

## NHS England and NHS Improvement South East

### 2020-21 Flu Programme

### Stakeholder communications – briefing note

13 October 2020 (issue 3)

#### Purpose of this document

Following the publication of the second annual [flu letter](#), NHS England and NHS Improvement's (NHSEI) South East regional team is working hard to address the safe delivery of the flu vaccination for the region in line with national planning requirements.

We are aware that many of our stakeholders have questions and are seeking clarification on this year's flu vaccination programme. This briefing aims to bring together information from the various sources that we are aware of to aid consistency and understanding of the latest position for communications. It has been produced by NHSEI comms with input from public health and screening and immunisation teams.

This year, the regional flu communications campaign will be run by the south east regional flu comms team which comprises representation from each ICS/STP and two ambulance trusts who will coordinate activity in their local areas. The NHSEI regional comms lead and PHE regional comms lead meet with the group regularly.

This briefing will be updated on a regular basis and distributed to flu communications leads (representing each ICS/STP region) who in turn will brief and share with their local leads. The leads of the flu planning groups for Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Thames Valley, Kent and Medway, Surrey and Sussex will also receive this briefing, which will be refined in line with feedback. This document is not for the public although it does contain messages that can support the drafting of internal and external communications.

If you have any questions regarding communications, please contact your local communications lead or email [emma.wray1@nhs.net](mailto:emma.wray1@nhs.net) who is the NHSEI regional flu communications lead.

This briefing contains information on:

- Delivery
  - Guidance on accessing additional vaccination
  - FAQs for primary care
  - Flu immunisation e-learning programme
  - RPS and RCGP joint statement on delivery of flu vaccination programme
- Campaigns
  - Access to additional stock – news release and narrative
  - National marketing launch 5 October
  - GP and pharmacy campaign pack
  - Supplementary regional materials
  - Timeline of upcoming activity

NHS England and NHS Improvement



## **DELIVERY**

### **Guidance on accessing additional vaccination**

The guidance for GPs is available on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessing-government-secured-flu-vaccines-guidance-for-gps>

Guidance for additional stock for community pharmacies and trusts is to follow.

### **FAQs for primary care (operational focus on delivering the flu programme)**

These are in sign-off and will be sent out shortly.

### **E-learning**

PHE and HEE have developed a [flu immunisation e-learning programme](#) available for free for all NHS staff involved in their local flu vaccination campaign.

### **RPS and RCGP joint statement on delivery of flu vaccination programme**

The RCGP and the RPS has [issued a joint statement](#) emphasising how important professional collaboration locally between GPs and community pharmacy is to deliver the flu vaccination programme in the most effective way for patients.

Environments where the vaccine is delivered must be safe and include adequate access to PPE. All eligible, trained professionals should be utilised to administer the vaccine and good processes for sharing information and routes of communication between GPs and community pharmacy should be established, to encourage uptake.

### **Media handling**

A reminder that the South East regional flu communications group is handling flu media enquiries. Primary care colleagues who are approached by media with questions on this year's flu vaccination programme should direct the journalist to their relevant STP / ICS communications team, who should advise and work with NHS England and NHS Improvement South East's flu media team:  
[england.secomms@nhs.net](mailto:england.secomms@nhs.net).

### **Vaccine stock: media handling**

The Department of Health and Social Care is responding to media enquiries on vaccine stock. Please refer media enquiries on this topic to DHSC press office:  
[pressofficenewsdesk@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:pressofficenewsdesk@dhsc.gov.uk).

### **Single point of contact for flu enquiries (non comms related)**

Any operational / technical / clinical enquiries relating to the flu vaccination programme can now be sent to a single point of contact for handling: [england.nhsfluspoc@nhs.net](mailto:england.nhsfluspoc@nhs.net)

## CAMPAIGNS

There are two national campaigns – one for health and social care workers and one for the public. Both campaigns are now live. Information in this document can support local messaging and systems are encouraged to develop these to suit their local area needs and challenges. Some systems have also produced digital assets which can be shared for other teams.

The SE communications team has developed a regional campaign to raise awareness of the vaccination programme, in support of and aligned to the national campaigns.

If local advice or guidance is needed, please contact Emma Wray.

### **Additional stock / access arrangements and situation narrative and promotional / external facing materials**

A public explanation of **why people may be asked to wait** is available online and there is a leaflet to download:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-why-you-are-being-asked-to-wait>

A readout of the release is at Appendix A.

To support the GP practice guidance, a **DHSC press release** has been issued:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guidance-for-gps-to-access-extra-flu-vaccines-as-part-of-expanded-vaccination-programme>

A readout of this explanation is at Appendix B.

The **tripartite narrative on flu supply** (information produced by the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England and NHS Improvement) has also been published (easy read version to come) to ensure a consistent and accurate narrative: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccines-and-supply-for-the-national-flu-programme-2020-to-2021/flu-vaccines-and-supply-for-the-national-flu-programme>

A readout of this narrative is at Appendix C.

These documents can support lines to take and briefing notes. The SE regional comms media team will also update media briefings when enquiries are received.

### **Marketing campaign materials**

The national marketing campaign launched Monday 5 October. The following approach to the campaign has been set out on the Campaign Resource Centre:

*To ensure we encourage eligible cohorts where uptake is traditionally lowest, we will launch with a precision targeted campaign aimed at parents of 2- 3 year olds, pregnant women and people with long-term health conditions.*

*From Monday 19 October the campaign approach will be expanded to include broadcast advertising, targeting eligible cohorts where we know there is sufficient vaccine supply. This approach will support the management of the public expectation of when they can expect to be invited to get their vaccine whilst still driving those groups with lowest uptake to get their vaccine where vaccine is available.*

*Partners can still promote the campaign using PHE assets before 19 October 2020. However, we suggest you consider local vaccine levels wherever possible.*

Assets are [available on the CRC](#). At the time of writing this briefing, they include a social media toolkit and generic social media graphics; posters aimed at pregnant women, parents of children aged 2 and 3 and people with long term conditions; digital screens (generic); open artwork.

### **GP and pharmacy campaign pack**

A GP and pharmacy briefing sheet is available on the CRC with information about the campaign and suggestions on how practices and pharmacies can take part. This sheet is part of the campaign pack that all pharmacies and GPs should receive by mid-October.

### **Supplementary regional materials**

As trailed in the previous edition of this bulletin (28 September 2020), a series of short videos produced by the NHSEI South East communications team are now available for use on social media.

Currently these include videos featuring:

- Vaughan Lewis, South East Medical Director delivering general flu messages;
- Becky Sparks, a learning disabilities nurse, delivering flu messages aimed at people with learning disabilities (this video is signed), as well as a version aimed at carers of people with learning disabilities.
- GP Dr Raj Thakkar, delivering flu messages aimed at people with heart disease and another video aimed at people with diabetes
- GP Dr Zaid Hirmiz, delivering flu messages aimed at people with respiratory disease, including a version in Arabic.

Further videos featuring Jenny Hughes, regional chief midwife, aimed at pregnant women and Vaughan Lewis aimed at parents of children aged two to those in Year 11, are in production and will be added to the resources in due course.

Please speak to your regional STP/ICS flu communications leads for copies of these videos.

### **Timeline of activity for regional communications**

#### **w/c 5 October**

- National launch of public marketing campaign. Precise, targeted promotion to parents of 2-3 year olds, pregnant women and those with long term conditions.

**w/c 12 October**

- National launch of public marketing campaign. Precise, targeted promotion to parents of 2-3 year olds, pregnant women and those with long term conditions.
- Regional media release targeting pregnant women.

**w/c 19 October and beyond**

- National campaign approach expanded to include broadcast advertising, targeting eligible cohorts where there is sufficient vaccine supply.
- Regional media release for those with long term conditions
- Draft release for those living with a learning disability (distribution date tbc).

## **APPENDIX A – Flu vaccine supplies and why you need to wait for your vaccine**

### **Who can have the flu vaccine?**

You can get a free flu vaccine if you:

- are 65 years old and over (including those aged 65 by 31 March 2021)
- have certain health conditions
- live with someone who is on the [NHS Shielded Patient List](#)
- are pregnant
- receive a carer's allowance
- are the main carer of an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you get sick

Children aged 2 to 11 on 31 August 2020 are also eligible for the flu vaccine (with 2- and 3-year-olds offered it in GP surgeries and school-aged children offered it in school).

You can get the flu vaccine at your GP surgery or a pharmacy if you're a health and social care worker employed by a:

- registered residential care or nursing home
- registered homecare organisation
- hospice

You can also get the flu vaccine at your GP surgery or a pharmacy if you provide health or social care through direct payments or personal health budgets.

This year the free flu vaccine will be offered to healthy 50- to 64-year-olds later in the season. People in this age bracket with a health condition that makes them more at risk from flu will be offered it sooner.

Visit [NHS.UK](#) to check whether you are eligible.

### **Even if you are in one of the listed groups, you may be asked to wait to have your flu vaccine**

Overall, there is enough flu vaccine for everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated before the flu season starts, which is usually in December. Flu vaccine is delivered to GP practices, pharmacies and other services in batches in the run-up to and over flu season. This year, early demand for flu vaccine has been higher than usual.

This has meant that while a lot of people have been able to get vaccinated, some people have not been able to get vaccinated straight away as some GP practices and pharmacies have used their early supplies of flu vaccine, due to the level of demand.

If you are eligible and haven't been able to get your vaccination yet, you will still be able to have it before flu season starts.

### **You may be able to get your vaccine elsewhere if your GP practice or pharmacy has run out**

If you are eligible for the free flu vaccine, you can get it from your own GP practice or any pharmacy offering NHS flu vaccinations. They should be able to tell you when they next expect to be able to offer you a vaccine.

Pregnant women can ask their maternity provider for the free flu vaccine and some of those visiting hospitals, either as in- or out-patients, may also be offered the flu vaccine there.

### **Why some people are being offered the vaccine while others have to wait**

There are several types of flu vaccines available. You will be offered one that is recommended for you based on your age. This means some people will be offered a flu vaccine that is in stock while others, who need a different type of vaccine, may have to wait.

### **Wait for the right vaccine for you**

Providers of flu vaccination services are required to offer the vaccine that is most effective for you. It is better to wait to get the right vaccine so that you get the most benefit from it.

### **The best time to have a flu vaccination**

It is best to have the vaccine before flu starts to circulate, which is usually from December onwards. But, if it is later in the season than this, it is still worth having.

The priority this year is to vaccinate those who are most at risk from flu first, including people of all ages who have a health condition that makes them more at risk from flu. People aged 50 to 64 without a health condition that puts them at risk from flu will be offered the vaccine later on and should wait to be invited for vaccination.

### **What you need to do**

The national call and recall service is writing to eligible patients throughout the flu season this year to remind them to get the vaccine. You may also be invited by your GP practice to make an appointment. However, you do not have to wait until you receive a letter to get vaccinated. If you have been advised you are eligible for a flu vaccine but can't have the flu vaccine now because the best vaccine for you is not currently available, follow the advice from your GP surgery or pharmacy and book an appointment at the next opportunity.

## **APPENDIX B – Guidance for GP practices on ordering additional flu stock**

Guidance for GPs to access extra flu vaccines as part of expanded vaccination programme

- Vaccines are already being given to at-risk groups in GPs and pharmacies and will continue over the winter months
- Additional vaccines have been secured by government to allow providers to vaccinate the expanded eligible groups

This guidance explains the process that GPs should follow to access the government's additional vaccines from the central supply.

As part of the tried-and-tested approach to delivering vaccination at scale, should GPs deliver all vaccines from their own stock, they can place orders from mid-October with suppliers for the government-secured stock to be delivered from November. These vaccines will be provided to those at-risk groups like 65s and over, pregnant women and those with pre-existing conditions, as well as frontline health and social care workers.

GPs and pharmacies are responsible for procuring flu vaccine. However, in addition to this, the government has agreed to procure over 8 million vaccines which providers can access once their own stock is empty to help deliver the vaccine to 30 million people.

Over 10 million vaccines have already been delivered, with the other 20 million scheduled for delivery in October, November and December. As flu levels generally do not begin to rise until December, people do not have to rush to get vaccinated in September or October, as the vaccination programme continues right up until and into the flu season.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van-Tam said:

If you are in an eligible group, or if you are a frontline health or social care worker, the flu vaccination will help to protect you and your loved ones this winter. That is very important at a time when COVID-19 is an additional threat. If you're eligible for a free flu vaccine, you will be contacted by the NHS to arrange an appointment. When that happens, please take advantage of this important protection.

Dr Raj Patel, NHS Deputy National Medical Director of Primary Care, said:

Frontline NHS staff are working harder than ever to prepare for winter and have seen significant increase in demand for the flu vaccination, so access to additional supply will be very well received by GPs and patients alike. GPs and pharmacies will continue to offer regular, timely flu vaccines to eligible groups, making particular efforts to prioritise the most vulnerable.

Those eligible for the free flu vaccine, alongside frontline health and social care workers, have already begun to receive their vaccinations. Those aged 50 to 64 will also be eligible for a free vaccine but will be invited later in the season. Once they're invited, they will be eligible to receive vaccines from the government-secured supply.

The flu vaccination programme will run throughout the winter months and into January, so anyone eligible for a vaccine will be able to receive one. The flu season tends to start in December, but vaccination at any point in the season is valuable protection.

### **Background information**

GP guidance has been issued directly to providers. A pre-set proportion of this additional stock will also be made available to trusts and community pharmacy, and the arrangements for them to order against this stock will be confirmed shortly.



**APPENDIX C – Tripartite narrative on flu supply** (please cite this information as on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England and NHS Improvement)

**Flu vaccines and supply for the national flu programme**

Flu is a serious virus, killing an average of 11,000 people every year in England with thousands more needing hospital treatment.

The UK has one of the most comprehensive flu vaccination programmes in the world. We offer the vaccination to those who are already vulnerable and at increased risk from the complications of flu, our health and social care workers, and we have a programme for all primary school-aged children, which for the first time includes children in school year 7.

This year, as announced by the government, 30 million people in England will be able to get the free flu vaccination – twice as many as were vaccinated last year. Getting the flu vaccine is more important than ever this year, as people at high risk from COVID-19 are also those most at risk from flu.

We have already seen huge early demand for the flu vaccination and a lot of people have already been vaccinated. However, some people have not been able to get vaccinated straight away as some GP practices and pharmacies have used their first deliveries of flu vaccine, due to the level of early demand.

Flu vaccine is delivered to GP practices, pharmacies and other services in batches in the run-up to and throughout the flu season. This means that GP practices, pharmacies and other providers will be getting more vaccines.

This is partly because the vaccine is produced in a phased way because it is a complex biological product. This is also partly to allow GPs and pharmacies to schedule clinics and appointments alongside their other usual services and to allow people to choose when to have their vaccination.

People shouldn't feel they have to rush out and get vaccinated in September or October, as the vaccination programme continues right up until and into the flu season, which doesn't normally start until December. There will however be enough flu vaccine for everyone who is eligible.

There is no problem with the production and delivery of stock which has been ordered: a third of the national total of the vaccine was ordered for September and has been delivered, with more still to come during October, November and December to vaccinate over 30 million people.

There are several types of flu vaccines available. You will be offered one that is recommended for you based on your age. This means some people will be offered a flu vaccine that is in stock while others, who need a different type of vaccine, may have to wait.

GP practices and pharmacies are doing their very best to ensure that social care and health care workers and people who are at the greatest risk from flu are vaccinated as early as possible, in line with their supply. Please therefore treat people working in GP practices and pharmacies with respect.

As well as offering the free flu vaccine to people who are at greatest risk, there is an ambition to offer the vaccination to all people aged 50 to 64 years old who aren't already in an at-risk group later in the year. People in this age group should therefore wait until later in the year when they are advised by their GP practices or pharmacy.