



Open letter to Chairs of Health and Wellbeing Boards within Greater Manchester, with copy to the Mayor of Greater Manchester and Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership

23 February 2021

Dear {Name},

In order to address the coronavirus pandemic and strengthen public health efforts, the coronavirus vaccine must be safely accessible to everyone, regardless of immigration status, ID or proof of address.

The Government has stated that everyone is able to access the coronavirus vaccine, but in practice, people are being asked for ID, or are unable to register with a GP, or are afraid to access services because of longstanding and entrenched barriers to healthcare.

Without further action, the pandemic will continue to have a disproportionate impact on all marginalised groups, including migrant communities, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and BME communities.

The experiences of migrants have shown that the Hostile Environment fosters a culture of discrimination in the NHS, and creates fear and mistrust. Temporary offers of safety are not enough to undo the decades of harm caused by structurally racist policies that have embedded immigration controls into vital public services. The only viable solution is the immediate repeal of all Hostile Environment policies and the creation of an NHS that truly lives up to the principle of universal access for all.

You will recall that we wrote to you, on 15th August 2020 asking your Health & Wellbeing Board to take up these issues. A copy of that previous correspondence can be found in the covering email thread.

We are very pleased to note that the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, along with 230 other organisations, has signed the Vaccines for All call upon the Department of Health and Social Care (<https://www.vaccineforall.co.uk/>) to take the following actions :

1. Guarantee a firewall that prevents any patient information gathered by the NHS or Test and Trace being used for the purposes of immigration enforcement.
2. End all Hostile Environment measures in the NHS, including charging for migrants, to combat the fear and mistrust these policies have created.
3. Provide specific support to all GP surgeries to register everyone, including undocumented and under-documented migrants and those without secure accommodation, and ensure that all other routes to vaccination are accessible to everyone.
4. Fund a public information campaign to ensure that communities impacted by the Hostile Environment are aware of their right to access the vaccine and the steps taken above.

We ask your Health and Wellbeing Board to add its name to that call via :
<https://www.vaccineforall.co.uk/>

Please help to keep everyone of your constituents safe and guarantee free access to vaccines for all.

And we ask that you do all in your power locally to give such effect to this call as you are able, in particular points 3 and 4 above, which are both amenable to local action.

Thank you. We look forward to your response, both to this letter and our earlier correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Caffrey,
Secretary, GMKONP,

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