



News Alert

Thursday 14th May 2020

PSNC News Alert: Annual Flu Letter Published for 2020/2021

The Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England and NHS Improvement have jointly published a [letter](#) to provide further information on the national flu immunisation programme for 2020–21.

The letter notes that the impact of COVID-19 on the NHS and social care has been visible to all, and this coming winter we may be faced with co-circulation of COVID-19 and flu. Those most at risk from flu are also most vulnerable to COVID-19. So, flu vaccination is one of the most effective interventions the NHS has to reduce pressure on the health and social care system this winter.

Service delivery during the pandemic

The organisations acknowledge that delivering the flu immunisation programme is likely to be more challenging because of the impact of COVID-19 on health and social care services. Further guidance will be issued about how to manage the immunisation programme to reflect circumstances nearer the planned start of the programme in September 2020.

Ordering sufficient vaccines

The letter advises that this season it will be more important than ever to ensure that sufficient stocks of the recommended adult flu vaccines have been ordered for your eligible patients, as it is anticipated that concerns about COVID-19 may increase demand for flu vaccination in all groups.

In light of COVID-19, community pharmacies and general practices are being asked by the organisations to urgently review their vaccine orders now to make sure the number of vaccines ordered meet at least national ambitions and previous uptakes rates, whichever is highest.

The letter also outlines the vaccines agreed for use by NHS England and NHS Improvement during the 2020–21 programme.

Eligible groups

The groups included in the eligibility criteria for 2020–21 currently remain the same as in 2019–20. The letter does however highlight that discussions to consider expansion of the flu programme for this autumn are underway, so there could be expansions to the eligible groups announced in due course.

The letter also notes that all those eligible should be given flu vaccination as soon as possible so that individuals are protected when flu begins to circulate. Providers should aim to schedule their immunisation services to match vaccine supply, usually from September, and complete vaccination by the end of November, where possible.

Pharmacy Advanced service documentation

The Directions, service specification and Patient Group Direction for the Community Pharmacy Flu Vaccination Service 2020–21 will be published in due course; PSNC will highlight this to contractors through normal communication channels once published.

[Read the Annual Flu Letter 2020-21](#)

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