

# The Invisible Burden

## Why we must protect the UK's immunocompromised

Around 1.8 million people in the UK are immunocompromised. These are individuals living with conditions like cancer, organ transplants, autoimmune diseases, or on immunosuppressive medication.

Unlike the general population, standard Covid vaccines often offer them little to no protection. For more than six years, this vulnerable group, and their families who frequently shield alongside them to provide protection and support, have faced ongoing risks, living in a prolonged state of anxiety and restriction. This continued inaction is not just a personal tragedy; it is a national scandal.



### The Covid Inquiry's findings

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry has found that the needs of immunocompromised people were not adequately considered and that protections for the clinically vulnerable were insufficient. It concluded that the UK must learn these lessons to better prepare for future pandemics and protect everyone.

## The human & healthcare cost of inaction

Failing to adequately protect the immunocompromised has devastating personal and systemic consequences for patients and their families. It's time for long-overdue change.



### Jeopardising the gift of life

Many immunocompromised patients have received life-saving treatments like organ and stem cell transplants. These interventions can cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. Inadequate protection puts both patients and major NHS investment at risk.



### Strain on the NHS & critical services

Immunocompromised patients frequently develop severe infections, often requiring intensive care. Their prolonged illnesses strain critical NHS resources, contributing to bed blockages and longer waiting times for all.



### Risks of virus transmission & mutation

Without protection, immunocompromised individuals can shed viruses for longer, increasing the risk of community transmission and the emergence of new, more dangerous variants.



### Deteriorating mental health crisis

More than six years of shielding and restricted living have led to a severe mental health crisis among patients and their families, with anxiety, depression, social isolation and reduced quality of life.



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Vulnerable Groups  
to Pandemic



# A Win-Win for the UK

## The economic & social case for protection

Protecting immunocompromised people is not only the right thing to do. It also benefits the wider economy, strengthens public services and improves future preparedness.



### Economic drain & lost workforce potential

When immunocompromised people and family caregivers cannot work fully, the UK loses skills, productivity and spending power. In 2022, 500,000 shielding people were estimated to withhold around £500 million a year from the dining sectors alone.



### Missed tax & spending contributions

Safer lives would help more people return to work, pay tax, contribute to National Insurance and participate more fully in the wider economy.



### Unlocking protective treatments & innovation

Faster access to effective protective treatments, alongside clearer regulatory and commissioning pathways, would reduce NHS pressure, improve lives and encourage investment in UK life sciences.



### Future pandemic preparedness

Implementing stronger protections now is essential preparation for the next health emergency and would help create a more resilient public health system.



## The time for action is now

For too long, the voice of the immunocompromised and those who care for them has been met with silence. We need a united approach: patients, charities, clinicians, mental health experts, industry and policymakers must work together. We urge decision-makers to champion this cause and help deliver swift, positive change.



## Our ask of MPs

Please support immunocompromised people by urging Ministers to:

- 1 Recognise the ongoing risks faced by those who remain vulnerable to Covid-19.
- 2 Improve access to effective protection, including treatments, prophylactics and clear clinical pathways as evidence develops.
- 3 Ensure future pandemic planning includes immunocompromised people from the start, reflecting the findings of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.
- 4 Meet with Forgotten Lives UK and the APPG for Vulnerable Groups to Pandemic to hear directly from those affected.

