

Unpaid Carers FAQs

How and when will unpaid carers be able to access their COVID-19 vaccination?

Unpaid carers who are eligible under JCVI priority group 6 are now being invited to receive their first COVID-19 vaccination.

All unpaid carers who are already known to health and care services and whose contact details were passed to the NHS have now been invited to receive their first COVID-19 vaccination. They can use their NHS vaccine invitation to book an appointment online through the National Booking Service here: www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination. Those carers who have not already made themselves known as an unpaid carer to their local health and care services, should contact their GP practice to be assessed and registered as a carer so they can receive their COVID-19 vaccination.

There are many benefits to being registered with a GP as a carer. By doing so carers can be advised of local support services and be prioritised for certain vaccines including COVID-19 and the flu vaccine.

Which groups of carers are eligible to get their vaccine and are included in priority group 6?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has identified unpaid carers within priority cohort 6. The JCVI definition is further clarified by the Public Health England Green Book on COVID-19 and the Standard Operating Procedure for Unpaid Carers to be those who are either:

- Eligible for a carer's allowance
- Identified as a primary carer by their GP
- Receiving support following a carer's assessment by their local council or from a local carer's organisation
- The sole or primary carer who provides close personal care or face to face support for an elderly or disabled person who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 *

*Those clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 include:

- Children over the age of 12 with severe neuro-disabilities who tend to get recurrent respiratory tract infections and who frequently spend time in specialised residential care settings for children with complex needs;
- Those who are designated Clinically Extremely Vulnerable ([CEV](#));
- Adults who have underlying health conditions (as defined in table 3 of the [Green Book](#) which includes adults over 16 on the GP Learning Disability Register); and those who need care because of advanced age (over 65)

In some cases where caring responsibilities are shared, an additional person can be classed as a primary carer and receive a vaccination.

How are unpaid carers being identified?

The NHS started by collating lists of unpaid carers drawn from a mixture of national and local sources, including those who:

- Are eligible for a carer's allowance
- Are identified as a primary carer by their GP
- Are receiving support following a carer's assessment by their local council or from a local carer's organisation

We recognise that the above sources will not identify all eligible unpaid carers.

Unpaid carers who are not already identified as a carer will need to contact their GP practice to be assessed and registered as a carer, and subsequently will be offered a vaccination.

If you are an unpaid carer but are not known to health and care services, now is the time to make yourself known to your local GP practice. You will be able to get a vaccine and you will be eligible for wider support too.

I am a parent carer who provides care to a child/young adult with a special educational need or disability, can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Almost all children with COVID-19 have no symptoms or mild disease. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that only children at very high risk of catching the virus and serious illness, such as older children with severe neuro-disabilities in residential care, may be offered vaccination. If you care for a child under the age of 16 with a severe neuro disability then you will be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Carers of young adults, aged between 16 and 18, will be able to get their COVID-19 vaccine if the young adult they care for is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 as defined in table 3 of the [PHE Green Book](#).

I am a carer for someone with a mental health condition. Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The nature of unpaid care is broad, and the roles and responsibilities that carers provide varies both in scope and intensity. It can include help with everyday tasks such as getting out of bed and personal care such as bathing, helping with shopping and housework, and emotional support, like helping someone to cope with the symptoms of a mental illness.

If you are the sole or primary carer for someone who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 as defined in table 3 of the [PHE Green Book](#), then you will be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine as an unpaid carer. This includes those with severe mental illness, such as individuals with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, or any mental illness that causes severe functional impairment.

Equally if the person you look after is on the shielding list and considered to be [Clinically Extremely Vulnerable](#) due to an underlying health condition, separate to their mental illness, then you can get the COVID-19 vaccine as an unpaid carer.

Who is considered “clinically vulnerable” to COVID-19?

People who are defined as clinically vulnerable are thought to be at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Table 3 on pages 12 and 13 of [Public Health England’s Green Book](#) identifies the following conditions which are automatically deemed clinically vulnerable to COVID-19. This list includes people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.

A hospital clinician or GP can also add a patient to the list, based on their clinical judgement, because they consider them to be at very high risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

- **Chronic respiratory disease** Individuals with a severe lung condition, including those with asthma that requires continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) including chronic bronchitis and emphysema; bronchiectasis, cystic fibrosis, interstitial lung fibrosis, pneumoconiosis and bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD).
- **Chronic heart disease and vascular disease** Congenital heart disease, hypertension with cardiac complications, chronic heart failure, individuals requiring regular medication and/or follow-up for ischaemic heart disease. This includes individuals with atrial fibrillation, peripheral vascular disease or a history of venous thromboembolism.
- **Chronic kidney disease** Chronic kidney disease at stage 3, 4 or 5, chronic kidney failure, nephrotic syndrome, kidney transplantation.
- **Chronic liver disease** Cirrhosis, biliary atresia, chronic hepatitis.
- **Chronic neurological disease** Stroke, transient ischaemic attack (TIA). Conditions in which respiratory function may be compromised due to neurological disease (e.g. polio syndrome sufferers). This includes individuals with cerebral palsy, severe or profound learning disabilities, Down’s syndrome, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, dementia, Parkinson’s disease, motor neurone disease and related or similar conditions; or hereditary and degenerative disease of the nervous system or muscles; or severe neurological disability.
- **Diabetes mellitus** Any diabetes, including diet-controlled diabetes.
- **Immunosuppression** Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including patients undergoing chemotherapy leading to immunosuppression, patients undergoing radical radiotherapy, solid organ transplant recipients, bone marrow or stem cell transplant recipients, HIV infection at all stages, multiple myeloma or genetic disorders affecting the immune system (e.g. IRAK-4, NEMO, complement disorder, SCID).

Individuals who are receiving immunosuppressive or immunomodulating biological therapy including, but not limited to, anti-TNF, alemtuzumab, ofatumumab, rituximab, patients receiving protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors, and individuals treated with steroid sparing agents such as cyclophosphamide and mycophenolate mofetil. Individuals treated with or likely to be treated with systemic steroids for more than a month at a dose equivalent to prednisolone at 20mg or more per day for adults. Anyone with a history of haematological malignancy, including leukaemia, lymphoma, and myeloma and those with systemic lupus erythematosus and rheumatoid arthritis, and psoriasis who may require long term immunosuppressive treatments.

Most of the more severely immunosuppressed individuals in this group should already be flagged as CEV. Individuals who are not yet on the CEV list but who are about to receive highly immunosuppressive interventions or those whose level of immunosuppression is about to increase may be therefore be offered vaccine alongside the CEV group, if therapy can be safely delayed or there is sufficient time (ideally two weeks) before therapy commences. Some immunosuppressed patients may have a suboptimal immunological response to the vaccine (see Immunosuppression and HIV).

- **Asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen** This also includes conditions that may lead to splenic dysfunction, such as homozygous sickle cell disease, thalassemia major and coeliac syndrome.
- **Morbid obesity** Adults with a Body Mass Index ≥ 40 kg/m².
- **Severe mental illness** Individuals with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, or any mental illness that causes severe functional impairment.
- **Adult carers** 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.
- **Younger adults in long-stay nursing and residential care settings** Many younger adults in residential care settings will be eligible for vaccination because they fall into one of the clinical risk groups above (for example learning disabilities). Given the likely high risk of exposure in these settings, where a high proportion of the population would be considered eligible, vaccination of the whole resident population is recommended. Younger residents in care homes for the elderly will be at high risk of exposure, and although they may be at lower risk of mortality than older residents should not be excluded from vaccination programmes.
- **Adult household contacts of people with immunosuppression** Individuals who expect to share living accommodation on most days (and therefore for whom continuing close contact is unavoidable) with individuals who are immunosuppressed (defined as above).

What if I am not eligible to receive a carer's allowance, or have never applied for a carers allowance, will I still be able to get my vaccine?

So long as you are the sole or primary carer who provides close personal care or face to face support for an elderly or disabled person who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 in JCVI groups 1-6, you will be eligible to get your COVID-19 vaccine.

All unpaid carers who are already known to health and care services and whose contact details were passed to the NHS have now been invited to receive their first COVID-19 vaccination. Unpaid carers who are not already identified as a carer will need to contact their GP practice to be assessed and registered as a carer and subsequently will be offered a vaccination.

If you are an unpaid carer but are not known to health and care services, now is the time to make yourself known to your local practice team. You will be able to get a vaccine and you will be eligible for wider support too.

What if the person I care for has more than one carer?

Where caring responsibilities are shared equally and both carers are critical to continuity of care for a person who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, they will both be eligible to receive a vaccination.

Who should I contact if I am a carer, but I am unsure if I am eligible to receive my COVID-19 vaccine?

Unpaid carers who are not already identified as a carer will need to contact their GP practice to be assessed and registered as a carer and subsequently will be offered a vaccination.

You can also contact your local council or [local carers organisation](#) and they will advise you if you are able to receive your COVID-19 vaccine.

Who should I contact if I am unsure if the person that I care for is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, or I think they should be included as someone who is clinically vulnerable?

If you are unsure whether the person you care for is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 speak to your GP, and they will be able to advise you.

A list of people who are defined as clinically vulnerable can be found in table 3 of the [PHE Green Book](#).

A hospital clinician or GP can also add a patient to the list, based on their clinical judgement, because they consider them to be at very high risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

Can I receive my vaccine at the same time as the person I care for?

Every possible effort will be made to vaccinate eligible carers at the same time as the people they care for. Eligible unpaid carers are encouraged to make themselves known to the vaccination service as a carer, so that they and the person they care for can both be vaccinated at the same time where this is possible.

If you are an eligible unpaid carer and you will be accompanying the person you care for to their vaccination appointment at their local GP vaccination service, and you haven't received your invitation yet, if you wish to receive your vaccination at the same time you must make this known to the GP surgery in advance to confirm an appointment as the vaccination sites are not able to support walk-in appointments.

Where will I receive my vaccination as an unpaid carer?

Carers can be invited for vaccination through one of two routes – either through the NHS or through their local GP vaccination service (Primary Care Network). Their vaccination will either be at a vaccination site in their local community supported by their GP practice, in a local pharmacy, or at a large vaccination centre.

If a carer is invited for vaccination through the NHS and the distance to travel to a vaccination centre or community pharmacy is difficult, they will be offered the flexibility to book their vaccine through the local GP vaccination service instead, so that where possible they can be vaccinated at the same time as the person they care for.

This needs to be booked via their GP with the local GP vaccination service and they may need to provide their letter from the NHS as proof of eligibility.

Will I have to prove my status as an unpaid carer when I go to get my vaccine?

When you go and get your vaccine, it's advised that you take along with you the confirmation of your appointment, photo ID to prove your identity, and your [NHS number](#) if you have it.

You do not need to prove you are a carer.

If you do not have a photo ID, that's okay as you won't be turned away, but you may be asked to confirm your identity such as your name, date of birth, and address.

Are young carers able to get the COVID-19 vaccine under JCVI priority group 6?

Along with other carers, those carers aged 16-17 are able to get a vaccine, and are strongly encouraged to do so.

The COVID-19 vaccines are not licenced for people under the age of 16, and only certain vaccines are licensed for use on people aged 16 or 17.

If a person is aged 16 or 17 and is eligible for a carers allowance or provides close personal care for someone who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, the NHS will contact them and they will be given a vaccine appropriate for their age by their GP. Where necessary the GP will support the young carer if there are issues in relation to consent. This would be consistent with current practice in relation to other treatments and immunisations.

Unpaid carers who are not already identified as a carer will need to contact their GP practice to be assessed and registered as a carer and subsequently will be offered a vaccination.

If you are an unpaid carer but are not known to health and care services, now is the time to make yourself known to your local practice team. You will be able to get a vaccine and you will be eligible for wider support too.

Vaccinations will not be offered to people under the age of 16 unless they are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and meet the clinical criteria for vaccination set out by the JCVI.

Do you need an NHS number to receive the vaccine?

- Whilst an individual's NHS number might be used for administration purposes, having an NHS number is not a prerequisite to be offered the coronavirus vaccine.
- The provision of the COVID-19 vaccine is a primary medical service and will be offered to all individuals living in the UK. This will include those who are living in the UK without permission when provided by GP practices or community pharmacies.
- If individuals are registered with a GP, then their GP will contact them in due course. If they are not registered with a GP, NHS Regional teams, working with various local systems will reach out to unregistered people to ensure they are offered the vaccine.