

COVID-19 Update Briefing: Vaccination and unpaid carers (ENGLAND ONLY) – 15 Feb 2021

Vaccination against COVID-19: update for 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 Operation Procedure for the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination to unpaid carers, we expect this 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 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.”

When will the guidance be out regarding roll-out?

Government is working on guidance for the roll-out of for Priority 6 for adult carers and expects this to be published week commencing 15 February 2021. Carers UK is involved in these discussions.

We will communicate the guidance as soon as it is published.

What 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 in February 2020. Carers UK is involved in these discussions.

The following are Carers UK’s views about roll-out that we have put forward to Government:

- All carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance should be directly contacted. We do not yet know whether this will be directly or through data sharing with local authorities.
- Adult social care departments should use their carer lists of those whom they have assessed or jointly assessed/are in contact with.
- Close working and data sharing with local carers' and disability organisations to identify carers within the right cohorts, according to the definition.
- GP lists of carers are a good source of data that could be used.
- There needs to be a system locally where carers can be registered if they are not already e.g. through GP practices or through another route.
- Public Health England should have a targeted campaign for unpaid carers similar to that of the flu jab – e.g. 2020 flu campaign and based on the materials for health and care workers for the COVID-19 vaccine.
- When carers are invited to come for either a flu jab or the COVID-19 vaccination, that the GP practice automatically registers the carer, to ensure that there is a record for the future. This would leave a positive legacy.

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 rightly identified.

Who might be covered?

The letter sent to all GPs from NHS England defines eligible carers as:

Those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person, someone who has a severe mental illness or whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill.

There are no further details about the definition of carers other than that provided above. Government will set out the scope in the guidance which we expect to be published in week commencing 15 February 2021.

Carers UK has asked that the definition is sufficiently broad and includes in scope:

- Parents of disabled children, where the child would be vulnerable if the parent were unable to provide normal levels of care and support because they were ill with COVID.

We are pleased to see in the GP letter that 16 to under 18 year olds will be included and the direction given to GP practices.

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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