



Nadhim Zahawi MP  
Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

12 January 2021

Dear Nadhim Zahawi MP,

### **Priority vaccination to protect those working with people experiencing homelessness**

I am writing to ask for your support in ensuring that people who are working in frontline homelessness services are urgently prioritised for Covid-19 vaccination.

Here at St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity, we support people through the Vicar's Relief Fund which gives small grants to access accommodation or prevent homelessness and through the Frontline Network, which provides funding, community and resource for frontline workers across the UK. We are best known for our annual BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal with St Martin-in-the-Fields which, in the last two years, has raised over £8 million.

People without a home are at high risk of harm from Covid-19. They are substantially more likely to report having chronic diseases such as asthma, COPD, heart problems and stroke.<sup>1</sup> Research has also found that people with no home have an average of seven long-term health conditions, far higher than people in their 90s.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, just as residents of care homes are at higher clinical risk of severe disease, so are those who use single homeless hostels and other shared homeless accommodation for rough sleepers.

Correspondingly, frontline homelessness staff are at increased personal risk of exposure to infection and of transmitting that infection to the vulnerable people they work with, and any vulnerable people they are living with.

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<sup>1</sup> D. Lewer et al (2019) Health-related quality of life and prevalence of six chronic diseases in homeless and housed people: a cross-sectional study in London and Birmingham, England; BMJ Open

<sup>2</sup> Raphael Rogans-Watson et al (2020) Premature frailty, geriatric conditions and multimorbidity among people experiencing homelessness: a cross-sectional observational study in a London hostel



Through our [Frontline Network](#) of frontline workers across the four nations of the UK, we surveyed how those working with people experiencing homelessness feel about the situation:

- 10% of frontline workers have been advised if they and their colleagues are to be considered under priority groups for Covid-19 vaccination;
- 87% of frontline workers are concerned about the health and safety of their work environment in relation to Covid-19;
- 92% of frontline workers consider that receiving the vaccine would improve their ability to continue delivering services to people who have higher rates of illness and compromised immunity than the wider population.

The survey was undertaken on 10/11 January 2021 with 140 frontline workers responding.

**I therefore ask that working with people experiencing homelessness is, as a matter of urgency, treated as a priority occupation for vaccination.**

I would greatly appreciate if you could raise this issue with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Covid-19 Vaccine Deployment.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Bissett  
Director  
BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal with St Martin-in-the-Fields  
St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity  
St Martin's Frontline Network