

21100 In praise of the Queen effect: why her vaccine speech will make a real difference

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For the Queen, less has always been more. She knows that the less she says, the more mystery and 'soft power' she assumes. That's why she has never given an interview.

And that's why, when she does intervene in public events, it's all the more effective.

This week, her Zoom call to the senior officers overseeing the vaccine delivery across the four UK nations was a fine example of her understated, selfless style. She didn't speak about her own concerns about her husband Philip, then in his seventh day at King Edward VII's Hospital in London.

Instead, she gently said that people who refuse the coronavirus vaccine "ought to think about other people, rather than themselves".

The Queen only spoke of herself as an example to others. The jab, she said, was "very quick", adding: "It didn't hurt at all."

The indirect, subtle message was that, if the vaccine didn't hurt the Queen at 94, then it's not likely to hurt the great majority of the population who are younger than her. What's more, if the most influential person in the country – if not the world – with a top team of medical advisers, has had the jab, surely it must be safe for the less powerful.

Over the last few weeks, the Royal Family has been involved in a bid to increase the vaccine take-up, not least among ethnic minorities.

But it is the Queen, more than any other Royal Family member, who really does have an extraordinary effect on the nation.

The fact that she went out of her way to back the vaccine shows the nation she cares. The chattering metropolitan classes may ask what difference will her address make – surely there must be more relevant people who can connect more effectively with the British? But the truth of it is that, for many people – and many of those from ethnic minorities – the Queen does have a greater 'nudge' effect than anyone else on the planet.

That is thanks to her great age and her 69 years on the throne, and her obvious love for the Commonwealth – a relationship that is reciprocated by many British people with Commonwealth links to Africa, India and the Caribbean. Many of those from ethnic minorities might distrust Government edicts about the vaccine – but will be much more open to a gentle suggestion from a monarch who really does put duty and public service above everything.

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