

## **Unpaid Carers and the Coronavirus Vaccine Booster Programme**

**Updated and shared: 7 October 2021**

The Coronavirus Vaccine Booster Programme has been launched and unpaid carers who were eligible as part of Priority Group 6 in the first phase of the vaccination programme, are eligible for the booster jab.,

The [Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) for vaccinating unpaid carers has now been updated and published](#)

This is a summary of the SOP and how eligible unpaid carers will be identified for the booster vaccine. You may find it helpful to read the SOP in full (linked above) alongside this summary.

### **How will the Booster Programme work?**

Those who were in Priority Groups 1 – 9 in the first phase of the vaccine programme (full list below) will be offered a 'booster' vaccine.

Those who are being offered the booster vaccine are:

- people who live and work in care homes
- frontline health and social care workers
- people aged 50 and over
- people aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from Coronavirus
- unpaid carers aged 16 and over
- people aged 16 and over who live with someone who is more likely to get infections

People will be invited for their booster vaccine **no earlier than 6 months after their second dose.**

Unpaid carers who were identified during phase 1 (identification was through entitlement to Carer's Allowance, GP records, or receiving support from a Local Authority and/or Carer Support Organisation), will be contacted by the NHS Call and Recall service or their GP for booster vaccinations.

### **When will carers receive their booster jab?**

All those eligible for the booster vaccine, including unpaid carers, will be able to book and receive their booster vaccination **no earlier than 6 months after the completion of their second dose**. This is in line with JCVI guidance.

### **How unpaid carers will be contacted?**

The NHS will issue invitations directly to eligible carers via text message and/or letters. Unpaid carers will also receive reminders.

There will be at least six months between carers receiving their second vaccine and receiving the invitation for the booster jab.

Carers should wait to receive the invitation as the vaccination programme will have a record of their status as a carer and when they received their second dose.

Unpaid carers identified through having a carer's flag on their GP record will be contacted by their GP practice who are delivering the vaccination programme through the local Primary Care network. All other eligible unpaid carers will be invited through the National Booking System.

The letter from the NHS sent to carers inviting them to book their booster jab also advises them to approach their GP to ensure they have a carers flag on their records to ensure they get future vaccines and support they are eligible for.

### **Can carers and care workers have the Coronavirus vaccine booster at the same time as the flu vaccine?**

The JCVI has advised that people can have the flu and Coronavirus vaccines at the same time.

The NHS is now considering where it's appropriate for co-administration to be used to support the roll out of both the booster and flu vaccination programmes, and where waiting to deliver one vaccine does not unnecessarily delay administering the other vaccine.

People are being encouraged to take up the offer of both vaccines (if eligible) when they receive the invitation so they get both vaccines rather than waiting for the possibility of getting them together.

### **Can the carer and the person they care for get the booster vaccine at the same time?**

If the carer and the person they care for are both eligible for the vaccine booster and had their second dose at the same time, they will likely get their invitation for the booster at the same time too.

There will need to be at least six months between when the carer received their second dose and receiving their booster vaccine. If it has been six months since the carer's second dose and they'd like to have the booster at the same time as the person they care for (it is important that it has also been six months since the person they care for had their second dose and that their booster vaccination is not unduly delayed) then carers should let their GP or the vaccine centre know.

### **Which carers are eligible for the Coronavirus vaccine booster?**

The eligibility for carers for the booster vaccine is the same as it was during the first phase of the vaccine roll out when carers were part of Priority Group 6. The JCVI and the [Public Health England \(PHE\) Green Book](#) have outlined that unpaid carers eligible for the Coronavirus vaccine are:

“Those who are eligible for 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” (page 11 of the Green Book, linked above)

Those clinically vulnerable to Coronavirus are listed in the Green Book and include:

- Children with severe neuro-disabilities
- Those who are designated Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) and were in Priority Group 4 for the first phase of the vaccination programme
- Adults who have underlying health conditions
- Those who need care because of advanced age

It is important to remember that for the booster programme, **all adults aged over 50 will be invited.**

Contact the [Policy Team](#) if you hear of difficulties of carers accessing the booster vaccine.

### **Young carers**

At present, only the Pfizer vaccine is authorised for use in those aged under 18 years old. Therefore, eligible 16 or 17-year-olds will need to access vaccination via their local GP vaccination service. Where necessary, the GP team will support the young carer if there are issues concerning consent which is consistent with current practice about other treatments and immunisations. Detailed information about consent for vaccination is in [Chapter 2 of the Green Book](#) and includes the requirements for children.

Children aged 12-15 can now access Coronavirus vaccinations in line with JCVI guidance released on 3 September 2021. Young carers can now access vaccinations as part of this approach.

### **How will carers be identified for the booster vaccine?**

In line with new NHS guidance, locally held data submitted by Local Authorities and their partner carers' organisations in Phase 1 can be refreshed locally to send invitations to newly identified carers.

If you have a data sharing agreement in place with your local authority, you may get a request to share the most up to date data. If you do not – local areas will likely refresh the data set they had in March.

Carers are being invited to get the booster vaccine based on the 4 ways that carers were identified in the initial roll out of the vaccine:

- those in receipt of or entitled to a carer's allowance.
- those known to GPs who have a 'carer's flag' on their primary care record
- those known to Local Authorities who receive support following a carer's assessment.
- those known to local carers organisations to be actively receiving support.

Once data collected from these sources has been added to the national booking system, it is not possible to add any additional new eligible unpaid carers to this system.

Where GP teams and Local Authorities receive new enquiries from unpaid carers requesting the Coronavirus vaccination, GPs and local authorities are being told they should continue to apply their normal process for identifying their eligibility through statutory carers assessment or assignment of a carer's flag on the GP record. Where GP teams identify new unpaid carers, they are being advised to follow NICE Guidelines and record this on their primary care record. This will help provide more up to date records for carers to access other vaccinations and support.

### **Data collection**

Data on unpaid carers who are registered with their GP will be refreshed as part of the GP data collection process. Unpaid carers identified by the GP carer's flag will be called for the booster vaccination by their GP practice, who will be working as part of local GP vaccination services delivering vaccinations through a local Primary Care Network.

Data collection on Department for Work and Pensions carers in receipt of or entitled to Carer's Allowance may only be undertaken centrally. It can therefore only be refreshed on a national basis.

In line with NHS guidance, Local Authorities and carers organisations, alongside NHS partners in local and regional vaccination operations teams are advised that they **can elect to refresh locally held data**.

Irrespective of whether local systems decide to refresh their data, the NHS call and recall service will draw on the lists provided in March 2021 to invite carers on the local authority list for the booster vaccine.

As in Phase 1, all other known unpaid carers will be invited for booster vaccinations via the NHS call and recall service so they can book using the National Booking Service (NBS). The NHS will issue invitations directly to eligible carers via the appropriate text messages and letters of invitation and reminders

**FAQs for unpaid carers**

Carers Trust have [developed these FAQs for carers](#) that you could share with the cares you support or use to develop your own FAQs.

**Get in touch**

Please do continue to keep in touch and share with [Carers Trust](#) your experience of how the vaccine booster programme is working in your area. If you have any questions please do get in touch with the [Policy Team](#) and [Network Development Team](#).