



Thursday 14 May 2020

Dear Colleague,

The national flu immunisation programme 2020/21

1. Thank you for all the hard work everyone is doing as part of the NHS response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. It is more important than ever that we have effective plans in place for the 2020/21 flu season to protect those at risk, prevent ill-health and minimise further impact on the NHS and social care.
2. We recognise that delivering the flu immunisation programme is likely to be more challenging because of the impact of COVID-19 on our 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. Discussions to consider expansion of the flu programme for this autumn are underway, and we will write again with any changes in due course.
3. In the meantime, you should continue to plan for the programme as usual. This letter is to inform you which groups are eligible for flu vaccination this autumn and sets out actions that you can take now to prepare for this autumn's vaccination campaign.
4. In particular, 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. In light of COVID-19, we ask Primary Care providers (General Practices and Community Pharmacies) to urgently review your vaccine orders now to make sure the number of vaccines ordered meet at least national ambitions and previous uptakes rates, whichever is highest. Please do so across your local Primary Care Network ensuring that the Clinical Commissioning Group flu lead is fully appraised of the position. If necessary, you may need to adjust your orders with suppliers.
5. For NHS Trusts and across Integrated Care System arrangements, please review your vaccine orders now to make sure the number of vaccines ordered meets your requirements for a vaccination programme to cover all frontline healthcare workers.

Eligibility

6. In 2020/21 groups eligible for the NHS funded flu vaccination programme are the same as last year, although this may change if the programme is expanded, and include:
 - all children aged 2 to 10 (but not 11 years or older) on 31 August 2020
 - those aged 6 months to under 65 years in clinical risk groups
 - pregnant women
 - those aged 65 years and over
 - those in long-stay residential care homes
 - carers
 - close contacts of immunocompromised individuals
 - health and social care staff employed by a registered residential care/nursing home, registered domiciliary care provider or a voluntary managed hospice provider
7. We expect universal vaccination of health and care workers and further guidance will be published in due course.

Prioritising flu vaccine uptake

8. Flu vaccination is one of the most effective interventions we have to reduce pressure on the health and social care system this winter. We are currently seeing the impact of COVID-19 on the NHS and social care, and this coming winter we may be faced with co-circulation of COVID-19 and flu. We understand that planning this year is more challenging with the uncertainties of staff absences, and how long policies around social distancing and school closures will remain in place. However, it is more important than ever to make every effort to deliver flu vaccination.
9. Those most at risk from flu are also most vulnerable to COVID-19. We must do all we can to help protect them this winter. We anticipate that concerns about COVID-19 may increase demand for flu vaccination in all groups this year, and some in at risk groups may have concerns about maintaining social distancing when being given the vaccine.
10. 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.

Service specifications

11. The Directed Enhanced Service (DES) specification for seasonal influenza and pneumococcal immunisation sets out all eligible groups for vaccination (apart from those aged two and three on 31 August 2020). It includes eligible frontline health and care workers working in residential care and nursing homes, domiciliary care providers and the voluntary managed hospice sector. The DES can be found at:
www.england.nhs.uk/gp/investment/gp-contract/
12. There is a separate Enhanced Service (ES) specification for the childhood seasonal influenza vaccination programme, covering the vaccination of children aged 2 and 3 years on 31 August 2020. The ES can be found at:
www.england.nhs.uk/gp/investment/gp-contract/
13. General practices are reminded that both the DES and ES specifications require a proactive call and recall system to contact all at risk patients. Various methods for this should be considered such as letter, email, phone call, text or social media and during face to face interactions if the opportunity arises, to encourage people to attend for their vaccination.
14. GP practices should also proactively call 2- and 3-year-olds. This year the national Childhood Health Information System (CHIS) service specification has been revised to include issuing an early communication to advise parents/carers of all eligible 2- and 3-year-olds that they should access the flu vaccination from their GP practice. These communications are designed to support local call and recall initiatives. It is important that all children are given early protection through the flu vaccine, and GP practices should aim to complete flu vaccination by the end of November at the latest.
15. Community pharmacies offering a flu vaccination service for adults will be required to do so in accordance with the Community Pharmacy Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Advanced service specification for 2020/21, which will be published at:
www.england.nhs.uk/publication/community-pharmacy-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-service/
16. Planning for the school age programme should continue in the context of the current constraints of school closures and staff redeployment. The school age immunisation service specification has a requirement that, to provide early protection, the provider will complete the flu vaccination as early as possible after the flu vaccine becomes available and at the latest by 15 December for all eligible children. School aged vaccination services must actively invite 100% of eligible children. Providers will be required, if asked, to demonstrate that such an offer has been made.

Recommended vaccines for the national flu immunisation programme

17. Flu viruses change continuously and the World Health Organization (WHO) monitors the epidemiology of flu viruses throughout the world making recommendations about the strains to be included in vaccines. For further information on the strains for 2020/21, see the WHO website: www.who.int/influenza/vaccines/virus/recommendations/2020-21_north/en/
18. Providers should ensure that they have ordered adequate supplies of the recommended vaccines for their different patient groups, as set out in the letter from NHS England in December 2019:
www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NHS-England-JCVI-advce-and-NHS-reimbursement-flu-vaccine-2020-21.pdf
19. In summary these are:
 - for those aged 65 and over – the adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine (aTIV) (with the cell-based quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIVc) offered if aTIV is unavailable)
 - for under-65s at risk, including pregnant women, offer QIVc or, as an alternative, the egg-grown quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIVe)
20. The live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) for children should be ordered through ImmForm from centrally purchased supplies and QIVe will be available to order for children in at risk groups aged less than 9 years old who are contraindicated to receive LAIV, in accordance with the letter referred to in paragraph 18. See:
www.immform.dh.gov.uk
21. Children in at risk groups who are contraindicated to LAIV aged 9 years and over who access the vaccine through general practice should ideally be offered the QIVc from the practice's locally procured vaccine stocks. GP practices offering QIVc to these children will be reimbursed by NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I). Where QIVc vaccine is unavailable, practices can either offer QIVe ordered through ImmForm from centrally purchased supplies (which will not be reimbursed), or their own locally procured QIVe which will be reimbursed by NHSE/I.
22. The DES and ES specifications state that in order for practices to receive payment for administration and reimbursement of vaccine they will need to use the specific flu vaccines recommended in the NHSEI guidance.
23. The Community Pharmacy Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Advanced Service specification sets out the requirements under which community pharmacies may provide flu vaccinations to eligible adult patients, including detailing the specific flu vaccines which are recommended by NHSE and are reimbursable under this service.

Information and training resources for health professionals and PGDs

24. Healthcare practitioners should refer to the influenza chapter in ‘Immunisation against infectious disease’ (the “Green Book”) for further detail about clinical risk groups advised to receive flu immunisation and advice on contraindications and precautions for the flu vaccines. This can be found at:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book
25. Information for healthcare practitioners about the childhood flu programme and the inactivated flu vaccines, and links to training slide sets and flu e-learning programme will be available from: www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme and www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/flu-immunisation/
26. PHE will develop PGDs that will be available prior to commencement of the programme from: www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-patient-group-direction-pgd and www.england.nhs.uk/publication/community-pharmacy-seasonal-influenza-vaccine-service/

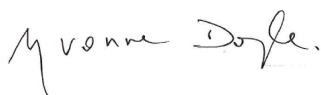
Conclusion

27. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your hard work in delivering the flu immunisation programme. Your continued efforts mean that we have some of the best flu vaccine uptake rates in Europe. This winter, more than ever, it is going to be a key intervention to reduce pressure on the NHS and social care.
28. We thank you for all your hard work in the most challenging of circumstances.

Yours sincerely,



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to: immunisation@phe.gov.uk For operational immunisation queries, providers should contact their local screening and immunisation team.

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Voluntary Organisations Disability Group
National Care Forum (NCF)
National Care Association (NCA)
Care England
ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services)
Local Government Association
Unison

Summary table of which influenza vaccines to offer

Eligible group	Type of flu vaccine
At risk children aged from 6 months to less than 2 years	Offer QIVe . LAIV and QIVc are not licenced for children under 2 years of age.
At risk children aged 2 to under 18 years	Offer LAIV If LAIV is contraindicated offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QIVe to children less than 9 years of age. • QIVc should ideally be offered to children aged 9 years and over who access the vaccine through general practice. Where QIVc vaccine is unavailable, GPs should offer QIVe. • It is acceptable to offer only QIVe to the small number of children contraindicated to receive LAIV aged 9 years and over who are vaccinated in a primary school setting.
Aged 2 and 3 years on 31 August 2020 All primary school aged children (aged 4 to 10 on 31 August 2020)	Offer LAIV If child is in a clinical risk group and is contraindicated to LAIV (or it is otherwise unsuitable) offer inactivated influenza vaccine (see above).
At risk adults (aged 18 to 64), including pregnant women	Offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QIVc • QIVe (as an alternative to QIVc)
Those aged 65 years and over	Offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aTIV* should be offered as it is considered to be more effective than standard dose non-adjuvanted trivalent and egg-based quadrivalent influenza vaccines. • QIVc is suitable for use in this age group if aTIV is not available. <p>* It is recommended that those who become 65 before 31 March 2021 are offered aTIV 'off-label'.</p>

All influenza vaccines marketed in the UK for the 2020 to 2021 season

Supplier	Name of product	Vaccine type	Age indications	Ovalbumin content micrograms/dose	Contact details
AstraZeneca UK Ltd	Fluenz [®] Tetra	Quadrivalent LAIV (live attenuated influenza vaccine) supplied as nasal spray suspension	From 24 months to less than 18 years of age	Less than 0.024 micrograms per 0.2 ml dose	0845 139 0000
GSK	Fluarix Tetra	QIVe (standard egg-grown quadrivalent influenza vaccine), split virion, inactivated	From 6 months	Equal to or less than 0.05 micrograms per 0.5 ml dose	0800 221 441
MASTA	Quadrivalent Influenza vaccine ▼	QIVe (standard egg-grown quadrivalent influenza vaccine), split virion, inactivated	From 6 months	Equal to or less than 0.05 micrograms per 0.5 ml dose	0113 238 7552
Sanofi Pasteur Vaccines	Quadrivalent Influenza vaccine ▼	QIVe (standard egg-grown quadrivalent influenza vaccine), split virion, inactivated	From 6 months	Equal to or less than 0.05 micrograms per 0.5 ml dose	0800 854 430
Mylan	Quadrivalent Influvac [®] sub-unit Tetra ▼	QIVe (standard egg-grown quadrivalent influenza vaccine), surface antigen, inactivated	From 3 years	Equal to or less than 0.1 micrograms per 0.5 ml dose	0800 358 7468
Seqirus UK Ltd	Flucelvax [®] Tetra ▼	QIVc (cell-grown quadrivalent influenza vaccine), surface antigen, inactivated	From 9 years	Egg-free	08457 451 500
Seqirus UK Ltd	Adjuvanted Trivalent Influenza Vaccine	aTIV (egg-grown trivalent influenza vaccine), surface antigen, inactivated, adjuvanted with MF59C.1	From 65 years	Equal to or less than 0.2 micrograms per 0.5 ml dose	08457 451 500
Sanofi Pasteur Vaccines	*Trivalent Influenza Vaccine, High-Dose ▼	TIV-HD (high-dose egg-grown trivalent influenza vaccine), split virion, inactivated	From 65 years	Equal to or less than 1.0 micrograms per 0.5 ml dose	0800 854 430

*This vaccine will not be commissioned by NHSE/I and will not be reimbursed by NHSE/I in 2020/21.