

# **Coronavirus – unpaid carers invited to self-register for vaccination**

**Unpaid carers who have not already been identified through social security data or GP systems will be able to register themselves for a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination appointment from next week.**

At Friday's media briefing the Health Secretary, Jeane Freeman, announced a new online service, which opens on Monday 15 March, for unpaid carers aged between 16 and 64 who provide face-to-face care for a family member or friend.

Carers who receive relevant benefits (Carer's Allowance, Young Carer Grant or Child Winter Heating Payment) will be in the Scottish Government system and will receive a letter with details of their appointment. But all unpaid carers are being encouraged to self-register – when they do, they will be advised if they are already scheduled for an appointment so that there is no duplication.

A Scottish Government marketing campaign will be launched next week to encourage all unpaid carers who are eligible for a vaccine to get one. The campaign will be supported by additional communications from local carer services and other third-sector organisations to carers on their mailing lists.

Ms Freeman said: "The support provided by unpaid carers is

hugely valuable. I know they are under greater pressure than usual as a result of the pandemic, and we owe them our sincere thanks for the important work they do.

“Our vaccination programme follows the priority list set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) with unpaid carers included within Group 6.

“We have already written to many unpaid carers identified through Social Security data and GPs and we are launching a system which will ensure every carer who is eligible for an appointment can register for one.

“It is crucial that all unpaid carers are offered a vaccination so they are protected whilst they care for others.

“We will be launching an extensive marketing campaign to make sure all unpaid carers know about this opportunity and understand how to book an appointment. All those who have access to the internet are encouraged to use the online service but those who don't can, of course, call the Vaccination Helpline on 0800 030 8013.

“We continue to urge all those eligible to take up the offer of a vaccination. The vaccination programme is one of three key ways we are working to beat this virus, along with our expanded testing programme to identify cases and break chains of transmission and the important lockdown restrictions everyone in Scotland must follow. All these measures work to greatest effect when they work together.”

On behalf of the National Carer Organisations, Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP) Chief Executive Margaret Chiwanza said: “Over the last year, carers have continued to provide support to family and friends in unprecedented circumstances. Their inclusion as a priority group for the vaccination recognises the overwhelming contribution they have made and continue to make.

“Many of Scotland’s carers will be in touch with a local carer centre but there will be many others who are not in contact with support services. It is essential that we reach out to these carers. The self-registration system will provide a single point of contact making it simpler for carers to make an appointment and receive a vaccination.

“It is vital that all of Scotland’s carers – young carers aged 16-plus, adult and older carers and those from Minority Ethnic backgrounds – are supported to protect and maintain their own health and well-being and that of the people they care for.

“We commend government for taking this very positive step.”