

Y Grŵp Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol

Health & Social Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

5 March 2021

Dear Colleagues,

As you will be aware, vaccination is continuing at pace, and we are progressing with JCVI group 6 which has a wider range than previous ones. Briefing has been prepared at annex 1 to explain and clarify a number of points that have been raised. This is not exhaustive, and ultimately professional judgement using JCVI criteria and the Green Book may be required, but I feel this will address the majority of issues.

The Welsh Government has published guidance on number of groups within cohort 6. Guidance is available in relation to [unpaid carers](#); and those with a [learning disability or severe mental illness](#). Guidance is also being prepared in relation to the homelessness population. Further guidance will be issued if necessary as specific areas are considered.

I recognise the enormous effort Primary Care is making to support the delivery of vaccines to the people of Wales and am grateful for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

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Annex 1 - Group 6 briefing for Primary Care

1. Group 6 in WIS includes everyone registered with a GP in Wales age 16 and over based on around eighteen thousand clinical codes in their GP record that indicates they fall in to a clinical risk group who should receive COVID-19 immunisation in line with JCVI advice. The summary of these groups is in Table 3 of the Green Book chapter 14a.
2. This code list has been developed by a team of experienced clinical coders and clinicians in Nottingham University for use across the UK, see <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/primis/covid-19/covid-19.aspx> . The coding has been checked by the primary care team in NWIS, who work with coded GP data and carry out similar work annually for influenza at risk groups. The high level groups loaded into WIS have been reviewed by the Data and Epi CVB sub-group. The NWIS primary Care team have mapped and extracted the relevant codes from GP practice records which have then been used to load Group 6 into WIS.
3. The list is similar to the flu risk groups but with important differences. In particular for COVID-19 compared with flu:
 - a. Only 16 years and over
 - b. Only those with severe asthma are included, defined as regular use of oral corticosteroids or previously requiring hospital admission. Individuals with mild to moderate asthma are not at increased risk of severe outcomes with COVID-19 and not recommended vaccination by JCVI.
 - c. Only those with learning disability that's 'severe and profound' or are coded as on the LD register are included, see below
 - d. Pregnancy itself is not an indicator for COVID-19 vaccination, see below
4. Some conditions have been added into the Group 6 specification since deployment into WIS, and work is underway to include these individuals into WIS :
 - a. Addison's disease
 - b. Current gestational diabetes
 - c. Asthma, definition of "continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids" being changed to 3 oral corticosteroid prescriptions in the past 2 years
 - d. Systemic lupus erythematosus
 - e. Rheumatoid arthritis
5. Some individuals in Group 6 in WIS will be pregnant and will be called because they are in a risk group. Before being vaccinated, the benefits and potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy and breastfeeding should be discussed, and some women will choose to defer vaccination. An SOP is being developed so that pregnant women at risk are managed consistently, and the PGDs are being reviewed to allow vaccination under the PGD if the woman has evidence of counselling by an appropriate professional.
6. Some eligible individuals may not have the relevant clinical codes in their GP record, so would not appear in Group 6 in WIS and will need to be identified by the GP, their hospital consultant, or self-identify. Similarly those recently diagnosed with conditions that place them in a clinical risk group will not appear on WIS if their condition was

coded after data was extracted from GP systems. These may include those prescribed immunosuppressant medications by a hospital clinician not coded on the GP records; these individuals will need to be advised by the hospital team. It is expected that most of these individuals will already have been added to Group 4 in Wales as hospital prescribing records were used to identify those prescribed a single immunosuppressant and they were added to the Shielded Patient List.

7. Conditions included within the Group 6 eligible list are the same across the UK, based on the PRIMIS coding list. It's not feasible to respond to individual enquiries about specific conditions. When a patient has been placed in Group 6 without an apparent clinical indication, the vast majority of examples investigated so far have been due to practice coding issues, such as conditions that are not current. There is a known issue with the BMI definition not including all eligible patients which is being corrected. Any individual found to have been included in Group 6 in error, for example because of codes for conditions that are not current, should be corrected in the practice record and can also be corrected in WIS by changing the "Priority group" field.
8. Guidance on vaccination and admission to hospital for certain procedures is expected to be issued by WG.
9. To capture those described by JCVI as having "severe or profound learning disability" those with codes for "severe learning disability", "profound learning disability" or "significant learning disability" have been added, and those who are coded as on the wider learning disability registers in GP practices will also be added. Note that locally, to capture all those in this group, markers of severe LD may include in receipt of day-care services or disability benefits related to their learning disability. Many younger adults in residential care settings will also fall into this group, and where the majority in a care setting are eligible, vaccination of the whole residential setting is recommended. Further guidance is available at gov.wales/covid-19-vaccinations-prioritisation-individuals-learning-disability-or-severe-mental-illness.
10. Eligible carers are defined by JCVI as "Those who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable". WG has requested that those currently coded as a carer in GP records are added to Group 6. Further guidance on identifying carers is available at gov.wales/covid-19-vaccination-unpaid-carers-html.