

# Call for vaccine priority for ambulance workers

**The union which represents the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) has today called on vaccination priority for all its Ambulance Control Room and NHS 24 staff.**

They have demanded that these workers are prioritised for the Covid-19 vaccination programme as fears grow over potential outbreaks which could bring the nation's emergency response units to a shutdown.

Around 500 workers are employed by SAS as control room handlers and around 1650 workers are employed at NHS24. The plea comes as The Scottish Government published an evidence paper, which informed the latest restrictions, stating that Scotland's R number showed the virus was "likely in another growth phase".

The Scottish Government has argued that both workforces are not 'patient facing' and do not qualify for the immediate prioritisation of the vaccination programme. However, the nation's leading trade union is highlighting that if a COVID-19 outbreak were to happen, as has happened in multiple call centres, then the nation's emergency response capabilities could be significantly compromised. Independent research conducted by [Professor Phil Taylor](#) of the University of Strathclyde indicated that throughout the UK there was massive alarm amongst call centre workers about the safety conditions within their workplace.

Unite Scottish Secretary, Pat Rafferty, said: “The reality is that if any outbreak of COVID-19 occurred among SAS control room staff or NHS24 workers then the nation’s emergency response capabilities could in effect grind to a halt putting lives at risk. There is no sound rationale at all for the Scottish Government stating that the workers are not to be prioritised because they are not ‘patient facing’. Without these workers we do not have an effective patient facing operation across our health and emergency response services. Therefore, we are demanding that the Scottish Government fix this mistake immediately and afford these workers the same protections.”

The vaccination priority list is determined by the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#) (JCVI) which sets out nine priority groups for the Covid-19 vaccination programme, largely based on age.