

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Issue Date: 14 February 2019

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**STATUS: ACTION**

**CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Title: Changes to the shingles immunisation programme from 1 April 2019**

**Date of Expiry / Review N/A**

**For Action by:**

General Practitioners  
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards  
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards  
Directors of Primary, Community and Mental Health, Health Boards  
Deputy Director of Public Health Services, Public Health Wales  
Head VPD Programme, Public Health Wales

**For information to:**

Chief Executives, Health Boards  
Medical Directors, Health Boards  
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards  
Chief Executive, Public Health Wales

**Sender:**

Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales

**DHSS Welsh Government Contact**

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Dear Colleague,

### **The Shingles Vaccination Programme**

1. A national shingles vaccination programme was introduced on 1 September 2013. Since that time people aged 70 years on 1 September of each year have been offered vaccination as part of the routine programme.
2. There has also been a phased “catch up” programme for people aged 71 to 79 years.
3. The shingles vaccination programme commences on 1 April each year and runs for 12 months to 31 March (the ‘vaccination year’).
4. This Welsh Health Circular:
  - provides guidance on eligibility for the shingles vaccination programme from April 2019 and,
  - seeks your support in actively promoting this vaccine to better protect older people by improving uptake in Wales.

### **Incidence of shingles and vaccine uptake**

5. The annual incidence of shingles for those aged 70 to 79 years is estimated to be around 790 to 880 cases per 100,000 people in England and Wales. Data from GP based studies in England and Wales suggest that over 50,000 cases of shingles occur in people aged 70 years and over annually, with around 4% of the cases resulting in complications including long term pain (postherpetic neuralgia).
6. The aim of the national shingles immunisation programme is to lower the incidence and severity of shingles in older people. As at 30 December 2018, the uptake of shingles vaccine in Wales in those aged 70 years was 31% with uptake in health boards ranging from 21% to 39%. Uptake increases year by year to 68% at 75 years. Further detail on uptake can be found on the Public Health Wales web site at:  
<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/43922>
7. From April 2019 eligibility for the shingles vaccination programme will be simplified. This will help support local efforts to reach the target group. I would like to see an improvement in overall uptake across Wales, especially in people at 70 years of age and a reduction in the significant variability in uptake between health board areas.

### **Eligibility from 1 April 2019**

8. From 1 April 2019, shingles vaccination may be offered as follows:

## Routine programme

- to individuals aged 70 years. Vaccination can be offered on or after they reach their 70<sup>th</sup> birthday but not before.

## “Catch up” programme

- to unvaccinated individuals in their 70s who have not yet reached their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

As eligibility will no longer be linked to an individual’s age on 1 September, care must be taken not to miss people who became eligible since 2 September 2018 who were not offered the vaccine in the vaccination year April 2018 – March 2019.

9. There is no requirement for practices to operate active call and recall systems but it would be good practice to do so. Priority should be given to maximising uptake when the patient becomes eligible at 70 years of age.
10. The programme does not offer the vaccine to individuals aged 80 years or older due to the reducing efficacy of the vaccine as age increases.

## **Individuals not eligible for the national programmes**

11. Following an assessment by a suitably qualified clinician, the shingles vaccine may be offered to those who are not currently eligible for the national programme but who would benefit medically, for example those with underlying conditions which increase their risk of shingles. Please note that vaccine for this purpose cannot be used from the central supplies ordered through ImmForm and it should instead be sourced separately.

## **Funding**

12. Funding for the routine programme has already been transferred to health boards’ core allocations.
13. An ‘in year’ funding allocation will be made to health boards in 2019 to cover the final cohort of the ‘catch up’ programme. This will be based on the latest available uptake data at that time. Funding will then cease for this element of programme.

## Service arrangements

14. Service arrangements have been agreed with GPC(Wales). The Directions to Local Health Boards as to the Financial Entitlements Directions 2013 will be amended to reflect the change to the eligibility criteria.
15. An Item of Service fee at the current applicable rate will be made in respect of each registered patient who meets the eligibility criteria and who has received the shingles vaccine during the financial year ending 31 March.
16. The changes to the Directions mean that the National Enhanced Service (NES) currently in place for the 'catch up' programme will no longer be required from 1 April.

## Vaccine Uptake Data Collection

17. Practices are required to provide data to Public Health Wales (PHW) sufficient to carry out surveillance and monitoring of the shingles vaccination programme. Data to monitor vaccine uptake will be collected automatically via Audit plus in a similar manner to that of other existing adult immunisation programmes and will not be patient identifiable.
18. For accurate monitoring of immunisation uptake, it is essential that all shingles vaccinations administered are recorded in a timely manner in the GP practice clinical information system using appropriate Read codes (or SNOMED CT codes when available in Wales). Any General Practice in Wales that opts out of providing immunisation uptake data to PHW in an automated electronic manner will be expected to undertake its own interrogation of its GP practice clinical information system in order to provide equivalent data.

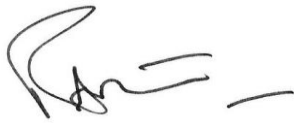
## Further information

19. Guidance on shingles immunisation can be found in Chapter 28a of *Immunisation against infectious disease* ('the Green Book')  
  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shingles-herpes-zoster-the-green-book-chapter-28a>
20. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) statement on shingles vaccination is available at:  
  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/ab/JCVI/DH\\_094744](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/ab/JCVI/DH_094744)
21. Further information is available from Public Health Wales at:  
  
<http://www.publichealthwales.org/vaccines>  
  
<http://nww.immunisation.wales.nhs.uk/shingles-vaccination-programme>  
[NHS Wales intranet only]

Shingles is a significant cause of morbidity in older people and we hope colleagues will recognise the significant benefits the shingles vaccine will bring to their patients. Simplification of the eligibility criteria should be better for patients and healthcare professionals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all involved in delivering the programme and for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Frank Atherton', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Dr Frank Atherton**  
**Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales**