

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH

Title: Flu vaccination for residential care and nursing home staff in 2018-19

Date of Expiry / Review N/A

For Action by:

Community Pharmacists
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards/Trusts
Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts
Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Chief Pharmacists, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards
Directors of Workforce and Organisational
Development, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Primary, Community and Mental
Health, Health Boards
Chief Executive, Public Health Wales
Executive Director of Public Health Services,
Public Health Wales
Nurse Director, Public Health Wales
Head Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme,
Public Health Wales
Chief Executive, Welsh Local Government
Association

For information to:

Community Pharmacy Wales
General practitioners
GPC(Wales)Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Sender:

Chief Medical Officer for Wales

DHSS Welsh Government Contact(s) :

Health Protection Services, Department for Public Health, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff.
CF10 3NQ Email: HealthProtection@gov.wales

Enclosure(s): None

Dear Colleague,

NHS provision of flu immunisation for staff working in adult residential care homes and nursing care homes in 2018-19

In 2018-19, staff working in all adult residential care homes and nursing care homes will be offered free NHS flu vaccination.

This letter provides further detail on programme arrangements.

The purpose of the programme

Despite having high flu vaccination rates in residents, flu can spread within care homes and can easily be passed from staff to residents when the staff member has mild or even no symptoms. This is partly because as people age, their response to vaccination does not protect them as well.

Vaccination of staff in long term care settings has been shown to be effective in reducing the spread of influenza and illness and deaths in residents. It can also help to ensure business continuity by reducing flu related staff illness and the need to provide agency cover. The social care sector has a crucial role to play in preventing hospital admissions over the winter period, particularly for older people. Last winter there were 88 reported flu outbreaks in Wales, of which 64% occurred in care homes. Studies have shown that the uptake of flu immunisation in staff in care homes to date is very low, and they are therefore at increased risk of catching flu.

Care homes included in the programme

Adult residential care homes and all nursing care homes in Wales are included in the NHS programme because of the higher risk to staff and residents due to the enclosed nature of these settings. Nursing care homes will include the small number of children's hospices in Wales but does not include other residential care settings for children or young adults.

Eligible staff

All staff employed at care homes as described above and who are in regular contact with residents are eligible. The majority of these staff will be providing direct personal or clinical care. Smaller homes are likely to employ staff whose role brings them into regular contact with residents but do not provide direct care. All homes are expected to take a planned approach to identifying staff in regular contact with residents and confirm their eligibility to community pharmacies as outlined below.

Other social care staff, such as domiciliary care workers, are not eligible for NHS flu vaccination in 2018-19. The risk from flu and the spread of flu is greater in people living in shared accommodation.

Programme delivery

The programme will be delivered through the community pharmacy NHS seasonal influenza vaccination service.

Health boards will need to include staff working in care homes amongst the eligible groups to whom community pharmacies providing this service can provide vaccination.

The method of delivery should be agreed locally. Community pharmacies that supply medicines to care homes may wish to make arrangements with those homes to offer flu vaccination to staff on the premises. Alternatively, staff may be directed to visit any pharmacy providing the community pharmacy NHS flu vaccination service.

Community pharmacies will need to take steps to check the eligibility of individuals who present for vaccination, for example by seeing a letter or voucher from the care home confirming employment and eligibility.

Care home staff should be vaccinated wherever possible through the community pharmacy service to relieve pressure on general practices. However, care home staff who are in a clinical risk group eligible for NHS flu vaccination, may choose to be vaccinated at their own general practice.

Recording Uptake

Data on eligible residential care and nursing home staff will be collected as part of the community pharmacy NHS seasonal influenza vaccination service requirements.

Community pharmacies will be required to provide details of vaccinations administered using the Choose Pharmacy or National Electronic Claim and Audit Form systems and to the appropriate general practice in a timely manner.

Funding

It has previously been agreed to repurpose community pharmacy contract funding to support additional service commissioning. The costs arising from fees paid to

pharmacies would be met from within the repurposed funding and this funding is therefore already included in the allocation made to health boards.

The cost of procuring the vaccine is not included in the existing funding. Health board finance directors will be notified separately of the funding amounts allocated to individual health boards.

Publicity and information materials

Public Health Wales will be sending information packs to care homes across Wales to raise awareness of this new programme and to provide support and guidance on helping to ensure that their staff with direct contact with residents are vaccinated.

Further information will be published on the Public Health Wales 'Beat Flu' webpage at: www.beatflu.org or www.curwchfliw.org.

Yours sincerely,

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

Dr Frank Atherton

Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales