



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Via email:

Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Social Services, Local Authorities

2nd February 2021

Dear Colleagues

RE: Defining frontline social care workers for the purposes of COVID-19 vaccine prioritisation

Data published today shows that almost 440,000 people in Wales have now received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. We are making incredible progress due to the continued hard work and commitment of you and your teams and we want to thank you again for this.

As you know, we are prioritising for vaccination those most vulnerable to coronavirus. We are doing this by following the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The JCVI has advised 9 priority groups in total – including all those aged 50 and over, clinically extremely vulnerable individuals, those with some underlying health conditions and frontline health and care workers. It is estimated that taken together, these groups represent around 99% of preventable mortality from Covid-19 – that's why they are being prioritised. This same approach is being followed by all 4 nations of the UK.

All adults in Wales will be offered the vaccine. However, there is a need to prioritise offers in the short term because there are limits both on supply and capacity. We are prioritising those who need it most.

The Welsh Government has a [National Vaccination Strategy](#). This Strategy sets out our ambitions for the vaccine programme with a series of markers and milestones. We have said that it is our aim to offer the vaccine to the first 4 priority groups by the middle of February, based on current progress we are on-track to do this. We have then said that we aim to offer the vaccine to all those in priority groups 5-9 by the spring. With the rest of the adult population offered the vaccine by the autumn.

You will be aware that priority group 2 includes frontline social care workers. It is on this point that we are writing. We have become aware that there are some differing interpretations of the JCVI guidance on which social care workers fall within the scope of the definition for vaccine prioritisation purposes. This differing interpretation has led to some divergence of practice in some areas.

Attached is a guidance document on the definition of frontline social care workers for the purposes of vaccine prioritisation. This is to be applied without exception going forward.

The overarching position set out in the guidance is that to be prioritised for the vaccine social care workers must be **dealing directly with vulnerable people, delivering intimate personal care on a regular basis to those who are defined by the JCVI as clinically vulnerable to Covid-19**. Therefore, the care provided must be intimate personal care – and the person being

cared for must themselves be vulnerable to Covid-19, so would themselves fall into one of the 9 priority groups.

Please can you share this guidance with all those in your organisations involved in making decisions about the staff that are eligible for vaccination by virtue of their social care role.

It is only right that you have the scope to determine which of your staff meet the criteria, and we would expect health boards and local authorities to work together in making these decisions. You are best placed to make decisions about your workforce. However, these local decisions must be based on the national guidance which sets the parameters and our expectations going forward. Many of your staff will be prioritised for vaccination over the coming weeks as part of the first phase of our vaccine programme in any event.

In applying the new guidance, there are 2 specific points that we wish to highlight:

- Staff undertaking social care roles in childcare and education settings will be within the scope of the frontline social care definition where they support children, young people and adults with complex medical needs as per the definition in the guidance. This applies to all childcare and education settings, both in the public and independent sector.
- Foster carers will also be prioritised for vaccination. This will be done in two stages. Those caring for children and young people with complex medical needs will be treated on the same basis as childcare and education staff, and fall within the scope of frontline social care workers under cohort 2. All other foster carers will be prioritised alongside some unpaid carers under cohort 6. The additional consideration we were mindful of in making this decision was that if a foster carer were to fall ill there may be no one else able to care for the child or young person.

Finally, we are receiving reports that there is some lack of clarity about the prioritisation of people under cohort 4; those classified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV). In Wales, all those who are considered CEV and have received a shielding letter in line with the Welsh Government [guidance](#) will be prioritised under cohort 4.

The JCVI guidance lists Downs Syndrome under cohort 4 and 6. Please note that adults with Downs Syndrome are captured under the CEV category and should be prioritised accordingly and vaccinated in cohort 4.

Thank you again for your continued hard work and commitment. The efforts you and your teams are making in this national mission is a credit to our Welsh health and social care systems.

With our best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely



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Deputy Director General
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DR FRANK ATHERTON
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