

EMBARGOED TO **13th May 2025 00.01hrs**

STILL SHIELDING – A REPORT ON THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF IMMUNOCOMPROMISED PATIENTS AT CONTINUED RISK OF COVID-19

- The All-Party Group on Vulnerable Groups to Pandemics (APPG VGP), The [Forgotten Lives UK](#) Patient Group, The National Expert Group, in support of this important survey from the Association of Clinical Psychologists (ACP-UK)
- [This survey](#) explores how the ongoing risk to immunocompromised people from COVID-19 has affected their mental health and that of their families

13 May 2025, London – Today, Members of Parliament will hold a round table, chaired by Johanna Baxter MP in her capacity as Chair of the APPG on Vulnerable Groups to Pandemics, alongside ACP-UK, health organisations and representatives to discuss important research into the mental health impacts of failing to protect clinically vulnerable patients to COVID-19.

New research published this year by ACP-UK looks at how a continuing vulnerability to COVID-19 affects the mental health of this vulnerable cohort. Its objective is to provide data that will raise awareness and develop policy interventions to improve the care and provision received by immunocompromised people. The APPG VGP has previously published evidence of multiple and significant structural failures by Government in the handling of the pandemic for this group of 1.3 million families.

It will be presented by **Dr Penelope Cream**, Clinical & Health Psychologist, ACP-UK Director of Operations and **Dr Dorothy Frizelle**, Honorary Clinical Associate Professor & Head of Adult Psychology Services, St. James's University Hospital; Consultant Clinical Health Psychologist and ACP-UK Director for Strategy & Workforce

The report highlights:

- 95% of patient respondents still lead restricted or fully shielded lives, with 32% of respondents still fully shielding
- 73% of patient respondents were in treatment range for anxiety; 38% in treatment range for depression, and 89.5% of respondents suffer from loneliness
- Nearly one-in-two immunocompromised patients are missing medical appointments
- Nearly one-in-three said that they are suffering financial hardship

It also highlighted the scope to which family members of patients are also affected by the ongoing risk to immunocompromised people. 93% of family members are still shielding or distancing to protect their loved ones, whilst 75% remain in treatment range for anxiety and 40% in treatment range for depression.

Johanna Baxter, Chair of the APPG for Vulnerable Groups to Pandemics said: *“For too long, the voices of immunocompromised patients have gone unheard. Whilst the rest of the world has moved on from the COVID-19 Pandemic, there are still more than a million people who are unable to get the protection that they need to carry on with their lives.*

She added, “When more than a million people are unable to get to work, see their families, go to the shops or even get to a health appointment there is inevitably an impact on productivity. The Government needs to prioritise working with this patient group to implement the crucial measures that will let them get on with their lives and contribute to our economic growth.”

Johanna recently wrote to the new Minister for Health, Ashley Dalton MP, asking her to consider the benefit of ensuring pre-exposure prophylactic treatments, such as Sipavibart, is available to patients on the NHS and to ask what further steps the Government are engaging with immunocompromised patient groups.

ENDS

NOTES

- Link to the report ‘*Still shielding - The mental health of immunocompromised patients at continued risk of COVID-19*’ can be found [here](#)
- The National Expert Group for immunocompromised patients represents over 125 clinicians across 4 nations and 17 medical specialities treating immunocompromised patients. The clinical group works in parallel with the APPG VGP to safeguard and protect this vulnerable group from the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Immunocompromised patients are at greater risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes than the general population as many of these patients respond poorly to SARS-CoV-2 vaccines.
- The APPG has previously supported research on mental health and political engagement in the UK¹

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¹ Dr Luca Bernardi’s 2020 longitudinal study investigating how COVID-19 stressors are associated with mental distress and political engagement in the UK https://livrepository.liverpool.ac.uk/3166252/1/PB_2_13.pdf
Dr Daniels and her team’s research over the course of the pandemic which showed that those who were shielding themselves or others experienced significantly higher levels of psychological distress in comparison to the general population (<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19127333>).

- Bernardi, L., & Fleischer, L. (2022). The impact of COVID-19 stressors on mental health and political engagement in the UK, Policy Briefing 2(13), Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place.
- Bernardi, L., & Gotlib, I. H. (2022). COVID-19 stressors, mental/emotional distress and political support. *West European Politics*, 46(2), 425-436.
- Daniels, J., & Rettie, H. (2022). The Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic Second Wave on Shielders and Their Family Members. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(12), 7333; Rettie, H., & Daniels, J. (2021). Coping and tolerance of uncertainty: Predictors and mediators of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Psychologist*, 76(3), 427.