

UK charities join together to boost vaccine drive

- Sixteen charities will work together to help save lives through the vaccine roll out
- Those with underlying health conditions and adult carers in cohort 6 encouraged to take up the jab
- Organisations will help promote access to important advice and information on vaccines

Organisations including The British Heart Foundation, Macmillan Cancer Support and Mencap are joining with the government and NHS to promote vaccine uptake among those the charities support every day.

Since 15 February those in cohort 6 – people with certain underlying health conditions and their carers – have been receiving invites from their GP practice to come forward for life saving vaccinations to protect them from COVID-19.

Working with the government on the UK's largest ever medical deployment, the charities will use the combined strength of their networks to reassure people with long-term health conditions about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The incredible success of our vaccination programme has only been possible by working in partnership with the NHS, health and care professionals, local partners and our volunteers.

Having the support of the charities who work every day to support the very people we are reaching out to in cohort 6 is a great boost for the rollout which continues to show what we can achieve when we pull together as one.

Their help, encouragement and links with communities next in line for the jab will help make sure everyone can get access to the life-saving protection the vaccine provides and help protect those with underlying conditions and their carers.

The organisations which have signed up so far to become members of the coalition are:

- African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust (ACLT)
- Asthma UK
- British Heart Foundation
- British Liver Trust
- British Lung Foundation

- Cancer Research UK
- Carers UK
- Diabetes UK
- Epilepsy Action
- Kidney Care UK
- Lupus UK
- MacMillan Cancer Support
- Mencap
- MS Society
- Sickle Cell Society
- Terrence Higgins Trust

These vital charities support those included in priority vaccination categories, including cohort 6 which covers individuals aged 16 to 64 with certain long-term conditions identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation as being at higher clinical risk from COVID-19.

These conditions include chronic respiratory, heart, kidney, liver disease and neurological conditions, including MS and epilepsy, vascular disease, diabetes mellitus, immunosuppression, asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen, morbid obesity, severe mental illness, as well as sickle cell, lupus and those on GP learning disability registers.

Following the government meeting its target of offering a first dose vaccine to the top four priority groups by 15 February, all those in cohort 6 are now eligible to get the jab and should be receiving their invitation for their first dose.

Minister for Vaccines, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

The vaccine is our way out of this pandemic and offers the chance to protect yourself and others – that’s why it’s vital that people get their jab when called to come forward.

The rollout is a truly UK wide effort which is why having the support of these fantastic and trusted charities as we work to ensure everyone eligible gets their vaccine is so important.

I would like to thank them all for backing this life-saving campaign and offering their expertise and assistance to support the largest medical deployment in British history.

Cohort 6 also includes carers 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.

The charities will support the campaign by sharing content across their channels, including a new campaign video featuring people in cohort 6 getting their jab, and putting forward both those who represent the charities and those the charities work with to encourage others to take up the vaccine.

Chris Askew OBE, Chief Executive of Diabetes UK, said:

We are incredibly proud to be working with other leading voices in the charity sector to encourage people to get their COVID-19 vaccine.

People with diabetes have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and have a higher risk of becoming seriously ill if they develop coronavirus.

For people living with diabetes, the best protection against coronavirus is to get the vaccine and take whichever vaccine you are offered.

People in group 6 who are at higher clinical risk from coronavirus and have not already been contacted will be invited for a vaccine by their local GP team.

Co-Founder and Chief Executive of ACLT, Orin Lewis, said

The ACLT feels compelled to ensure we do all we can to guarantee any decisions made regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, is done with knowledge of the verified facts and the science behind the vaccine.

Far too many lives have already been lost, however now there is a real opportunity for positive change especially on behalf of patients with immunosuppression systems linked to stem cell, blood and organ related disorders.

We feel extremely passionately people should seriously consider protecting themselves, their loved ones and society at large.

When they do make that decision, they need to ensure it's an informed one based upon verified facts and not myths, fears and taboos.

[The campaign video](#)

Sixteen charities have already joined the campaign and more are welcome to help boost the vaccine drive and save lives.