

# Local Implementation of the 2020 Flu Vaccination Programme

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

## Executive Summary

**This report outlines the ambition of the National NHS Flu vaccination programme to deliver flu vaccinations to 75% of eligible population cohorts and 100% of front-line health and social care workers in the challenging environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report highlights the local implementation plans that have been put in place in Hammersmith and Fulham to deliver the programme and the local reporting systems to monitor vaccine uptake. Plans are being adapted according to local variations observed, and, when necessary, in response to the unfolding wider healthcare situation.**

## Key Matters for the Board

The Hammersmith and Fulham Health and Wellbeing board are asked to note the H&F position with respect to the delivery of the National NHS Flu vaccination programme and the local implementation planning that has been put in place.

## Background

### National Flu Campaign 2020

- There is a heightened focus on flu this year to protect vulnerable people and prevent health services being overwhelmed dealing with two potential concurrent outbreaks of COVID-19 and seasonal flu. Older adults and people with long term health conditions are at higher risk from both flu and COVID-19. An initial UK study of patients admitted to hospital earlier in 2020 showed that risk of death in COVID-19 patients more than doubled when they also had flu. (<https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3720>)
- Eligible cohorts for free NHS flu vaccine are as follows: All children aged 2-11yrs, pregnant women, people with long term health conditions aged 6months – 64yrs, all adults aged over 65, carers, members of a shielding household, care home residents and staff, front line health and social care workers.
- The flu vaccination programme runs through September – December. Peak flu season is generally late January – February but varies from year to year.

- The national NHS England ambition this year is for flu vaccine uptake of 75% in eligible cohorts and 100% of front-line health and social care workers.
- Uptake of flu vaccinations in Hammersmith and Fulham in the 2019-20 season was considerably lower than this and illustrates the scale of ambition involved in the roll out of the 2020-21 programme.

### Flu vaccination uptake 2019-20

Cohort	England	London	H&F
65+	72.4%	66.2%	58.3%
Under 65 at risk	44.9%	41.8%	28.7%
Pregnant	43.7%	39.2%	29.6%
Age 2	43.4%	32.2%	30.0%
Age 3	44.2%	32.6%	30.1%
Primary Schools	60.4%	50.3%	42.5%

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-gp-patients-monthly-data-2019-to-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-children-of-primary-school-age-winter-2019-to-2020>

## National Flu Campaign 2020 – Local Implementation

### Delivery Plans

- Eligible cohorts are offered a vaccination at their registered GP practice, via a home visit or at their local pharmacy. Delivery of vaccinations started in September. Planning for this season began with practices order vaccinations in late 2019; and by the team exploring how to maximise uptake from Early Summer in 2020 including collaboration with DPH.
- Primary Care Networks (PCNs) in Hammersmith and Fulham have plans in place to achieve the 75% uptake target and performance is being monitored against planned trajectories. The PCNs opted for traditional practice based flu clinic delivery models, rather than at scale models.
- Hammersmith and Fulham CCG have worked with practices to seek assurance around effective Infection Prevention and Control processes, appropriate supplies, use of PPE and adherence to social distancing guidelines in line with national recommendations for healthcare settings.
- Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH) provides flu vaccinations to those who are housebound and to those who are shielding this year. GP practices send their caseload to the District Nurses and vaccinations are provided in the community.
- Vaccination of school aged children is commissioned by NHS England (NHSE) and delivered by the Central and North West London NHS Foundation trust (CNWL) School immunisations team. The team visits all schools (state and independent) to vaccinate

children from reception through to year 7. Call/recall letters were sent out at the end of September and CNWL began visiting schools in October 2020. We have not been notified of any schools refusing to participate to date.

- Children receive the flu vaccine via a painless nasal spray called Fluenz. This contains porcine, a very refined derivative of pork gelatine, to enable vaccine stability. This presents a barrier to some Muslim, vegetarian and other families participating in the flu programme. Children with some high risk health conditions are offered the injected vaccine at the GP practice.
- Employer occupational health schemes are responsible for providing flu vaccinations to health and social care workers, although front line workers involved can also claim a vaccine at their GP practice or a local pharmacy by producing their ID badge.
- Care home vaccinations are monitored by the CCG and Local Authority. Pharmacies have been licensed to provide vaccinations in care homes to both staff and residents.

### Progress to Date

- Delivery of vaccinations started in September in most GP practices and pharmacies however commencement date was determined by the receipt of the initial vaccine supplies and for some practices this was early October.
- Early indications are that uptake is exceeding that of previous years at a similar time point in most cohorts.
- There have been concerns that GP practices and pharmacies have been running low on vaccine stock. GPs are now able to order more stock from the nationally held supplies although there may be a time lag in receiving these deliveries. Stock delivery is always staggered throughout the vaccination period and many GP practices and pharmacies have received deliveries in recent weeks. Feedback from the PRG last week did not indicate that availability of vaccines in practices is currently an issue. This correlates with the information the team have from practices. Some practices are also reporting high rates of refusals - fear of COVID infection in primary care settings being cited as one reason. The November lockdown is also likely to have impacted on vaccination rates – practices and PCNs are continuing to review and look to adapt the delivery of the programme accordingly.
- Working closely with the LBHF and NWL CCG comms promote the flu vaccine both internally and externally via council, CCG channels and social media.

### Flu vaccination uptake – week 47 2020

Cohort	H&F
65+	57.0%
Under 65 at risk	24.3%
Pregnant	32.1%
Age 2	36.9%
Age 3	36.8%

<https://portal.immform.phe.gov.uk/DataCollections/DataCollections/Current-Surveys/Flu-Data-Collections/Home/Flu-Collections-Home.aspx>

## **Maximising Uptake Actions**

- Joint communications and engagement approach with LBHF. CCG has made available £5k to the Council to support greater publicity of the vaccination programme. This will be used to target key populations via a range of social media, Council newsletter, Next Door
- Governing Body clinical members have recorded short videos which will be used across social media platforms and used by the Council as part of publicity campaign above
- All stakeholders on the CCG database have received regular updates and reminders of the flu campaign, Patient Reference Group members have been encouraged to remind their stakeholders to have the flu vaccination
- Letter sent by Dr Lang to all parents encouraging them to have their children vaccinated
- Dr Lang has presented to the Al Manaar Mosque on vaccinations generally to encourage people to have vaccinations
- CCG Community Engagement are working with BAME networks, community champions and community engagement leads to ensure that the flu vaccine is promoted effectively to all communities and that there is an opportunity for communities to raise questions and have them answered. NWL CCG has worked closely with Local Authority to ensure that communications and engagement plans, as well as messaging are consistent.
- A range of data sources, including a locally developed dashboard, are being used to actively monitor the uptake of flu vaccinations, quickly identify gaps and implement corrective actions to ensure that vaccinations stay on trajectory to ensure maximal uptake.
- The potential risk that an increase in COVID cases could cause has been taken into account and PCNs have been reviewing and refreshing Business Continuity plans with particular consideration of flu delivery.
- The CCG has been working with PCNs and the Local Authority to utilise outside GP practice space and car parks to deliver flu clinics in a socially distanced manner. GP practices have been offered staff parking exemptions in order to clear their practice car parks and support weekend flu clinics.

## **Over 65s:**

- Latest data shows vaccination rates have almost reached last year's uptake level with 5 weeks remaining before Christmas, and one practice in H&F Central PCN has already exceeded 75%.
- GP practices are continuing to call and recall this cohort of the population – via messaging and phone calls.
- Lead GP practices for each of the Care Homes in the borough have offered vaccinations to their residents via a range of locally defined delivery models, including clinics in the homes, in GP practices, and in collaboration with local pharmacies.

## **Under 65 at risk, Pregnant Women and 2-3 year olds:**

- Latest uptake levels for the pregnant women and 2-3 year olds cohorts is already higher than the final position achieved last year however remain considerably lower than the 75% target.
- This is not yet replicated in the under 65 year olds at risk but uptake is higher than the same point last year.
- NWL CCG Chairs have recently written a letter to all GP practices encouraging them to focus on these cohorts as a matter of urgency between now and the end of December.
- PCNs have been asked to provide assurance to the CCG that plans are in place to reach as many eligible patients as possible with good practice and shared learning between practices and PCNs.
- GP practices have been asked to continue to call and recall, with individual follow ups being undertaken and personal conversations to discuss concerns. Text message usage costs are funded by the CCG and have been encouraged to be used as frequently as necessary.
- H&F GP Federation staff and community link workers have been asked by PCNs to support in calling patients where they have capacity.
- Tailored communications for each of the cohorts has been developed to support practices when inviting patients to be vaccinated.
- Communications have been developed to try and counteract online anti-vaccination rumours, debunk myths about flu vaccination and to assuage fears linked to Covid-19 infection.
- Best practice from high performing areas across NWL on how to target each individual cohort has been identified and shared to all GP practices.
- NHSE are developing a GP letter to ensure the timely and accurate uploading of maternity trust data for pregnant women vaccinations.
- The British Fatwa Council/Karimia Institute has issued a fatwa (a formal ruling or interpretation on a point of Islamic law) which concludes the nasal flu vaccine containing porcine gelatine is permissible for Muslim children. This messaging has been shared with GP practices to support parents when making consent decisions.
- GPs are now able to order more stock from the nationally held supplies and have been urged to order more if stock levels are close to exhaustion.
- The CCG continues to work with GP practices to monitor stock levels and support ordering.

### **School Aged**

- CNWLs Scheduled school clinics have been conducted and evening clinics continue to be held. They will also hold Saturday catch up clinics and send parents a final reminder to consent for their children. Those who have declined the nasal spray due to porcine gelatine content will be offered an injection based vaccine as an alternative in the New Year following national guidelines on the availability of vaccines.

### **Community Pharmacies**

- Demand at pharmacies has been high
- GP practices now receive electronic notifications, directly into their clinical systems, when a registered patient receives a flu vaccination in a community pharmacy that uses PharmOutcomes or Sonar.

- The CCG have reminded GP practices to continue to check for these electronic notifications and upload vaccination data onto patient records in a timely and accurate fashion.

#### **Health and Social Care Workers:**

- The CCG is working with practices and the GP federation to actively monitor the uptake and recording of healthcare staff flu vaccinations and are strongly encouraging practices to ensure that all staff are vaccinated. This is recorded on the GP clinical system. Practices have the ability to alert commissioners to any concerns which may impact on service delivery through an online situation report.
- The CCG is liaising with the Local Pharmaceutical Committee to identify possible suitable pharmacies to support two Care Homes in the borough to vaccinate their staff.

#### **50-64 year olds:**

- The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) announced on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 20 that GP practices and community pharmacies will be able to vaccinate all 50-64 year olds from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020.
- Vaccination of priority groups is continuing alongside this new cohort.
- GP practices have been advised to begin planning now, for example, ordering additional stock and organising appointment slots.
- Vaccines are available, free of charge to GP practices, from the national stock to support this extension. However, we do not know what the exact patterns of uptake will be for this new cohort.
- H&F PCNs will continue the same delivery models for this cohort as used for the initial phase of the programme.

#### **Alternative Flu Clinic Delivery Models:**

- The CCG are supporting South Fulham PCN and CLCH as they develop a Parsons Green pre-bookable flu clinic for eligible patients, including 50-64 year olds.
- The CCG have encouraged PCNs to explore and offered help to support delivering larger at-scale flu clinics.