

From:

Name Redacted

Unpaid Carers Policy  
8 February 2021

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport  
Minister for Public Health and Sport

## COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME – UPDATE ON UNPAID CARERS COHORT

### Purpose

1. To update you on the details for the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine to unpaid carers who are in group 6 of the JCVI priority list.

### Priority

2. **Immediate** – You will wish to note this information as the rollout to carers is planned for later this month.

### Background

3. You will be aware that adult unpaid carers are included in the JCVI priority list at group 6 with the following definition: *“Those who are in receipt of a carer’s allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill.”*

4. You stated on 23 December: “Today, all members will receive what is becoming the weekly letter from us to them ... **Members will see that in the number 6 place on the list are unpaid carers, including all adult carers and young carers aged from 16 to 18. They are where we said they would be.**”

5. In her update on 2 February, the First Minister confirmed that unpaid carers will start to receive invitations for their vaccination the third week in February.

6. Official statistics indicate there are around 690,000 unpaid carers (including young carers) in Scotland however we recognise this is likely an underestimate. Those age 65+ will already be scheduled for vaccination in groups 1-5 so we estimate there are around 500,000 aged 16-65. Of those we estimate 57,000 will have been called already because they are in front line health and social care roles. This leaves us with an estimated 450,000 unpaid carers left in group 6.

7. We should emphasise there is considerable uncertainty in these estimates. Polling last summer indicated that up to 400,000 additional people had taken up caring roles during the pandemic.

8. The definition of unpaid carer in Scotland is broad - “those who provide or intend to provide care” - and there are a huge variety of types of caring role with

varying levels of intensity. We anticipate that not all unpaid carers will feel it is necessary to come forward at this stage if they are providing care that doesn't put them or the cared-for person at risk, such as dropping off shopping. The approach we are taking is not to limit the offer of the vaccine to certain types of caring and to base our approach on trust and respect for the individual as well as making the user-journey as flexible as possible to accommodate busy and pressured lives.

9. We understand it is your expectation that we proactively reach as many unpaid carers as possible, so have been developing exploring a number of options to ensure this happens and to meet FM's timescale commitment.

10. There is no single register of unpaid carers and, with local data patchy and no universal means of verification of their role, this is a challenging group to reach. We have therefore developed the following two stage approach:

### **Proposed approach**

#### *Phase 1 – Social Security recipients from 15 February*

11. After exploring the various available datasets, we have concluded that the data held by Social Security Scotland is suitable for use for this cohort as it enables us to identify unpaid carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance, Young Carer Grant and Child Winter Heating Payment. We anticipate that we will reach around 100,000 carers through this route.

12. A data sharing agreement between NHS and Social Security Scotland is now in place and carers in receipt of these benefits will begin to receive letters from 15 February with a scheduled vaccine appointment. As with previous cohorts, if the appointment is unsuitable for the carer, they will be able to reschedule to a time or place more appropriate.

13. After consultation with carer stakeholders and carers, we will seek to ensure that most carers have at least 5 days between the letter being sent and the appointment to allow carers to make alternative arrangements for care. However, this may not be possible for the whole cohort, due to the phased nature of the lettering planned. No-one will have less than two days and rescheduling is clearly set out as an option in the letter.

#### *Phase 2 – self-referral route to launch from 1 March*

14. Given the challenges with other datasets, we are working to develop a route that allows carers to self-refer themselves for the vaccine. This is the first time this approach has been used in this programme. Please see the **Annex** for a diagram of the user journey for both the phone and online self-referral process which will be part of the self-referral platform. The platform is currently still under development and there are plans to test it with users before launch.

15. In order to deter those who are not unpaid carers who may try to use this route to access their vaccine early we are building in two "screening questions" into the process to ask high-level information about the caring role. There is still a risk with this approach but after careful consideration, we feel that there would be more challenge if we made the process too complex for carers.

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16. We are working with all national and local carer organisations to ensure we are promoting this self-referral route to those they support and will be providing a template letter so they can share with all carers on their books.
17. We have also secured £100,000 from the health budget to develop a tailored marketing campaign with Public Health Scotland to reach more carers who would not otherwise know about the self-referral option.
18. The carers campaign will align with the current “Scotland it’s time to roll up our sleeves” creative treatment but will take into account the particular considerations for unpaid carers. The key aims are to communicate:
- i. Unpaid carers are now eligible for vaccine
  - ii. Who qualifies as an unpaid carer in Scotland
  - iii. How to register
19. The campaign will launch alongside the self-referral route on 1 March on radio, press and digital.
20. Given the large number of unpaid carers, we are seeking to ensure the phone lines are adequately staffed for the period of the campaign. As carers aged 65+ will have already been offered their vaccine due to their age, we expect that the requirement for the phone line option may be lessened with younger carers choosing the online option.
21. Although we will not completely close the self-referral route for carers after 4 weeks, we understand the need to move the programme forward and will seek to encourage as many people to come forward within the month of March as possible.

Added value

22. We see this as an opportunity to reach many unpaid carers who would not otherwise have been in touch with any formal support and are exploring scope to offer them further signposting to support services or information about their rights. For example, the offer of a tailored leaflet at the point of vaccination letting them know about local carer centres, their rights under the Carers (Scotland) Act and relevant Social Security benefits.

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23. As well as the marketing campaign which will launch on 1 March, we plan to prepare a news release for 12 February and include information on the rollout of the carers cohort in the daily briefing for that day.

**Conclusion**

**24. You are asked to note the above information.**

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Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constituent Interest	General Awareness
Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People  Minister for Older People and Equalities			X X		

DG Community Health and Social Care  
 Chief Medical Officer  
 Deputy Chief Medical Officer  
 National Clinical Director  
 Chief Scientist  
 Chief Pharmaceutical Officer  
 Chief Dental Officer  
 Chief Nursing Officer  
 Dr Syed Ahmed  
 Covid Director of Public Health  
 Healthier Comms  
 Davie Hutchison  
 Liz Lloyd  
 Jeanette Campbell

Covid-19 Policy Mailbox  
 Vaccines Division, Covid Public Health Directorate  
 Covid-19 Health Comms  
 Covid-19 Policy  
 Health Group Hub

Donna Bell  
 Gillian Barclay  
 Anna Kynaston  
 Kate Hall  
 Iain MacAllister

Name Redacted  
 Name Redacted  
 Name Redacted  
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Name Redacted  
 Jamie MacDougall  
 Name Redacted  
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HIGH LEVEL USER JOURBEY DIAGRAM

