



**Ministry of  
JUSTICE**

National Offender  
Management Service



*Department  
of Health*

To:  
Healthcare Managers  
Governing Governors

Cc:  
NOMS Board  
Regional Managers Custodial Services  
NHS Regional Offender Health Leads  
Matt Bullard - Intelligence and Operations Unit  
Anne Norton, Occupational Health, NOMS;

20 December 2010

**Gateway ref: 15344**

Dear colleagues,

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has recently reported an increase of seasonal flu activity above baseline in England. This winter (2010/11), we know that influenza A H1N1 (2009) (Swine Flu) is prominent among other circulating flu viruses, including Influenza B.

HPA surveillance has indicated an increase in severe illness & deaths due to influenza infection requiring access to critical care services. Many of the severely ill cases & deaths have resulted from infection with influenza A H1N1 (2009). This has prompted the HPA to advise the Department of Health that the use of antivirals for prophylaxis and treatment of influenza according to NICE guidelines is indicated.

These guidelines have been produced jointly by Offender Health and the HPA. It provides clear guidance on how to manage isolated cases/outbreaks of seasonal influenza in prisons and other places of detention, taking into consideration the special circumstances associated with them.

Maintaining the operational effectiveness of prisons is essential to preserving a fully functional criminal justice system and this makes it desirable to minimise the impact of seasonal flu within prisons.

Prisoners who are in clinical risk groups (see previous guidance for details) should be offered the current seasonal flu vaccine if not already vaccinated.

Prison officers in appropriate categories should also be vaccinated via Occupational Health services as per guidance issued from NOMS on December 7th. Those in clinical risk groups should be vaccinated by their GP.

Offender Health have been informed on Friday December 17th of a large outbreak of flu in HMP Manchester. Single cases have also been reported from HMP Gartree. Therefore, we know that the prison estate has already been affected and is expected to be more so during the coming weeks.

Prevention of infection through vaccination, early detection of disease and effective isolation of cases will reduce the impact of the disease on the prison estate. It is essential that prisons work effectively with their local Health Protection Units (HPUs) if they detect or suspect an outbreak of flu. Details of local HPUs can be found at [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk).

Please ensure that all clinical staff in your prison receive and read these guidelines. Please remind all non-clinical staff of the need to recognise outbreaks of flu and to seek advice from their clinical colleagues if they are concerned. Please remind all about the need to ensure they are vaccinated if they are in a clinical risk group (via Healthcare for prisoners or GPs for staff) or an occupational risk group (via Occupational Health Services).

Further advice and information on flu can be found on the DH website ([www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)) or the HPA website ([www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)). Offender Health can be contacted on 0207 972 4989.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Éamonn O'Moore,  
Consultant in Public Health (Health Protection),  
Offender Health, DH.  
Area 111 Wellington House  
Waterloo Road  
London SE1 8UG

Telephone: 020 7972 4989  
GMC No.: 4208747