

## Flu Campaign 2020-21

Annual flu vaccinations are part of one of the biggest campaigns to reduce pressure on the NHS each winter. The impact of COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the NHS so far and there is a real threat that this winter we may be faced with both COVID-19 and flu.

The government says the “most comprehensive flu programme in UK history will be rolled out this winter and providers will work to vaccinate more than 30 million people during this flu season – millions more than received it last year”.

In addition to the people who are already eligible for a free flu vaccine, an expanded flu vaccination programme to protect vulnerable people and support the NHS has been announced by NHS England, with a free flu vaccine to be made available for people aged 50 to 64 later in the year. Additionally, households of those on the shielded patient list will also be eligible for free flu vaccination, and the school programme has been expanded to the first year of secondary schools (year 7) for the first time.

Once vaccination of the most ‘at-risk’ groups is well underway, the Department of Health and Social Care will work with clinicians to decide when to open the programme to invite people aged 50 to 64, with further details to be announced.

All frontline health and social care workers will also be urged to get their free vaccine to protect themselves and others from flu.

However, planning the flu campaign this year will be extremely challenging with the uncertainties around the exact number of patients in the increased cohorts, availability of additional flu vaccines needed, possible staff absences due to self-isolation, and how long some government restrictions will remain in place or even be reinstated at short notice.

## Delivering Mass Vaccinations During COVID-19

Last week the RCGP published new guidance for GP practices which can be found [here](#) about mass vaccination programmes which may need to be delivered during mid-2020 to 2021.

Key considerations for vaccinations at such a challenging time include:

- Standards of infection prevention and control
- Larger spaces may be necessary to maintain safe social distancing
- Increased time necessary for the use of PPE and preparing patients, e.g. 4-6 minutes per flu vaccination instead of 1-3 minutes
- Availability of vaccines
- Adequate fridge storage
- Flu vaccine extended to those aged 50 or over (who are not already in an eligible group for flu vaccination)
- Urgent vaccination against COVID-19 (when it is available)
- Workforce availability
- Protection of vulnerable staff
- Risk assessment
- Planning for worst-case scenario

The Government has now announced the expanded cohort, which is set to target 30 million patients - including all those over 50, shielded patients and their households and all school year groups up to Year 7, available [here](#).

GPs will be asked to use the flu stock that they have already ordered to deliver this year's expanded flu programme. It is believed that the Government has secured a 'central stock' of flu vaccines in preparation for the additional groups added to the cohort eligible for free jabs as well as an expected increase in uptake this year. Further information is not expected until September, but Practices have already been contacted by patients who are eligible in the new groups asking when they can have a flu jab.

We know that Practices will have many questions and concerns about this, particularly during a pandemic. We recommend that you consider the following points initially:

### **Additional Potential Costs for the Flu Program, due to COVID-19**

- Venue hire, or car park plus any temporary structures, e.g. tent or gazebo
- Insurance - if not covered by existing policy
- Overtime for staff
- Travel for staff if doing clinics off-site
- Power supplies/generator if doing clinics off-site
- Waste disposal – additional sharps bins & insurance
- Additional refrigeration – portable vaccine fridges and/or vaccine cool boxes
- Additional IT support
- Water and sinks for handwashing if doing clinics off-site
- Additional hand sanitiser
- Heating and lighting for clinics done out of core opening hours
- Refreshments for staff
- Traffic management – cordons and signage
- Additional planning time
- Correspondence to and from patients
- Extra time needed for each appointment
- PPE – gloves, masks, aprons
- Marshalls/staff
- Set up and planning application for a drive-flu clinic

We recommend you utilise the following policies to create an initial plan:

- Annual Holiday Policy and Procedure
- Staff Immunisations Policy and Procedure
- Infection Control and Decontamination Policy and Procedure
- Cold Chain Policy and Procedure
- Action Planning Policy and Procedure