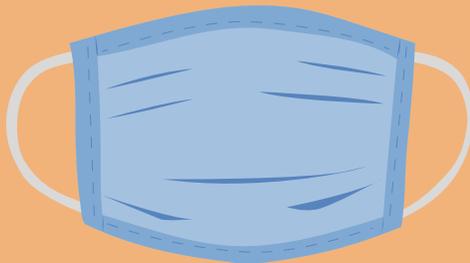


# Health Messaging for All



Co-producing recommendations workshop  
Beyond Sight Loss  
5th July



## About the participants

Number of participants: **16**

The group is made up of people who are blind or partially sighted. A few have additional disabilities but visual impairment is the main, declared disability.

Most members of the group live in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. A few live in neighbouring boroughs. The group meets twice a month in Tower Hamlets. The language used at meetings is English, although some informal translation into Bengali takes place. Members of the group mostly originate from Bangladesh, the Caribbean, India, Africa, Turkey and the East End of London. Membership is about 50% male and 50% female and the average age is somewhere between 50 and 60 years of age.

# VACCINES

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- 1 People expressed difficulty in booking vaccines online - this is not accessible for someone who is blind. A few were able to book through the 119 number.
- 2 Participants expressed that they would have liked someone to contact them by phone. Somebody made the suggestion to put little flags next to people's names who are visually impaired and who would prefer to receive a phone call to book their vaccine appointment.
- 3 Everyone who spoke had a positive experience accessing a vaccine centre. One person was very anxious, but when they arrived a member of staff brought in a GP who explained everything to her, and she felt a lot better. Another booked their vaccine and her mum helped her get there - they had to walk 10 minutes to the centre.
- 4 One person drove to the vaccine centre with their friend. They had the blue badge, and was able to find accessible parking, and were taken straight to the front of the queue.



**Recommendation: Phone calls specifically to people that are blind to help them book the vaccine**

# VACCINES

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- 5 One person mentioned that when they got the vaccine, they didn't know they had to get a vaccine card, so they didn't ask for it. They were not given anything, and now don't know how to find out what vaccine they had, or prove that they had it.
- 6 There was a discussion around how to prove you have had the vaccine. Someone asked if they could contact their doctor and ask them to print of a vaccinate certificate. Someone said they had contacted their doctor for this, and was told it is not their responsibility. Another person contacted 119.



## Recommendations:

1. Clearer information that every person being vaccinated should expect to receive a vaccine card
2. Clearer guidance on where your vaccine passport is stored, and how you can prove you have had it especially if you don't have a smartphone or the NHS App

# TESTING

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1

There was a clear lack of information around testing. People didn't know the difference between a PCR test and a lateral flow test. Although not everyone was from the Borough of Tower Hamlets, only 1 participant knew that they were entitled to free lateral flow tests. They didn't know where to collect them from, and how to do the tests. Somebody asked if it is possible to do a blood test instead (a pin prick).



## Recommendation:

1. More information about what the difference between the 2 tests are, and how they can get their free test kits. This information could be shared via email, at libraries, places of workshop, or as a local newsflash on social media and other platforms

# TESTING

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2

One person who had attended a test centre with a friend had a very negative experience. Their friend did his test first, and then when the blind participant asked if a member of staff could do it for him (as he can't see what to do), they refused him and were told 'your friend can do it for you'. His friend is old, and didn't know how to do it properly. Instructions were shouted across the testing centre so the friend could complete it, but it was not a pleasant experience and he would really have liked assistance from a member of staff



## Recommendations:

1. Designated members of staff at each testing centre to help blind people, and other people with disabilities to do the Covid test
2. Information about how to carry out the test in braille and large print at every testing centre.

# TESTING

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3

People discussed how difficult it is to put the little drops in the test kit, as it is so small, and you can't add it if there is an air bubble - when you are blind or partially sighted it is very difficult to see this detail.

4

One person getting tested was asked to fill out a form. A member of staff at the testing centre was really helpful and helped to fill it out, but it was not done in private and all her personal information was being shared very loudly across the test centre.



## Recommendations:

1. More detailed verbal information about how to carry out the tests
2. A quite, private space for a disabled person to get assistance filling out a form, so their private information is not compromised

# SIDE EFFECTS

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1

One person mentioned that since getting the vaccine, they have got shingles. There was then a discussion about how there was a lot of people with shingles at the moment, and was this connected to the vaccine.

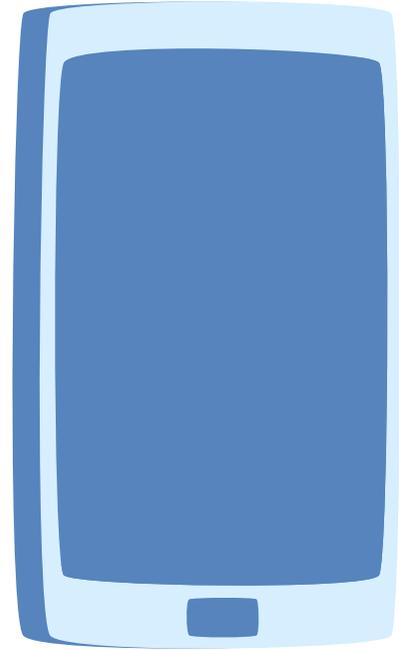


**Recommendation: A clear announcement that shingles is/isn't a side effect of the vaccine**

# TECHNOLOGY

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- 1 There was a discussion around the inaccessibility of QR codes, and what to do if you are travelling abroad, and you don't have a smartphone.



**Recommendation: People would like to know the alternatives to scanning QR codes if you are blind, and/or you don't have access to technology**

# SOCIAL DISTANCING

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- 1 Participants were worried about people no longer maintaining social distancing, and that the mentality of people had already changed.
- 2 They mentioned that the announcements on London underground threatening arrest/prosecution was fear mongering, and encouraged members of the public to be aggressive to others who don't wear masks (and some people can't).
- 3 One person gave an example of a passenger who was wearing a lanyard, and was therefore exempt, but experienced horrific abuse from another passenger for not wearing a mask - telling her 'they hope she dies of cancer'.



## Recommendations:

1. More guidance as to who is eligible to be exempt from mask wearing
2. Build awareness in the general public about what a lanyard signifies to combat harassment and aggressive behaviour
3. More announcements about Covid rules on public transport would be helpful

# Recommendations

- 1 Phone calls specifically to people that are blind to help them book the vaccine
- 2 Clearer information that every person being vaccinated should expect to receive a vaccine card
- 3 Clearer guidance on where your vaccine passport is stored, and how you can prove you have had it, especially if you don't have a smartphone or the NHS App
- 4 More information about what the difference between the 2 tests are, and how they can get their free test kits. This information could be shared via email, at libraries, places of workshop, or as a local newsflash on social media and other platforms
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- 6 Information about how to carry out the test in braille and large print at every testing centre
- 7 More detailed verbal information about how to carry out the tests
- 8 A quite, private space for a disabled person to get assistance filling out a form, so their private information is not compromised
- 9 A clear announcement that shingles is/isn't a side effect of the vaccine
- 10 People would like to know the alternatives to scanning QR codes if you are blind, and/or you don't have access to technology
- 11 More guidance as to who is eligible to be exempt from mask wearing
- 12 Build awareness in the general public about what a lanyard signifies to combat harassment and aggressive behaviour
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