



Saving lives through stem cells



Daisy Cooper MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

22 August 2024

Dear Daisy Cooper MP,

**Re: Welcoming the Liberal Democrat commitment to supporting immunocompromised individuals**

We write to commend the Liberal Democrat Party's manifesto commitment to "develop and implement a post-pandemic strategy for supporting people who are immunocompromised." As representatives of charities advocating for the immunocompromised community, we believe this policy is not only timely but crucial for addressing the ongoing challenges faced by this vulnerable group.

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly highlighted the precarious situation of immunocompromised individuals, who continue to face significant risks even as the general population has returned to a semblance of normalcy. Your party's recognition of their unique challenges is a significant step forward, and we are keen to collaborate with the Liberal Democrats to ensure this policy becomes a reality.

We are eager to meet with you to discuss how we can work together to build cross-party consensus around this critical issue and call on the government to adopt and implement this strategy. As such, we would be grateful for the opportunity for our organisations to jointly meet with you and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Andrew Gwynne MP to discuss this proposal in more detail.

Urgent areas of focus for the immunocompromised community include:

- 1. Access to protective COVID-19 prophylactic drugs:** It is imperative that we advocate for a streamlined assessment system for COVID-19 drugs, ensuring that the immunocompromised have timely access to treatments that are crucial for their protection. The JCVI recently narrowed eligibility for COVID-19 vaccines; further amplifying the need for effective preventative treatments. We believe the UK should align with international best practices, as seen in the EU and USA.
- 2. Reassessment of non-pharmaceutical measures in health settings:** Given the ongoing risk of infection, especially in healthcare settings, there needs to be a thorough review of non-pharmaceutical interventions. The goal should be to create environments that minimise risk for immunocompromised patients.
- 3. Review of the lateral flow test access scheme:** The current scheme for accessing lateral flow tests has proven problematic, with issues in both access and supply. A more efficient system is essential for ensuring that the immunocompromised can regularly monitor their health status.

**4. Improvement of the ICB system for access to COVID-19 antiviral treatments:**

Despite being in place for over a year, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) system still underperforms, making it difficult for many vulnerable patients to access necessary treatments. Access can be a postcode lottery, with some ICBs setting out clear processes while others have provided no detail at all. A review and overhaul of this system are urgently needed to ensure it meets the needs of those it is intended to serve.

**5. Reestablish and routinely publish high-quality surveillance data:** High-quality surveillance and variant monitoring data of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases is crucial for immunocompromised people to inform their decision-making around mitigating risks. This data is also vital for evidencing the need for further interventions, such as preventative treatments. However, there is currently limited accessible data on community testing, hospitalisations and deaths due to COVID-19, even though the risk posed remains.

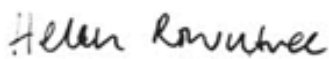
For the thousands of immunocompromised individuals who continue to shield and live with severe restrictions, these issues deserve immediate action.

Thank you again for your commitment to this crucial issue. We look forward to collaborating with you to ensure that the needs of the immunocompromised community are not only recognised, but addressed with the urgency they demand.

Yours sincerely,



Henny Braund MBE  
Chief Executive, Anthony Nolan



Helen Rowntree  
Chief Executive, Blood Cancer UK

Mark Oakley & Nikola Brigden  
Founders, Forgotten Lives UK