

**REPORT TO:** Health and Wellbeing Board  
**DATE:** 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Public Health  
**PORTFOLIO:** Public Health  
**SUBJECT:** Seasonal Flu Vaccination Programme 2015/16  
**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report presents an overview of changes to and requirements of the annual seasonal influenza vaccination campaign for the 2015 – 2016 flu season and implications of this for the Local Authority and health and social care partner agencies.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

**The Health and Wellbeing Board note the changes to the national flu vaccination programme for 2015-2016 and for each individual agency to note their requirements in relation to the programme.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 3.1 Background

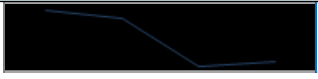


Influenza represents a significant cause of morbidity and mortality, and is a particular concern in those with existing health problems. Flu is ultimately preventable and flu vaccination remains an important tool in protecting the health of our population.

Influenza vaccination is a nationally developed programme for local implementation. The details of which are produced by Public Health England and published in the Winter Flu Plan for local adoption and delivery. This year sees some significant changes, predominantly to the extension of the offer of flu vaccine to a wider age range of children.

### 3.2 Previous campaigns

The target uptake of flu vaccination is for at least 75% of all at risk individuals to be vaccinated to ensure adequate community protection. Uptake of flu vaccination has generally decreased in the last few years in Halton and the uptake varies considerably by Practice. Variation in uptake across Halton puts some areas at increasing and inequitably higher risk.

## Uptake of Flu Vaccines across Halton CCG

Vaccination Group	% uptake 2012/13	% uptake 2014/15	2014/15 Practice variation		Trend 2011/12 to 2014/15
			highest	lowest	
65 and Over	76.7%	73.8%	79.4%	67.2%	
Under 65 at risk	55.2%	50.3%	66.7%	38.5%	
Pregnant women	42.2%	46.7%	61.6%	33.0%	

Uptake across Halton has decreased in the last few years, with the exception of amongst pregnant women, where, as a new addition to the programme in 2011, considerable effort has been put in to expanding the uptake.

Uptake amongst front line health care workers continues to increase, with Warrington and Halton Hospital Trust achieving an overall uptake of 78.5% and St Helens and Knowsley Hospital Trust achieving 83.5% uptake amongst front line health staff.

Data for uptake amongst social care workers is not currently available but nationally the uptake amongst this cohort is low.

### 3.3 Flu programme 2015-16

The main change to the programme this year is the offer of flu vaccination to children of school years 1 and 2 age. Therefore, in 2015/16, the following are eligible for flu vaccination:

- those aged 65 years and over
- those aged six months to under 65 in clinical risk groups which include:
  - chronic (long-term) respiratory disease, such as severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or bronchitis
  - chronic heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, neurological disease, such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease, or learning disability
  - diabetes
  - Non-functioning or absent spleen
  - a weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment)
- pregnant women
- all two-, three- and four-year-olds from 31 August 2015
- all children in school years 1 and 2 from September 2015
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers
- primary school-aged children in areas that previously participated in primary school pilots in 2014/15

### 3.4 Flu programme delivery

The vaccinations will be delivered through primary care (GP practices) for the majority of the eligible persons (over 65, under 65 in a clinical risk group, children aged 2,3 and 4, pregnant women and carers). The vaccine for children in school years 1 and 2 will be delivered by School Nurses. Midwifery are encouraged to vaccinate pregnant women.

Halton has also contracted with CRI for the flu vaccination to be offered to individuals in risk groups attending treatment services.

There is a requirement for all frontline health and social care workers to be offered flu vaccination by their employer. This includes general practice staff. General practice and hospital staff vaccinations are undertaken by their own staff and occupational health units.

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority as an employer of front line Health and social care staff to ensure that provision for vaccination is made for all relevant staff.

### 3.5 Publicity and marketing

Public Health England have announced that there will be a national public facing Winter Pressures publicity campaign, which will include flu vaccination promotion.

The announcement arrived late in the year and following a decision by Public Health and Halton CCG to undertake a local public facing campaign to encourage uptake. As part of this campaign, St Martins Primary School, Runcorn were engaged in developing images and artwork for a poster campaign. This is currently being developed and will be launched in the next few weeks. The campaign will target children and parents predominantly as the extension of the vaccination to a new cohort of children is a significant change to the regular programme. Protecting children is one of the main methods shown to prevent further transmission of flu amongst the wider community.

### 3.6 Potential challenges

A number of challenges have been identified for which consideration needs to be given.

#### *Vaccine effectiveness*

The flu vaccine is carefully determined by WHO annually to ensure maximum protection against the most likely strains of flu predicted to be circulating during any given year. The vaccine composition changes annually to reflect this. During the 2014/15 flu seasons, the vaccine did not exactly match the types of flu that were circulating and with media coverage suggesting that the vaccine was not effective. There were outbreaks of flu amongst previously vaccinated individuals (although evidence suggests that the illness experienced by vaccinated individuals was milder) from a strain not adequately covered by the

vaccine. It is anticipated that there may be a greater degree of public apathy and/or scepticism about the effectiveness of the vaccine which may impact upon numbers taking up the offer of vaccine. There is no evidence to suggest that the composition of this year's vaccine will be ineffective and therefore additional publicity and promotion may be necessary to prevent drops in uptake. The vaccine protects against 3 strains of flu, so even if a different strain of flu is circulated the vaccine should still offers a good level of protection against other strains.

Health, social care and all staff engaged in services facing the public are encouraged to take every opportunity to promote the benefits of flu vaccination, prevent and encourage participation in the programme to eligible groups.

#### *Social Care staff*

The council employs around 500-700 potentially eligible front line health and social care staff involved in direct 'patient' care. These staff should be encouraged to have the flu vaccine to protect themselves against flu and protect the vulnerable clients they are working with. Discussions are under way with the Health and Social Care and Children's directorates to identify eligible staff, identify the most effective source of provision and ensure resource is available.

Encouraging eligible staff to take the vaccination is an ongoing challenge, maximising uptake is key to protecting the wider and more vulnerable populations and every effort should be made to encourage uptake through high level leadership. Ensuring provision and uptake amongst eligible staff in contracted services also poses a challenge. This is currently undertaken through Quality Assurance and contracting processes, though uptake is historically low and this puts the wider population at risk.

In the last 2 years, the council has opted to offer flu vaccinations to all council staff; the Chief Officers Management Team took the decision to extend this offer to all staff again this year and options for this provision are being explored.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The flu vaccination programme is a national requirement, monitored through monthly returns to NHS England.

#### **5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There will be financial implications in the implementation of the national programme – vaccinations within primary care and to risk groups is covered through national arrangements. Individual employer organisations of health and social care staff are required to resource arrangements for the provision of vaccination. Resource is required to promote vaccination uptake amongst all eligible groups and maximise the programmes impact.

5.2 Flu presents an annual health challenge on the health and social care system and is responsible for a large proportion of excess winter deaths. Cases of flu pose a significant burden on primary and secondary health care systems. Outbreaks amongst vulnerable groups are common in unprotected communities and can be difficult to manage and control. Flu is preventable and inequities in uptake across the Borough, within higher risk populations and staffing groups can put the most vulnerable people at greater risk.

## 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Children represent one of the key sources of carriage of flu virus in the community, ensuring high uptake amongst children is one of the best ways to ensure limit the spread of flu in our communities and protect our most vulnerable children and members of the community from a preventable illness.

### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Maximising vaccine uptake amongst eligible groups will protect members of our communities, facilitating people to maintain good health through the winter period will maximise employment and learning opportunities and limit absence from school and workplaces.

### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Flu is a preventable illness. Ensuring good uptake of flu vaccination for risk groups and health and social care staff, will prevent illness and death within Halton.

### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None specified

### 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Nonespecified

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Failing to adequately implement the national flu plan and protect our community puts the population at significant risk of outbreaks and increased incidence of a serious, preventable infection. Failure to provide flu vaccination for eligible front line health and social care staff is a corporate risk and can put employees and service users at increased risk of influenza.

## 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The strategy is developed in line with all equality and diversity issues within Halton.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF  
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.