**19 March 2021 (Version 5)**

**MEA TEMPLATE LETTER FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (GPs):**

**RE: COVID VACCINE PRIORITY FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS**

* Please modify the letter template to suit your individual circumstances.
* Then copy and paste to your own letterhead or email.
* Make sure it’s dated and signed, contains your home address and date of birth – then either email it or send by royal mail.

Dear **[Your GPs Name]**,

**Request to be included in Group 6 for Covid vaccine priority**

I have a diagnosis of ME/CFS, and I believe I should be included in 'Group 6' on the Covid vaccination priority list.

The ME Association (MEA) has suggested that I should make this request because ME/CFS is a recognised neurological condition and there is an increased risk that Covid infection could cause a significant relapse and additional complications.

The MEA has provided the following information for you to consider and has confirmed that people with ME/CFS are being included in Group 6 by other GPs, Covid vaccination centres, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health Boards in Wales – with more expected to follow throughout the UK.

**1.** People with a chronic neurological disease are listed as having an underlying health condition in Group 6 in the JCVI guidance. See page 9 in Chapter 14a of the ‘Green Book' on Covid vaccine priority:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/955548/Greenbook_chapter_14a_v6.pdf>

**2a.**  The World Health Organisation (in ICD10 section G93.3) recognises ME/CFS as a neurological disease (as it does in ICD 11 which will become effective in Jan 2022):

* ICD 10: <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en#/G93.3>
* ICD 11: <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/569175314>

**2b.** SNOMED CT, the NHS electronic classification system, has accepted the WHO ICD classification for ME/CFS: <https://termbrowser.nhs.uk/>

**2c.** NHS England acknowledge ME/CFS as a long-term neurological condition: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/clinical-policy/ltc/our-work-on-long-term-conditions/neurological/>

**2d.** The Scottish Government accepts the WHO definition for neurological diseases: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/neurological-care-support-scotland-framework-action-2020-2025/pages/4/>

**3a.** The JCVI 'Green Book' guidance (page 10) states that:

“The examples above are not exhaustive, and, within these groups, **the prescriber should apply clinical judgment to take into account the risk of COVID-19 exacerbating any underlying disease that a patient may have**, as well as the risk of serious illness from COVID-19 itself.”

**3b.** The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, has commented on this guidance and said that it should also be applied to people with ME/CFS: <https://meassociation.org.uk/2021/02/matt-hancock-on-me-cfs-covid-vaccine-priority/>

**4.** Even though ME/CFS does not feature as a named example of a neurological disease in the ‘green book’ list of neurological conditions, the guidance makes it clear that the examples are not intended to be exhaustive.

**5a**. New infections are probably the commonest cause of exacerbation or relapse of ME/CFS – as noted in section 3.3.2 of the Chief Medical Officer’s Working Group Report on ME/CFS: <https://meassociation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CMO-Report-2002.pdf>

**5b.** This is also noted in section 1.6.4 of the new (draft) NICE clinical guideline on ME/CFS which will become operational in April 2021: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-ng10091/documents/draft-guideline>

**5c.** Chu et al (2019) in an epidemiological study examining outcomes in ME/CFS reported that infections are the most common factor for having a deleterious impact on the course of the condition: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6370741/>

**6.** The MEA has now received information from Dr David Hefin, Member of the Welsh National Assembly for Caerphilly, that the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board has accepted people with ME/CFS into Group 6 of the JCVI priority list. Other health authorities in Wales have also been contacted.

**7.** In Scotland, the Chief Medical Officer has reinforced the Green Book guidance and written to all GPs saying that they should make the decision on including people in Group 6 (09.03.21):
<https://meassociation.org.uk/2021/03/cmo-scotland-issues-new-guidance-re-group-6-covid-vaccination-eligibility>

**8.** Patient evidence to the MEA also indicates that almost everyone with ME/CFS who has caught COVID-19 has had a  significant and/or prolonged relapse. This is not surprising given the considerable degree of clinical overlap between ME/CFS and Long Covid.

**9.** For further information about ME/CFS, you might like to take the online CPD course provided by StudyPRN:
<https://www.studyprn.com/p/chronic-fatigue-syndrome>

**[*Include a brief paragraph here about your own situation and why you think you should receive the vaccine as a priority. Vaccine priority is also being afforded to the housebound and those who are not ambulatory, so if you are in this category it could be worth mentioning.*]**

In light of this information and guidance, and considering my personal situation, I would be very grateful if you could confirm that I have been added to the Group 6 priority vaccination list.

To ensure that I can be contacted as soon as I am eligible, please add my mobile number to my file as a primary means of contacting me.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and indeed for everything you and your other NHS colleagues are doing during this pandemic.

With kind regards,

**[*Your Full name. Address. Contact phone number. Date of birth. NHS Patient Number.*]**