

REPORT TO: Health and Wellbeing Board
DATE: 13th November 2013
REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Public Health
PORTFOLIO: Health and Adults
SUBJECT: Seasonal Flu vaccinations

1.0 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Board of the details of the 2013/14 season flu vaccination campaign and local implementation

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

To acknowledge the content of the report and request that senior managers promote the benefits of the vaccine to all appropriate staff.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Influenza (often referred to as Flu) is an illness that occurs all year round but peaks in the winter time. It is a highly contagious viral infection that for most people is a self-limiting illness that will cause nasty symptoms for up to a week. However, older people, the very young, pregnant women and those with underlying disease, particularly chronic respiratory or cardiac disease, or those who are immunosuppressed, are at particular risk of severe illness if they catch flu. Flu is easily transmitted and even people with mild or no symptoms can still infect others.

3.2 To protect those at risk immunisation is recommended. It is particularly important that frontline staff that have direct contact with patients of all ages are offered immunisation against Influenza.

3.3 Vaccinating staff against flu is an important infection control measure as part of the annual winter planning process to ensure that health and social care are as resilient as possible.

3.4 The following key points have been communicated to all frontline staff across all community and social care services –

- As part of your duty of care to your patients or residents you should do everything in your power to protect them against infection. This includes getting vaccinated against flu.
- The impact of flu on frail and vulnerable patients, in communities, care homes and in hospitals, can be fatal.
- Getting vaccinated against flu can help protect you and your family.

- Even if you have no symptoms you can still pass flu to patients.
- Having the flu vaccination can be a powerful message to colleagues and patients.

3.5 HBC Staff have been offered free seasonal flu vaccinations on 29 and 31 October. Sessions were arranged at a location in Widnes and Runcorn and ran from 9.30 to 5pm to allow as many staff as possible the opportunity to attend. This is a healthy workplace initiative which has the potential benefit of maintaining staff capacity during the winter months due to improved resilience against flu.

3.6 Priority has been given to HBC Staff who fulfil the definition of being frontline staff, which are those who have direct patient contact; they have been given the opportunity to attend at the ASDA Pharmacy in Widnes or Runcorn up until the first week of December. The message has been given alongside the fact that that the sooner they go the sooner they are protected.

3.7 To improve vaccine coverage, research suggests that a multi-faceted approach will be most effective, within the context of a comprehensive infection control programme that is designed to protect both patients and staff. This should include:

- easy access to flu vaccination during staff working hours with protected time and on-site provision
- senior clinical flu vaccination champions
- clinicians vaccinating colleagues
- education and training
- visible Board and staff engagement with the local campaign.

3.8 The Public Health Team has coordinated arrangements for vaccination of all staff including those in the front line.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Immunisation against infectious disease (the Green Book)¹ states that immunisation should be provided to healthcare and social care workers in direct contact with patients/clients to protect them and to reduce the transmission of influenza within health and social care premises, to contribute to the protection of individuals who may have a suboptimal response to their own immunisations, and to avoid disruption to services that provide their care.

4.2 The updated Code of practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance reminds both NHS and social care bodies of their responsibilities. These are to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that health and social care workers are free of, and are protected from exposure to infections that can be caught at

¹ For the Green Book see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/series/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book>

work.²

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The responsibility for funding the seasonal flu vaccine and its administration to staff (other than those that are in a clinical risk group) lies with employers.

6.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 Making flu vaccination available to staff reduces the risk of them transmitting the illness to others who may be in a vulnerable at risk group, reduces staff absenteeism and increases winter resilience

7.0 **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 Not likely to impact adversely on any of the nine groups

² The Code can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-and-social-care-act-2008-code-of-practice-on-the-prevention-and-control-of-infections-and-related-guidance>)