



Event Industry Alliance  
119 High Street  
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28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP  
Department for Health and Social Care,  
39, Victoria Street,  
London  
SW1H 0EU

Dear Minister,

Following 18 months of being unable to trade due to necessary public health restrictions being put in place, the business events industry is looking forward to reopening and to reinstating the UK as a world leader in the business events sector.

However, we are concerned about the Government's intention to introduce so-called 'vaccine passports' for certain settings from September. While the Prime Minister's comments on Monday 19 July seemed to focus on this requirement being targeted at nightclubs, your comments in the House of Commons on Thursday 22 July suggested that business events, both indoor and outdoor, are among the settings the government is most concerned about and are considering introducing the vaccine passport requirement for.

We fully understand the government's desire to achieve a full vaccine rollout and we congratulate you on the success in that regard to date. We also understand the rationale for the timing, given by September all adults will have had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated.

We completely appreciate the need to tackle transmission of covid as our businesses reopen given the pandemic is not over. That is why, as a sector, we have been working on updated industry guidance and best practice, based on updated government guidelines. This includes the use of covid-status certification, requiring attendees at events to demonstrate they have either received a vaccine, have tested negative or have acquired natural immunity. We also made it clear in a letter to the Prime Minister in May that we supported this measure (a copy accompanies this letter).

Removing the option for testing is highly problematic for business events, which are in a unique position compared to other large-scale events such as nightclubs or sports. This is because there is a direct impact on employment circumstances. Business events, such as trade shows, form part of business activity, as opposed to more social activity. The decisions and trade-offs involved in attending business events compared to social events are therefore very different.

Crucially, requiring individuals to demonstrate they have been fully vaccinated in order to attend or exhibit at a business event, whether this be a trade or consumer show, would be tantamount to setting a new condition of employment on them. Mandatory requirements for vaccinations for particular workplaces are rightly extremely limited in the UK, however this requirement on our sector would introduce compulsory vaccinations for anyone whose job may involve attending a business event. We do not believe it is right to indirectly introduce a condition of employment in this way, and to place the responsibility for enforcing that requirement onto businesses who otherwise do not require their employees to be vaccinated.

In addition, there are also practical concerns and significant economic costs which should be considered. Mandatory vaccination would require any business that is considering exhibiting at a trade show, or sending delegates to one, to collect highly sensitive health information which they would not otherwise need to collect, creating clear data protection and privacy risks. It is also unclear how non-UK residents would demonstrate their vaccination status.

It is worth noting that where other countries have introduced covid-status passes under similar initiatives testing has remained an option. The risks here would likely lead to businesses concluding they would rather not participate in an event, further damaging a sector already highly impacted by the pandemic. This would reduce the UK's international competitiveness as companies would seek out opportunities at business events overseas, which would significantly reduce the profile and economic contribution of UK events – which drive both business sales (an estimated £70bn of transactions can be attributed to Trade and Consumer Exhibitions held in the UK), and economic impact across the supply chain, including hospitality and travel (estimated to be £11bn).

We would therefore welcome a discussion with you about how the introduction of vaccine passports would impact the business events sector and whether it may be possible to create an exemption, or take an alternative approach, due to the unique circumstances involved.

Yours sincerely

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Harrison,  
Director,  
Event Supplier and Services Association



Rachel Parker,  
Director,  
Association of Event Venues



Chris Skeith OBE,  
CEO,  
Association of Event Organisers

CC:

Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Lord Grimstone, Minister for Investment for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Nigel Huddleston, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

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