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# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) standard operating procedure

## COVID-19 vaccine deployment programme: unpaid carers (JCVI priority cohort 6)

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**This guidance is correct at the time of publishing. However, as it is subject to updates, please use the hyperlinks to confirm the information you are disseminating to the public is accurate.**

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# Glossary

<b>CCG</b>	Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>CQC</b>	Care Quality Commission
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>HH</b>	Hospital Hub
<b>ICS</b>	Integrated Care System
<b>JCVI</b>	Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation
<b>LVS</b>	Local Vaccination Service
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>NBS</b>	National Booking Service
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NIMS</b>	National Immunisation Management System
<b>NIVS</b>	National Immunisation Vaccination System
<b>PHE</b>	Public Health England
<b>PCN</b>	Primary Care Network
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>SRO</b>	Senior Responsible Officer
<b>S4C</b>	Skills for Care
<b>STP</b>	Sustainability and Transformation Partnership
<b>VC</b>	Vaccination Centre

# 1 Introduction

Unpaid carers play a vital role. The nature of unpaid care is broad, and the roles and responsibilities that carers provide varies both in scope and intensity. They can be family members or friends, adults or children, who provide crucial care to a person who, due to a lifelong condition, be it to their physical and/or mental health, disability, or serious injury, simply cannot cope without their support.

The Joint Committee on Immunisation and Vaccination (JCVI) has set the Phase One priorities<sup>1</sup> for the rollout of the COVID-19 Vaccination programme. The key principle underpinning the JCVI's approach to identifying nine priority cohorts in Phase one has been the protection of those at greatest clinical risk from COVID-19, and protection of the frontline health and social care workforce. It reflects the vital role of those unpaid carers that they have been explicitly recognised within priority group 6 for COVID-19 vaccination.

The JCVI definition of an unpaid carer has been clarified in Public Health England's [Green Book](#) for COVID-19. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) seeks to support unpaid carers' access to the COVID-19 vaccination as part of priority cohort 6.

This SOP draws on national and local sources for known carers, to help identify and enable them to be invited quickly for vaccination, as well as making provision for those unpaid carers who may not already be known to the health and social care system to come forward.

## 2 Purpose

This standard operating procedure (SOP) has been developed to support the consistent approach to the offer of COVID-19 vaccination to unpaid carers within priority cohort 6. This includes:

- identification of eligible unpaid carers to be invited for vaccination
- roles and responsibilities within local and national systems
- how vaccination services should work to deliver COVID-19 vaccination to unpaid carers.

<sup>1</sup> [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation: advice on priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination, 30 December 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

This SOP is intended to support Local Authorities, the NHS Vaccination Programme and local carers organisations deliver the strong system leadership and partnership working which is essential to ensure local arrangements are in place to deliver the national offer for vaccination.

The SOP describes the framework for vaccination delivery, focusing on the definition, identification and necessary actions needed to enable eligible unpaid carers to receive the vaccine and to monitor uptake.

It is not intended to disrupt existing vaccination arrangements for those within a higher priority for vaccination, for example, an unpaid carer who is over 65 years-old should receive a vaccine as part of cohort 5.

This SOP is complementary to the [clinical guidance](#) to support the safe and effective delivery of the vaccination programme and will be updated as we learn of potential improvements from operational delivery.

## 3 Scope

This SOP focuses on the process to enable eligible unpaid carers to be identified and invited by the NHS vaccination programme, so that they can book an appointment for their first vaccination.

### 3.1 Identification of unpaid carers

There are a number of existing sources that will be drawn from to identify unpaid carers. They are:

- 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 are in receipt of support following a carer's assessment
- those known to **local carers organisations** to be actively receiving care and support.

Existing data sources will not identify further eligible unpaid carers for whom an application process is being finalised.

Where GP teams and LAs receive new enquiries from unpaid carers requesting priority vaccination, 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 because of the ongoing benefits. Where carers meet the eligibility thresholds, GP teams and LAs should support access to priority vaccination. If this approach is made after the transfer of existing information has already taken place they should direct / support unpaid carers to self-report and access the application process which will be made available through the National Booking Service.

## 3.2 Eligibility

The JCVI has identified unpaid carers within priority cohort 6. The JCVI definition is further clarified by the PHE Green Book on COVID-19.

### **PHE Green Book<sup>2</sup> – Adult Carer**

**“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.”**

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 of the Green Book)
- those who need care because of advanced age.

### Examples

An unpaid carer requiring a vaccination therefore can be, but is not limited to:

<sup>2</sup> [COVID-19 Green Book chapter 14a \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-green-book/covid-19-green-book-chapter-14a)

- Someone who cares for a person who is within JCVI priority cohorts 1-6, provides close personal care or is the sole or primary carer.
- An adult family member or friend providing daily face-to-face care to a person who, because of their advanced age, requires support but is still living in their own home.
- A person caring for an adult with Down's Syndrome.
- A parent/foster parent caring for a young person who is receiving Personal Independence Payments (PIP) because of a severe neuro-disability.
- Any adult providing supplementary unpaid care to an older person who is self-funding their own care package, for example through a domiciliary care agency.
- Two siblings who equally share and provide 24-hour care to an older person with dementia in addition to their own family and work commitments. If either sibling was to fall ill, the other would not be able to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the older person. Both siblings would be considered the primary carer.

#### Where unpaid carers will already be vaccinated

It is likely that up to a third of unpaid carers will already be eligible for, or already have received, a vaccine if they are:

- aged 65+
- clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)
- working in a frontline health or social care role.

They may also be identified and called for vaccination in cohort 6 because they have underlying health conditions leading to greater risk of disease / mortality.

Where any person could be classified within more than one JCVI priority cohort, the higher priority is assumed.

### 3.3 Considerations for young carers

Carer's Allowance can be awarded to individuals who meet the eligibility criteria from the age of 16. For the purposes of this SOP an adult carer is used to include unpaid carers from aged 16. It is possible that some young carers may not be recognised as such by their families but may be known to their school, a voluntary sector young carers service, and/or to their local authority.

At present, only the Pfizer BioNtech 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 in relation to consent which is consistent with current practice in relation to other treatments and immunisations.

Vaccinations will not be offered to individuals under the age of 16 unless they are clinically vulnerable to COVID and the clinical criteria for vaccination as stated by JCVI have been met.

## 4 Overview of process

To maximise the effective delivery of the vaccination programme for unpaid carers, strong partnership working between Local Authorities, carer and voluntary organisations and the NHS will be required.

NHS Digital will draw on the relevant lists highlighted in section 3.1 to identify and call forward unpaid carers. This will happen on a phased basis, starting with those registered with their GP who are identified by the 'GP carer's flag' and those known to DWP as in receipt of, or entitled to, a Carer's Allowance.

Those identified by the GP carer's flag will be called by their GP practice who will be delivering vaccinations through a local Primary Care Network. This means the location of their vaccine appointment may not be at their own GP practice. It may be at another local GP site. All other unpaid carers are being invited via the NHS call and recall service to book using the National Booking Service (NBS). The NHS will issue invitations directly to the person via the appropriate method based on contact information available.

Where an eligible unpaid carer is intending to support the person they care for to attend a vaccination appointment arranged through the GP as part of priority cohort 6, and they also wish to receive their vaccination at the same time, they will need to make this known in advance.

If the carer and the person they care for are both registered with the same GP practice they should contact the surgery to check if they have been flagged as a carer on the GP practice management system. Where the GP practice is satisfied that the eligibility criteria have been met, they can add the carer's flag, where required, and advise the GP team via their local GP vaccination service that they are eligible for vaccination. The carer should take their letter of invitation from the NHS to that appointment.

### Identification, consent and vaccine information

The NBS can access the appropriate information for those unpaid carers who are known to the health and social care system. As each data source for known carers set out in section 3.1 is added to the booking system, more unpaid carers will be able to book using the NBS.

The NHS will send a letter of invitation and patient information leaflet to carers who are below age 64 and are eligible for a carer's allowance or have been identified as eligible by the local authority. Given the clinical considerations for young carers identified in section 3.3, the NHS will direct those who are aged 16 or 17 to the local GP vaccination service. Those over the age of 64 will have already been called for vaccination in a previous cohort.

GP practices will work with their local GP vaccination services to issue invitations to book by telephone or text.

Information about vaccinations is also provided at the vaccination site and consent will be verbally attained at the point of vaccination. There is no requirement to fill in or bring a consent form to the vaccination appointment for unpaid carers.

A person may be asked to prove their identity for the purpose of vaccination but not to prove their status as an unpaid carer. For example, unpaid carers *will not* be required to provide proof of receipt or entitlement to a carer's allowance.

### Data collection and protection

NHSEI, working with NHS Digital, have responsibility for requesting and processing the lists of known unpaid carers based on the sources identified within this SOP. NHSEI will ensure that all necessary data protection and governance arrangements are in place with partner organisations to facilitate this and it will only use this information to call people for vaccination.

A minimum data set will be requested by the NHS to undertake batch tracing to identify an individual's NHS numbers. This includes:

- NHS number
- Name
- DOB
- Address and postcode
- Gender/Sex.

The main data sources are:

- GP practice management data on those who are flagged as carers.
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data on those eligible for a carer's allowance.

- Local Authority data on those carers already known to be receiving care and support, based on the existing lists held by both the LA and local carers organisations.

To enable national data monitoring, vaccination sites are responsible for the collection of a minimum data set at the point of care which will enable the number of carers who are vaccinated to be monitored. For primary care services and community pharmacies, this will be recorded via Pinnacle, and for vaccination centres and hospital hubs via NIVS/ NIMS.

### Flexible arrangements

Invitation letters from the National Booking Service provide flexibility for carers to book online or over the telephone to make appointments.

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The following appendices provide further information on the process:

***Appendix 1 – Unpaid Carers Vaccination Process Chart***

***Appendix 2 – Data protection Information***

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## 5 Roles and responsibilities

This section details the roles and responsibilities for each organisation and the actions required.

### 5.1 Local Authorities

Local Authority adult social care departments have lead responsibility for collating existing information on carers who are already known to Local Authorities through the Carers Assessment, and those already known to local carers organisations who are actively receiving support or services through these organisations.

The information will be collected and transferred through a formal section 259 agreement established to meet the needs of the vaccination programme. This is the usual process by which NHS Digital instructs local authorities to provide data. Once collated, this will be used to issue invitations by the NHS call and recall service.

They should ensure appropriate data sharing agreements and privacy / consent arrangements are in place so the information they hold on those who have received a carer's assessment, support or services can be shared. The LA should ensure that appropriate data sharing agreements are in place to allow the LA to receive data from local carers organisations, and the subsequent sharing of that data with the NHS, as per Appendix 2.

The LA should establish a single point of contact for queries regarding unpaid carers. This could be delegated to a carers organisation where local agreements are in place.

The LA should provide communications about access to and eligibility for vaccination of unpaid carers in their local area, and work with local partners to communicate, encourage and enable eligible unpaid carers who are not already known to come forward.

Local Authorities should be aware of the specific clinical guidance for eligible unpaid carers who are aged 16 or 17.

The LA should work with local partners to ensure an appropriate level of information is available to carers about the vaccination programme, for example on how to create or find their NHS number by downloading the NHS app, or how to register with a GP if they don't already have one.

## 5.2 Local carers organisations

Local carers organisations should work closely with the LA to ensure that known, eligible unpaid carers have been appropriately captured within the LA's list.

They should ensure appropriate data sharing agreements and privacy / consent arrangements are in place so the information they hold on those who are actively receiving support or services can be shared.

Carers organisations should raise awareness among those who may be eligible within priority cohort 6 to recognise themselves as unpaid carers and to take action. This will include signposting previously unknown carers to the application process within the NBS to book a vaccination where they are eligible.

Carers organisations should be aware of the specific clinical guidance for eligible unpaid carers who are aged 16 or 17.

They should support unpaid carers to locate or establish their NHS number including the option to do this by downloading the NHS app, or registering with a GP if they don't already have one.

## 5.3 Department for Work and Pensions

DWP has worked with the NHS to establish the appropriate data sharing agreements for the information they hold on those eligible for a carer's allowance to be appropriately shared and processed. This information enables invitations for vaccination to be issued by the NHS call and recall service.

## 5.4 NHS Vaccination Programme

The NHS will process lists of unpaid carers as received from GP practice management systems, DWP, and Local Authorities to enable invitations via the National Booking Service, where appropriate.

## 5.5 NHS Vaccination Service Providers

The **National Booking Service** will provide a route for unpaid carers to book their vaccination at a vaccination centre or community pharmacy-led local vaccination service.

Vaccination delivery sites will ensure they utilise systems and processes set out in this SOP and other relevant operational frameworks. They should administer the vaccination (following the required clinical process), including gaining consent at the point of vaccination.

Vaccination delivery sites are clinically responsible for the administration of vaccinations in accordance with relevant guidance and operational frameworks.

Vaccination sites will also be responsible for the collection of a minimum data set at the point of care to enable the vaccination event to be recorded along with key data for monitoring in the usual way. The individual should be asked, by the person recording their vaccination, if they are a carer and this should be recorded as part of the minimum data set.

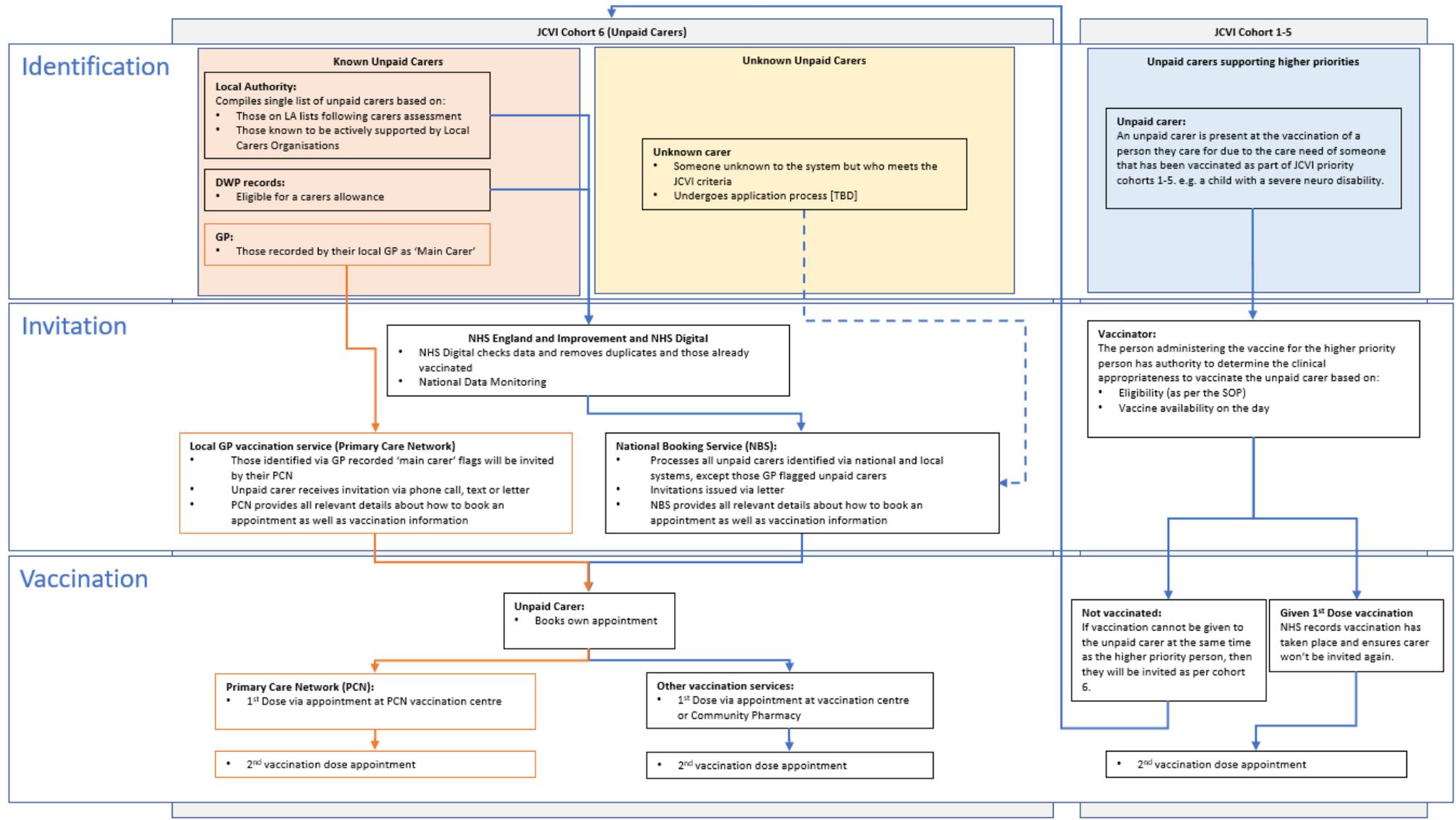
Vaccination sites should input data into their local data management systems NIVS (HHs and VCs only) and Pinnacle (LVS only) with automated transfer into NIMS.

Vaccination services will provide the recipient with a PHE record card, completed with the name of vaccine, batch number and date of their first dose of vaccination, a completion date and time for second vaccination.

They will recall individuals who have received their first dose of vaccine to attend for their second dose at the same location and issue reminders for the second vaccination appointment. Should a person fail to attend, they will ensure there are reminders and follow up.

At the point of delivery for second vaccination, they are to confirm records of first vaccination and complete the PHE record card with name of vaccine, batch number and date of second vaccination, while updating information on NIMS/NIVS/Pinnacle for the second vaccination as appropriate.

# Appendix 1: Unpaid carers vaccination process chart



Note: Those aged 16 or 17 will need to attend a vaccination appointment via their local GP vaccination service.

## Appendix 2: Data Protection Information

### Requesting of Information

NHS Digital is empowered, under Section 259 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to request information about unpaid carers from Local Authorities for the purpose of calling them for vaccination.

### Providing of Information

Under Section 259(10)(a) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, providing the data in response to a request will not breach any obligation of confidence owed by the person providing it. However, local authorities must determine for themselves whether they are willing and able to provide the requested data in response to the request by satisfying themselves that they are not subject to any express restriction on disclosure imposed by or under another Act (other than any restriction which allows disclosure if authorised by or under an Act) (s.259(10)(b)). This will extend to ensuring that they only collect data from carers organisations which they are entitled to request and collect from those organisations.

### Carers organisations

Carers organisations (from whom local authorities are likely to request data) must determine for themselves that they are lawfully able to provide the data to the local authorities and are not subject to any express restriction on disclosure imposed by or under another act (other than any restriction which allows disclosure if authorised by or under an act). Each organisation should, therefore, carry out their own due diligence in this regard in response to a request for data.

### Privacy notices

To provide greater transparency and to comply with the requirements of data protection law, local authorities or partners such as carers organisations may wish to update their privacy notices along the following lines:

#### *COVID-19 Vaccination Programme*

*The Department of Health and Social Care is rolling out a COVID-19 Vaccination Programme based on cohorts meeting specific criteria. In order to ensure you are given the opportunity to take up this vaccination we may share minimum and proportionate information about you to our NHS partners. Your rights under Data Protection Law remain unaffected.*