



Department  
of Health



Public Health  
England

**NHS**  
**England**

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Dear Colleague

## **CHILDHOOD FLU IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME: UPDATE AND PROVISIONAL ROLL-OUT SCHEDULE**

This letter provides an update on the extension of the seasonal flu immunisation programme to children. NHS area teams, Directors of Public Health and Local Education and Training Boards will need to take the requirements for this programme into account as plans for commissioning and workforce capacity are developed for 2015/16 and beyond.

In July 2012 the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation (JCVI) recommended vaccinating all children aged 2-16 years against flu. This is a new approach to reducing the burden of flu across the population, as by vaccinating all healthy children not only are the children protected, but the expectation is transmission across the population will be interrupted, reducing levels of flu overall. Implementing this programme is therefore key to increasing resilience across the system through the winter period.

The programme began in 2013/14 with all 2 and 3 year olds being offered vaccination through primary care / general practice, with pilots in 7 areas, offering vaccination to children of primary school age. The results from this first year are encouraging, with reduced numbers of GP attendances for influenza-like illness and reduced emergency department respiratory attendances in pilot areas, compared to non-pilot areas.

In the coming season (2014/15) all 2-4 year olds will be offered vaccination, and the pilot programme extended to include 12 pilot areas for secondary school aged children (11 and 12 year olds).

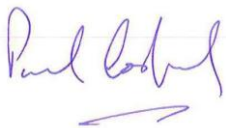
In 2015/16 we expect (subject to the successful outcome of the Section 7A negotiations) to extend the programme to all 2-6 year olds, with the expectation that 5 and 6 year olds will be vaccinated predominantly in primary school settings. Subject to the outcome of the Spending Review, the programme will extend to all children of primary school age in 2016/17, reaching secondary school aged children in 2017/18. These plans will be kept under review. JCVI will continue to monitor the impact of the programme on an annual basis, and the detail for each year will be confirmed through the annual process for confirming the public health functions to be carried out by NHS England (Section 7A agreement).

Workforce capacity is a major challenge for implementation of this programme, which will ultimately see some 9 million children offered vaccination in a short window every autumn. LETBs and Area Teams are currently developing their long term plans to feed into the Health Education England workforce planning process. We encourage Area Teams and Local Education and Training Boards to ensure these plans take account of requirements for childhood flu immunisation.

Further information about the roll-out schedule is attached. The weblink to additional sources of information, including the key findings from the 13/14 pilots, are listed below. This letter and attachments may be circulated or forwarded to anyone with an interest in the childhood flu immunisation programme.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact: [england.childhoodflu@nhs.net](mailto:england.childhoodflu@nhs.net)

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Withdrawn July 2015

Attachments:

Childhood flu immunisation July 2014 update and provisional roll-out plan

Weblink to further information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme>

Withdrawn July 2015

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# CHILDHOOD FLU IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME JULY 2014

## UPDATE AND PROVISIONAL ROLL-OUT PLAN

### Summary

A provisional roll-out plan for the childhood flu immunisation programme is set out as follows:

Year	Status	Pre-school age	Primary school age	Secondary school age
2014/15	Confirmed	2-4 yrs	Pilots	Pilots
2015/16	In discussion (S7A prioritisation)	2-4 yrs	5-6 yrs	-
2016/17	Provisional	2-4 yrs	5-10 yrs	-
2017/18	Provisional	2-4 yrs	5-10 yrs	11-12 yrs
2018/19	Provisional	2-4 yrs	5-10 yrs	11-16 yrs

This note provides a short briefing and invites comment on the pace of the roll-out proposed here, and any other aspect of the childhood flu programme.

### Background

1. Following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation (JCVI), and in line with our standing commitments on patient rights to implement such recommendations under the NHS Constitution, the routine annual flu vaccination programme is being extended to include all children in England (with similar schemes being taken forward in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). This extension is being phased in over a number of years. When fully implemented it is likely that over 9 million children aged 2 to their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday will be offered vaccination against flu every year.
2. Vaccinating children each year will provide a number of benefits:
  - It will offer important protection to the child, and as they would be likely to transmit the virus to other vulnerable groups, including infants and older people, it will offer protection to their close contacts and the wider community during the flu season.
  - If children are protected from contracting flu, they will be less likely to take time off school. This will reduce absence through illness – including children, teachers and other school staff, and parents either through being unwell themselves or having to care for family members who are unwell.

- This is an opportunity to embed wider health and wellbeing messages for children. Schools may wish to build related activity into the PHSE curriculum.
  - This programme is an important public health intervention and complements a number of initiatives to improve the health and well-being for children and young people.
3. There are also a number of additional wider benefits, during the winter months, as the programme will help to reduce GP consultations, alleviate pressure on A&E Departments, and reduce hospitalisations.

### **2013/14 and 2014/15: Pre-school children and piloting for school aged children**

4. In 2013/14, the programme began with all 2 and 3 year olds being offered vaccination through GP surgeries. National uptake was 42.6% for two year olds and 39.6% for three year olds. A pilot programme began for children of primary school age, with children in school years 1 to 6 being offered vaccination pilot programmes in 7 areas. (Bury, Cumbria, Essex, Gateshead, Havering, Leicestershire & Rutland and Newham). Uptake rates in the pilot areas varied from 35.8% in the pharmacy/GP based model to 71.5% in the most successful school based pilot. The pilots tested a variety of delivery methods, building on the success of other school-based vaccination programmes. Delivery models included school nursing teams, specialist immunisation teams (both working in schools), and one model working through community pharmacy and GPs. A summary of the pilots and key findings is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme>

### **Early results: Impact in pilot areas 2013/14**

5. Despite the low flu activity in 2013/14, early results, although statistically non-significant, suggest a positive impact. Results were obtained from a range of surveillance indicators including GP consultations for influenza-like illness, swab positivity in primary care, laboratory confirmed hospitalisations and percentage of respiratory emergency department attendances:
- The cumulative GP consultation rate for 'influenza like illness' over the 2013-14 season was higher in non-pilot (64.5/100,000) compared to pilot areas (17.7/100,00).
  - The cumulative influenza positivity rate in primary care in pilot areas was 8.5% compared to 16.2% in non-pilot areas.
  - The cumulative proportion of emergency department respiratory attendances was 5.5% in pilot compared to 8.7% in non-pilot areas.

## **Plans for 2014/15**

6. For 2014/15, all 2, 3 and 4 year olds will be offered vaccination through general practice. For school aged children, the pilots for primary school aged children will continue, and new pilots will be established to test approaches to vaccination for secondary school aged children. Pilots will be established in up to 13 areas, focused on year 7 and 8 children (11 and 12 year olds). A separate briefing is attached giving further details of the 2014/15 pilot programme.

## **2015/16 onwards: Future roll-out schedule**

7. Following feedback from Area Teams, and in the light of learning from the 2013/14 pilots, the principle for the future roll-out of the programme will be to extend upwards through the age cohorts, reaching all primary school aged children before offering to secondary school aged children.
8. The proposed roll-out schedule for 2015/16 and beyond is attached. The proposal is to offer vaccination to all 5 and 6 year olds in 2015/16 (ie to all children in Key Stage 1 in primary school), extending this to all children of primary school age (5-10 year olds) in 2016/17, bringing in older children in 2017/18. . These plans are subject to the Section 7A Agreement for 2015-16 (planned for October 2014) and to the outcome of the Spending Review for subsequent years.

## **The workforce challenge**

9. This programme presents a major workforce challenge. Pilot work to date has demonstrated the need for significant additional numbers of clinical and non-clinical staff. Delivery models, including staffing models, are being developed based on the findings of the pilots and will be published in the autumn. Initial modelling suggests that the national requirement for clinical staff to carry out school based immunisation during the autumn immunisation period could be 1,000 or more FTEs when the programme is fully rolled out. These estimates will continue to be revised and updated as the pilot programme progresses.
10. DH, NHS England and Health Education England (HEE) will be working together at a national level, supported by Areas Teams and LETBs at the local level, to ensure workforce plans include the requirements for this programme and that appropriate continuing professional development is in place. As a first step, LETBs and Area Teams are advised to take account of the forthcoming roll-out of the programme in their workforce forecast returns to the HEE, due by 15 August.

## National Taskforce

11. As this is a major shift in the way we approach protecting the population from flu and could involve up to 9m children being vaccinated every year over a 4 month period, we have established a National Flu Taskforce to practically support the rollout of the programme. This includes commissioning and procurement support. The taskforce is currently being recruited and will be fully operational by the Autumn.

## Next Steps

12. In 2014/15 NHS Area Teams, with their local partners, will continue the pilot work in primary schools and begin pilots in secondary schools to further improve our understanding of how to deliver the programme in those settings. Following this, as set out in Appendix 1 our provisional plan is to bring all 5 and 6 year olds into the programme in 2015/16 and work up through the primary school cohorts first, before bringing children of secondary school age into the programme.
13. Communication materials for schools in the pilot areas to help them to deliver the programme have been produced. This includes Q&As to address questions that schools may have. The Q&A and other materials for schools are available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-flu-immunisation-programme-from-september-2014-to-2015-information-for-parents-and-schools>

## Comments and further information

14. If you have any comments or require any further information, please write to [england.childhoodflu@nhs.net](mailto:england.childhoodflu@nhs.net)

[Appendix 1](#)



Childhood flu immunisation programme: roll-out schedule.

Age cohort	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Pre-school (GP)	2, 3 year olds	2, 3, 4 year olds	2, 3, 4 year olds	2, 3, 4 year olds	2, 3, 4 year olds	2, 3, 4 year olds
Primary	Whole school pilots in 7 areas	Pilots in expanded areas	All 5 and 6 year olds, plus whole school pilots	All 5-10 year olds	All 5-10 year olds	All 5-10 year olds
Secondary	-	Pilots for 11 and 12 yr olds in 13 areas	-	-	All 11-12 year olds	All 11-16 year olds

Notes:

1. 2014/15 plans (green) confirmed; 2015/16 (yellow) being considered through the overall governance process for determining 2015/16 priorities (Section 7A); plans for 2016/17 onwards provisional.
2. Secondary school pilots in 2014/15 are for one year only. This will enable valuable learning to ensure the best approaches to working with this age group are identified, with sufficient resources to enable proper evaluation. (In 2015/16 all available capacity will be targeted on bringing 5 and 6 year olds in to the programme).
3. Plans for 2016/17 onwards are indicative at this stage, and will be kept under review year-on-year.