Home Office, lack of trust in statutory agencies, and lack of translated information are all issues that are repeatedly raised by patients and by the charities and services that support them. There is particular concern that those with underlying vulnerabilities that should make them eligible for early phases of the vaccine will be missed.

Over the next 12 months DOTW will take a proactive approach to influencing the design of vaccination programmes and then monitoring programme roll out, drawing on links with health, clinicians, public health, migration and sector organisations and the experiences of patients accessing DOTW's clinical services.

The project will include three key work areas:

1. Advocacy and policy - Identifying gaps in vaccine roll out policy and implementation, and proposing workable solutions

DOTW will analyse and monitor the plans for roll out of vaccines and set out policy asks and good practice in relation to people subject to immigration control. This work will include:

- providing a regular briefing to the sector on vaccine roll out policy and implementation
- establishing a stakeholder group, made up of key figures from public health, the NHS, GPs and Home Office officials to act as a focal point for discussion of the roll out to people in the immigration system
- mapping and encouraging good practice by Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Authorities and Primary Care Networks as examples of excellence.

2. Coordination and connection: Representing migrant communities and sector organisation with a stake in vaccine roll out

DOTW will act as a hub for proactive coordination and convening within the sector, making sure that there is connection between parts of the sector who have a stake in vaccine roll out. This will include regular surveys of the sector and establishing a small sector vaccine strategy group of key partners and allies, to ensure a space for proactive discussion and action planning.

3. Communication materials: Providing tailored Covid-19 information for migrant and other excluded communities

DOTW has played a lead role in translating [Covid-19 public health messages](#) (working in partnership with the British Red Cross). DOTW will continue to lead production of public health materials around vaccination, as well as reinforcing messages about public health measures, test and trace and access to health care.

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