

COVID-19 vaccine deployment programme

Who do we regard as frontline social care workers for the purposes of identifying who should be in priority group 2 for COVID-19 vaccination?

1. The mass COVID-19 vaccination programme is being deployed in the context of widespread community transmission of COVID-19 infection. Vaccine is being administered to individuals as fast as possible but as there are insufficient doses available to vaccinate the whole population, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has considered how to design the programme to achieve the greatest reduction in mortality as fast as possible. They have drawn up a list of population and staff groups who are most vulnerable and which, if the first four cohorts are vaccinated first, should reduce over 80% of COVID-related deaths.
2. JCVI advises that implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine programme should aim to achieve high vaccine uptake. An age-based programme will likely result in faster delivery and better uptake in those at the highest risk. The first 4 cohorts listed below should be vaccinated as far as possible before moving on to cohorts 5 – 9. The risk of serious outcomes is extremely high in those age 75 and over, with the mortality rate exceeding 10% in those age 75 years and over infected with COVID-19.

Vaccine priority groups

Phase 1 – direct prevention of mortality and supporting the NHS and social care system

3. JCVI advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases significantly with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age. The order of priority for each group in the population corresponds with mortality data on the risk of dying from COVID-19, estimated from UK data obtained from March to June 2020:
 1. residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
 2. all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
 3. all those 75 years of age and over
 4. all those 70 years of age and over, clinically extremely vulnerable individuals (excluding pregnant women and those under 16 years of age)
 5. all those 65 years of age and over
 6. all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality (including relevant unpaid carers¹)
 7. all those 60 years of age and over

¹ Separate guidance on unpaid carers eligible for vaccination in group 6 will be issued

8. all those 55 years of age and over
9. all those 50 years of age and over

4. It is estimated that taken together, these groups represent around 99% of preventable mortality from COVID-19.

Frontline social care workers

The JCVI states the following with regard to the prioritisation of frontline health and social care workers

The committee considers frontline health and social care workers who provide care to vulnerable people a high priority for vaccination....

Frontline health and social care workers at high risk of acquiring infection, at high individual risk of developing serious disease, or at risk of transmitting infection to multiple vulnerable persons or other staff in a healthcare environment, are considered of higher priority for vaccination than those at lower risk. This prioritisation should be taken into account during vaccine deployment.²

The Green Book Chapter 14a describes frontline social care staff as those:

- *Working in long-stay residential and nursing care homes or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality*
- *Social care staff directly involved in the care of their patients or clients*
- *Others involved directly in delivering social care such that they and vulnerable patients/ clients are at increased risk of exposure³*

Welsh Government COVID-19 Vaccination Board guidance

5. This guidance is to provide clarity and consistency and ensure we vaccinate those social care workers that will have the greatest impact on mortality as quickly as possible. An element of professional judgement will be necessary, but this should be within the parameters set out in this guidance.
6. Eligibility for frontline social care workers should be based on the following factors:

The vulnerability of the person in receipt of care or support:

- Those aged 65 and over (group 5)
- Those deemed extremely clinically vulnerable (group 4)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation-advice-on-priority-groups-for-covid-19-vaccination-30-december-2020>

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/955548/Greenbook_chapter_14a_v6.pdf

- Those with underlying health conditions (group 6)
- Children under 16 with complex medical needs/ serious neuro-disabilities

Nature of the care or support provided:

- Personal care as defined in Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act 2016 and further clarified by Care Inspectorate Wales in their guidance note (Annex One)⁴ . Domiciliary care services and care homes are registered with CIW to deliver personal care and we would therefore expect employees of these services who are delivering personal care to be included. Personal Assistants should be included where their duties include personal care.
- The care for children under 16 years of age with serious neuro-disabilities would be expected to be beyond usual daily support and child care tasks that care givers would provide for a child. It should be frequent and may include tasks such as, for example, tracheostomy tube care, airway suction, repositioning to manage pressure areas, and care interventions such as respiratory physiotherapy.
- Close regular and prolonged contact with people in the risk categories defined above in order to provide support functions where maintaining social distancing and/or the wearing of face masks is not possible. This could include, for example, those working in the supported housing sector, provided this satisfies the criteria outlined above in respect to type of contact and vulnerability of the person in receipt of care and support. Examples of this may be:
 - intervening in challenging behaviour
 - intervening in self-harm or risky behaviour
 - day to day support of person with severe learning disability who cannot adhere to social distancing
 - prolonged and close contact due to teaching life skills in confined conditions

Eligibility is not based on:

- Location of where care or support is delivered. This could be the person's own home, care home, supported living, supported housing, day centre.
- Employment. This could be local authority, independent sector, self-employed, agency staff.

Unpaid carers are not included in this group and will be the subject of separate advice.

⁴ <https://careinspectorate.wales/sites/default/files/2018-06/180606-risca-guide-en.pdf>

7. Health boards working with their respective Directors of Social Services have ultimate responsibility for identifying eligible social care workers, underlined by the principle aim of achieving high rates of vaccination amongst frontline social care workers, recognising that vaccine supply is constrained and must be used for those at highest risk of severe morbidity and death. They should ensure that identification of eligibility is consistently applied across the system.
8. The local authority and NHS vaccination services will work in partnership to reach all eligible frontline social care workers irrespective of the sector in which they work.
9. Vaccination does not remove the requirement to have mitigation measures of social distancing, hand hygiene, environmental cleaning and good levels of ventilation in place. Strict infection prevention and control measures appropriate to the setting and the care being provided remain essential.