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# Technology is the route to lasting freedom from Covid

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Just as it did 12 months ago, our government is faced with unenviable decisions to make about Covid. Last year it was how to go into lockdown. This time, it's how to get out.

How do we strike the balance between breaking the back of infections and illness, being well protected by vaccines and having the confidence to show that we really are ready to roll? How do we get people back to pubs, restaurants, shops, theatres and sports stadia en masse without unravelling all the progress we've made in combating Covid-19?

There are a multitude of issues for ministers to grapple with — public health, naturally, being of paramount importance.

Thankfully, the UK blazed a trail with the vaccine programme, giving millions of us hope and a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel. But the eureka moment of vaccine discovery has settled into the realisation that, even with most people protected, the spectre of the virus will likely linger on for some time to come.

To help us, technology companies have devised a complete freedom passport which uses AI through a mobile phone app.

This will enable people to take a range of Covid-19 tests, record, verify and display the results accurately on the phone. In addition, a vaccine certificate can be uploaded and connected to a national database for verification purposes. Consequently, people can then demonstrate their Covid health status, clearing a major obstacle for working, socialising and travelling in large numbers.

There's much discussion over how the use of vaccine or freedom passports may have implications for individual privacy rights and, of course, that has to be a factor in any government's thinking.

However, it seems that the overwhelming majority believe that the issue that is of paramount importance is people's health and protection and if freedom certificates are a necessity, then that is a price that has to be paid.

We all have our opinions and no decision is a simple one. Vaccines are the nearest it gets to defeating a deadly virus but even they alone will not be the complete answer. The innovative use of existing drugs has mitigated the impact of Covid-19 on patients and is playing an important role too, as will continued scientific and technological developments. There can be no freedom from infection spreading without the continuous mass testing of populations whether at home, at work or in social situations.

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