

# **Lothians MSP asks First Minister to consider vaccine priority for those receiving palliative care**

**Lothian MSP and Co-chair of the Cancer Cross Party Group, Miles Briggs, asked the First Minister earlier today at Holyrood for some consideration on vaccine priority for those who have terminal conditions such as cancer.**

Mr Briggs pointed out that twelve leading charities have today written an open letter backing the call for palliative care patients and their families to be prioritised during the vaccination programme for Covid-19.

He mentioned Fred Banning who is spearheading the campaign. Mr Banning, 38, was told in February that he had Stage 4 bowel cancer, and that without treatment he would only have around nine months to live. He has been shielding during the pandemic and said that if he and others like him got the vaccine then it would allow them more time to make memories with their families. He also asked if the First Minister would personally investigate this matter and give new guidance to clinicians for terminally ill patients.

While the priority list is set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) the First Minister

replied: "Yes of course I will look into the letter referred to personally. I absolutely understand the sentiments and the reasons behind the request that is being made. We of course decide the prioritisation of vaccination based on advice from JCVI, but within that priority lists are the clinically vulnerable. Therefore there will be priority I think in the course of that advice. We will continue to do what we can to make sure that people at the end of their lives wanting to maximise the time they have with loved ones have the priority that they merit. We will respond to the letter as soon as possible."

Father of two Fred welcomed the development and urged politicians of all parties to back the campaign.

He said: ""It is really encouraging that the First Minister has agreed to review the position of those with terminal illnesses in prioritising the roll-out of the vaccine, and I hope the FM will do whatever is possible to help the many thousands of people in my position make the most of the time they have left with friends and loved ones.

"For those of us in palliative care, this is time critical and even just a few weeks could be a huge difference to our quality of life. I hope that progress now will be swift and that the UK government will treat this issue with the same seriousness and urgency as appears to be the case here in Scotland.

"In particular I would urge MPs of all political colours to back the Early Day Motion lodged at Westminster by my local MP Kirsten Oswald regarding this issue'"

Mr Briggs said: "Now that we have a Covid-19 vaccine it is important that those who have little time left with their loved ones are given priority.

"I'd like to pay tribute to Fred Banning for spearheading this important campaign and I welcome the First Minister's

commitment to investigate the prioritisation of the vaccines to people who are terminally ill.

“There is cross party support at the Scottish Parliament for people with a terminal illness to be prioritised for a vaccine and I will continue to campaign for patients who are receiving palliative care to be vaccinated as a priority.”

Yesterday, appearing on Sky News, Cabinet Minister Michael Gove appeared to give Fred and others some hope when he said: “We were discussing exactly how we can do this in Government only yesterday.

“It is an incredibly moving situation when you have people who are living with diseases and we are reviewing how we can make sure that the most vulnerable and those in clinically difficult positions can be vaccinated.

“Obviously, it depends on the number of vaccines we can secure, but absolutely when you have a moving example like that, and there are all too many, we want to make sure that people are vaccinated so that they can be with those they love at what is inevitably an incredibly difficult and stressful time for the family.”