



Department
of Health



Public Health
England

NHS
England

PHE Gateway reference Number: 2014-341
NHS England Gateway reference Number: 02140

24 September 2014

Dear Colleague,

Vaccination of health and social care workers against flu, 2014/15

Once again we write to urge your active support to increase flu vaccine uptake among frontline health and social care workers.

Last year uptake rates increased to 55%, from 46% the previous year. However, this means that almost half of frontline health and social care workers were unvaccinated and this leads to avoidable risk of infection to our patients. This is particularly important because we can be infected and pass the virus to others before we have any symptoms.

Misconceptions about flu vaccine are common. We are grateful for your help, not only in personally being vaccinated but also in promoting the following messages to frontline staff in acute, primary, community and social care services:

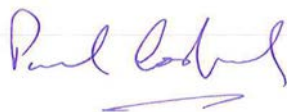
- As professionals it is part of our duty of care to patients or residents to do everything in our power to protect them against infection, including being immunised against flu.
- Getting vaccinated against flu can help protect us, our patients and family.
- We are all susceptible to flu, even if we are in good health and eat well. Frontline health and social care staff are, however, in frequent contact with people who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of flu.
- You can be infected with the virus and have no symptoms of flu but can still pass the virus to others including patients or residents.
- Good infection control measures are essential. They reduce the spread of flu, but are not sufficient alone to prevent it.
- The impact of flu on frail and vulnerable patients can be fatal and outbreaks of the virus can cause severe disruption in communities, care homes and hospitals.
- The flu vaccine is safe and effective. It cannot give you flu. Having the vaccination can encourage your colleagues to do likewise.
- It means that staff act as positive role models for patients aged 65 and over, those with long term health conditions and pregnant women to take up the offer too.

Local authorities, as well as NHS organisations, have a duty to ensure that frontline health and social care workers are offered and are encouraged to take up flu vaccination. It is also sensible for local authorities to offer flu vaccination to frontline staff working in institutions with vulnerable populations, such as special schools. Local authority directors of public health have a particularly important role in promoting this within their local authorities and working with NHS England area teams and clinical commissioning groups to ensure that

commissioning supports high rates of vaccination for frontline staff. Further advice can be found in [The Annual Flu Plan](#).

We would like to thank you in advance for the priority that you will give to increasing flu vaccination again this year.

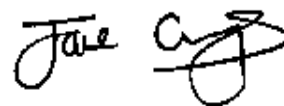
Yours sincerely,



Paul Cosford
Director for Health
Protection & Medical
Director
Public Health England



Sir Bruce Keogh
National Medical Director
NHS England



Jane Cummings
Chief Nursing Officer
England



Viv Bennett
Director of Nursing
Public Health England
& Department of Health



Dr Keith Ridge CBE,
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Supporting NHS England, the Department
of Health and Health Education England

Further information

- [Chapter 12](#) of 'Immunisation against infectious disease' (the Green Book) outlines the responsibility of employers to provide immunisations through occupational health services to employees.
- NHS Employers' excellent [flu fighters campaign](#) provides useful resources to support flu vaccination among healthcare workers and more information about the clinical evidence behind the key messages above can be found in the 'Clinical evidence' section of their website.

To: NHS England area directors
Clinical leaders of clinical commissioning groups
Chief executives of NHS trusts
Chief executives of NHS foundation trusts
General practitioners
Community pharmacists
Community dentists
Community optometrists
Directors of public health

Local authority chief executives
Public Health England centre directors

Cc: Screening and immunisation leads
Medical directors of NHS trusts
Directors of nursing
Chief pharmacists of NHS trusts
Directors of infection and prevention control
Director of operations in NHS trusts
HR directors in NHS trusts
Directors of adult social services