

COVID-19 Update Briefing:

Vaccination and unpaid carers

(ENGLAND ONLY) – 4 Mar 2021

Vaccination against COVID-19: update regarding unpaid carers

Carers were included in the Joint Committee on Vaccination Immunisation (JCVI) advice to Government on 30 December, clarifying their inclusion in Priority 6 of the vaccine priority list.

The Government announced on Sunday 14th February, that the following Monday (15th February) unpaid carers will be included in the next phase of the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine in England and will begin to be called forward for vaccine.

This briefing is England only: [Scotland have already included carers within the summary list in Priority 6](#), as has [Northern Ireland Assembly](#) and Welsh Assembly.

What has Carers UK been doing?

Carers UK have been working to ensure that the Government clearly communicates that unpaid carers are included in priority group 6 in all their communications. We continue to press the Government to provide clear and targeted communications about the inclusion of unpaid carers in priority group 6. We have also been talking to Government about the Standard Operational Procedure for the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination to unpaid carers, which we expect to be published soon.

What the Government has said about roll-out so far:

Following the Government announcement of Priority 6 group vaccinations beginning, NHS England wrote to GPs on 13th February regarding identifying people within the Priority 6 cohort, including unpaid carers. You can read the letter here:

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/02/C1124-Vaccination-of-cohorts-5-6-and-additional-funding-for-residential-settings-13-Feb-2021-1.pdf

In Annex B, the letter states that:

“Eligible adult carers will be contacted via the National Booking System (NBS) to receive an invitation to book vaccination through Vaccination Centres, Community Pharmacy LVSs or Hospital Hubs, once a list compiled by NHSE/I in conjunction with Local Authorities has been produced.

Local systems may choose to flex these arrangements based on the needs of their populations and PCN LVSs should be prepared to administer vaccination to eligible adult carers who choose to receive vaccination in LVS settings, and are coded as such on the GP system.

Local systems including both the NHS and Local Authorities should continue to collaborate to ensure that individuals within cohort 6 who are resident in settings of multiple occupancy or are adult carers not flagged within GP systems can be appropriately offered vaccination.

Further guidance relating to the vaccination of eligible adult carers will be published as a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) week commencing 15/02/21. This SOP will detail the specific actions that will be required by Local Authorities, carers organisations, DWP, the NHS and adult carers themselves.

*We recognise the difficulties in identifying people in this group. **We are asking the third sector to help us identify people through public campaigns, with an ‘ask’ that eligible unpaid carers contact their local authority to make themselves known so they can be prioritised for vaccination through the National Booking Service.***

PCN LVSs should also prioritise invitations to carers aged 16 and 17 flagged within their systems to align with their known allocations of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is the only currently authorised vaccine under Regulation 174 which can be used for individuals aged 16 and 17.

PCN LVSs should coordinate the offer of vaccination to carers flagged in their systems so that the carer and the at-risk individual they care for can be vaccinated at the same time if both individuals are registered within a practice in that PCN.

When administering vaccinations to at risk individuals who are housebound, the PCN LVS should, where it is clinically appropriate to do so, vaccinate both the at-risk individual and their main carer (if present) at the same time.”

NB: JCVI definition changed on 12 Feb 2021

The Green Book contains the advice from the Joint Committee on Immunisation and Vaccination (JCVI) to Government. It republishes it's advice and keeps it updated. The new definitions is as [follows](#) (see p. 10/11):

Those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable (see note).

In a note it adds:

Those clinically vulnerable to COVID include children with severe neuro-disabilities, those who are designated Clinically Extremely vulnerable (CEV), adults who have underlying health conditions (as defined in table 3), and those who need care because of advanced age. Eligible carers should be vaccinated in priority group 6.

The GP communication makes it clear that younger carers aged 16 to 18 are covered, which we have welcomed.

Carers UK estimates that up to one third of all carers will have been vaccinated already due to age, working in health or care, or because they are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or have an underlying condition that puts them in cohort six.

What steps have happened so far and are we saying about roll-out?

Government is working on guidance for the roll-out of for Priority 6 for carers and expect this to be published shortly. Carers UK is involved in these discussions. This is a phased process.

What has happened so far?

- Carers who are in receipt of or eligible for Carer's Allowance have been directly contacted and are now able to book directly through the National Booking System. Carers UK has warmly welcomed this move and the fact that the Department for Work and Pensions used this definition. This type of action is unprecedented and positive.
- Carers who were flagged on their local GP patient record have started to be contacted by their local Primary Care Network/GP practice. If carers have not been contacted this way, they should check what is happening with their GP practice and register as a carer.
 - All lists are being deduplicated which reduces the likelihood of someone being offered an appointment twice.
- The current guidance to GP practices, CCGs, and PCNs also suggests that if carers accompany someone to an appointment with someone who is in any of the Priority Groups, then they should be vaccinated at the same time.
- The current guidance on vaccinating housebound patients also recommends vaccinating eligible carers at the same time.

The next phase is now underway.

Local authorities have been contacted, asked to nominate a data lead for this work, and for data on eligible carers to be submitted so that carers can be invited for vaccination. Local authorities have been given the **deadline of 10 March 2021** to submit these data. These lists will then be deduplicated and eligible carers invited.

Local authorities will be working with local carers' organisations to identify eligible carers on their lists, where those local carers' organisations have data sharing agreements or are able to share carers' contacts with the local authorities.

Many local areas are already working collaboratively. Some local carers' organisations have data sharing agreements. Some are seeking consent from carers to pass on details.

Publicity: encouraging take-up

Carers UK is part of a Charities Coalition to encourage people to have the vaccine if they are offered it. This work started on Saturday 27 February – see [here](#). We will continue to work with DHSC regarding vaccine take-up.

We have also encouraged a targeted campaign for unpaid carers, similar to the flu jab campaign run by Public Health England – e.g. 2020 flu campaign, to be based on the materials for health and care workers for the COVID-19 vaccine.

We are concerned about vaccine hesitancy (i.e. people who are reluctant to have the vaccine) in some communities, particularly BAME communities, and how this will affect carers. Given the additional challenges in identifying carers in BAME communities, we believe that there needs to be additional focus on making sure these carers have the best accurate information possible, ideally led by community voices.

What about carers who are unidentified/not known or on current lists?

Some local areas have been very proactive with asking unknown carers to come forward and are experiencing very high demand for information and advice locally. We hope that the Standing Operating Procedure, when it is published, will have further information on how carers who are not identified or known on current lists can be identified.

Carers UK's information and advice services are also experiencing high demand across a range of queries. We are signposting carers to local carers' organisations and local authorities if they have queries about how identification is working in local areas.

Our hope is that there is efficient and effective collaboration locally, good data sharing, and support to ensure that carers receive the vaccine quickly and are correctly identified.

NHS website and information clarity

We have heard from carers about the fact that the National Booking System only has a reference to people being eligible for Carer's Allowance being able to book. This is because it reflects the stages already completed.

However, there is a page which looks at eligibility for the vaccine. In relation to carers it only mentioned eligibility for Carer's Allowance. Carers UK raised the problem with NHS England and we are delighted that this has now been updated. The link is here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

We hope that this will help to reduce confusion amongst carers, whilst also ensuring that carers talking to GP practices will not be turned away because they are not entitled to Carer's Allowance.

What will Carers UK be doing next?

- Updating our information, advice and guidance for carers and will be posting information here: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-vaccine-faqs

- Responding to carers' queries about the vaccination – this is the key issue through our advice services currently.
- Working with Government to get delivery of the vaccination right for carers.
- Providing regular updates as the situation unfolds.

About Carers UK

Carers UK is the leading charity representing the millions of people who provide unpaid care for ill, older, or disabled family members, or friends. We provide advice, information and support as well as providing insights into carer's experience.

Contact us

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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to ensure that this briefing is accurate, it is not an authoritative statement of the law. Please note that there will be periodic updates as new information is released. Please ensure that you have the most up to date version.

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