



saving the lives  
of people with  
blood cancer

14<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Department for Health and Social Care  
HM Government

Dear Secretary of State,

**Coordinating support and guidance for immunocompromised people during the pandemic**

Thanks to the successes of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the majority of the UK population are now enjoying greater freedoms from COVID-19 social restrictions. However, for people who are immunocompromised – such as those with blood cancer, blood disorders, inflammatory bowel, kidney and other diseases leading to immunosuppression – the pandemic continues to pose a very real threat.

New data from the Office of National Statistics shows that 13.1% of people who died from COVID-19 despite being fully vaccinated were immunocompromised.<sup>1</sup> Further, data from the OCTAVE trial has shown that 40% of people who are immunocompromised had lower antibody protection than healthy people following COVID-19 vaccination.<sup>2</sup> There remains a real and significant risk to some immunocompromised people, including blood cancer and stem cell transplant patients. For this group, the pandemic is not over.

With key government support schemes now closed, immunocompromised people have been left without tailored guidance or support to keep them safe. A recent example of the lack of a joined-up approach is in the timing of the announcement on third primary doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for people who are immunocompromised, which was rapidly followed by a general announcement on boosters for the wider population and which has caused significant levels of confusion and anxiety amongst our patients and their healthcare teams.

In order to stop patients being left behind, we believe a government lead for immunocompromised people should be appointed. This role would function best if it were fulfilled by a single named and dedicated person, with the specific remit to co-ordinate and plan guidance and support for people who are immunocompromised across all nations of the UK.

<sup>1</sup> [Office for National Statistics, Deaths involving COVID-19 by vaccination status, England: deaths occurring between 2 January and 2 July 2021](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Lancet Preprint - Examining the Immunological Effects of COVID-19 Vaccination in Patients with Conditions Potentially Leading to Diminished Immune Response Capacity – The OCTAVE Trial](#)

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This role will be instrumental in the coordination and implementation of key policies impacting immunocompromised people, providing leadership and clear communication on issues such as the roll-out of booster and third dose vaccinations, and guidance on safety at work. Having a single source of information and guidance on subjects such as this will provide many who are unsure about their safety and health with the reassurance that their circumstances have been considered and accounted for.

The UK Government has already acknowledged that the coming winter period will be challenging with respect to COVID-19 caseloads. We must take urgent action before the situation begins to worsen. This opportunity comes at a critical time for both governments and patient charities, where we must work together to ensure support is coordinated for those most susceptible to COVID-19 and least protected by the vaccine.

The appointment of a government lead for immunocompromised people is supported by the signatories of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Signed:

Henny Braund MBE, CEO, Anthony Nolan

**Co-signed:**

**Members of Parliament**

Clive Betts MP  
Andrew Gwynne MP  
Kim Johnson MP  
Navendu Mishra MP  
Layla Moran MP  
Jim Shannon MP  
Tommy Sheppard MP

**Members of Scottish Parliament**

Rhoda Grant MSP  
Bill Kidd MSP  
Martin Whitfield MSP

**Members of the House of Lords**

Baroness Masham of Ilton

**Charitable Organisations**

Marc Auckland, Chair, CLL Support  
Paul Bristow, CEO, Kidney Care UK  
Ropinder Gill, CEO, Lymphoma Action  
Fiona Hazell, CEO, Leukaemia UK  
Laura Kerby, CEO, Myeloma UK  
Orin Lewis OBE, CEO, ACLT  
Jane Nicholson, CEO, WMUK  
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