

**REPORT TO:** Health & Wellbeing Board  
**DATE:** 11 October 2022  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Public Health  
**PORTFOLIO:** Health & Wellbeing  
**SUBJECT:** Flu and Covid-19 vaccination, winter 2023/24  
**WARD(S)** Boroughwide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report presents a summary of the flu and Covid-19 vaccination programmes for winter.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1. the Board note the content and process of planning for winter to protect our population against additional threats that the season brings; and**
- 2. each individual agency uses all opportunities to promote positive prevention messages and community support as widely as possible.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 3.1 Background

3.1.1 Vaccination is the most important means of protecting the population from infectious respiratory diseases, particularly during the winter months when rates of infection peak. High rates of vaccination across local populations are important for preventing the circulation of infection, and for protecting individuals from illness. This is particularly important for individuals who are at higher risk of infection, or at greater risk of complications from respiratory disease – such as people who are immunocompromised, have co-existing conditions, or who are pregnant.

3.1.2 In addition, programmes of staff vaccination support business continuity, by protecting organisations from disruptions to services associated with staff absence which contribute to winter pressures. This is particularly important for organisations who provide essential services, such as health and social care organisations. Vaccination of health and social care staff also protects the people for whom they care.

3.1.3 UKHSA have identified a new Covid-19 Omicron variant – BA.2.86 – and, as a result, have brought forward this winter’s flu and Covid-19

vaccination programmes from October to September. Although BA.2.86 is not considered to be a variant of concern (VOC), a precautionary approach has been adopted to ensure that population groups eligible for vaccination are protected as early as possible this winter.

3.2 Flu is a highly infectious disease, with symptoms - including fever, chills, aches and fatigue - that develop rapidly. Although healthy individuals usually recover from flu within 7 days, vulnerable individuals are at risk of hospital admission, permanent disability and even death. Flu season normally extends from October to May, although rates of seasonal flu are usually at their highest between December and March. Flu adds to the increased burden of illness that challenges the health and social care system every year.

### 3.3 **Flu Vaccination**

The aim of the national flu immunisation programme is to protect people who are at higher risk of becoming more seriously ill or suffer complications if they catch flu. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) identifies population groups each year who are eligible for flu vaccination.

### 3.4 **Eligibility**

3.4.1 Groups eligible for flu vaccination for the 2023/2024 flu season are:

- All those aged 65 years and older
- People aged 6 months and over in clinical risk groups (including pregnant women)
- Children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2023
- Primary school children (YR-Y6)
- Secondary school children (Y7-Y11)
- Household contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- Health and social care staff in direct contact with patients/service users without an employer-led occupational health scheme
- People living in long-stay residential care homes
- People in receipt of carer's allowance, or who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person who will be at risk if they fall ill.

3.4.2 Eligible cohorts will be invited for flu vaccination in order of priority to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are protected first. People should wait to receive an invite to book a vaccination, and will then be able to book a vaccination appointment through the National Booking System. Local systems have been asked to work to specifically increase rates of vaccination of pre-school children and pregnant women.

3.4.3 Frontline health and social care workers should be provided with flu

vaccination through their employers' occupational health programmes. Frontline health and social care workers who are employed by organisations without an occupational health programme are eligible for NHS vaccination.

### 3.5 **Flu vaccination delivery**

3.5.1 Flu and Covid-19 vaccine can be administered to individuals at the same time. This is not associated with a higher risk of side effects, and ensures that individuals are protected from both viruses as early as possible.

3.5.2 Providers are expected to deliver a 100% offer to eligible groups. There are no defined national targets for flu vaccination this year, but providers are expected to equal or exceed last year's uptake rates, particularly for clinical risk groups, pregnant women and eligible 2 and 3 year olds. Providers must also have plans in place to address inequalities in vaccination uptake.

#### 3.5.3 **Primary Care**

All GP practices across Halton are delivering the flu vaccination to eligible patients. Most practices will offer appointments and some will also offer drop-in clinics. Pharmacies in Halton are also offering flu vaccination to people who are eligible for the NHS flu programme. Delivery of the service varies: some pharmacies may offer timed appointments but others offer drop in clinics. Pharmacies can also opt to offer the flu vaccination privately to people who are not eligible under the NHS programme

#### 3.5.4 **Schools and nurseries**

Children under the age of 18 years receive nasal spray vaccination, unless there is a specific clinical reason why they should receive injected vaccine. Eligible children of school age will be offered the vaccination by the School-aged Immunisation Team (Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust). The School-aged Immunisation Team will work closely with the Council to help maximise uptake and provide the most effective and efficient service. Children in clinical risk groups will be offered vaccination at school, but can also be vaccinated by their GP practice.

3.5.5 The School-aged Immunisation Team will also be holding vaccination clinics in Early Years settings for eligible pre-school children with the aim of increasing uptake rates. These clinics will be offered in pre-school settings on school sites. The main vaccination offer for pre-school children will continue to be in general practice, and all eligible children aged 2 and 3 years will be able to access vaccination through their GP.

#### 3.5.6 **Care homes and Care Staff**

Vaccinations in care homes are provided by the care home's nominated GP. Care home staff should be vaccinated at the same

time as residents wherever possible. Health and care workers who are not vaccinated in the care home setting can access vaccination at their GP or a pharmacy. Vaccination of care home residents should begin on 11 September and be completed by 22 October 2023. Flu and Covid-19 vaccination should be co-administered during care home visits wherever possible.

### 3.5.7 **Oversight**

Halton Flu Group will meet monthly throughout the flu season to oversee the planning of the seasonal flu programme, ensuring that relevant and robust procedures are in place. Membership of Halton Flu Group includes Halton Borough Council (public health and Adult Social Care), ICB Halton Place, Warrington and Halton Foundation Hospital Trust, Community Infection Prevention and Control team, Local Pharmaceutical Committee, Mersey Care and the NHSE Screening and Immunisation Team.

### 3.6 **Covid Vaccination**

During 2023, there has not been a universal Covid-19 vaccination offer to the general population. Instead, there has been a shift towards a seasonal vaccination programme approach – mirroring the approach to flu vaccination. Specific cohorts will be eligible for a Covid-19 vaccination as part of the current campaign. Individuals in eligible cohorts who have never previously received a Covid-19 vaccination should receive a single dose during the autumn/winter 2023 campaign.

### 3.7 **Eligibility**

3.7.1 The following cohorts will be eligible for Covid-19 vaccination during autumn/winter 2023:

- Residents in care homes for older adults
- All adults aged 65 years and over
- People aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group
- Frontline health and social care staff
- People aged 12-64 years who are household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals
- People aged 16-64 years who are carers
- Staff working in care homes for older adults.

3.7.2 Individuals must leave an interval of three months since their last dose of Covid-19 vaccine. Those at highest risk will be invited for vaccination first.

3.7.3 Vaccines developed by Pfizer, Sanofi and Moderna will be administered during this winter's programme. These vaccines have been updated for the current winter season, to produce higher levels of antibody against some strains of Omicron.

3.7.4 Patients eligible for the autumn/winter 2023 Covid-19 vaccination programme are advised to wait until they receive and invitation to make an appointment for vaccination. Residents can make an appointment through the National Booking Service for vaccination at a community pharmacy. In Widnes, people can receive Covid-19 vaccination on a walk-in basis at pharmacies. Details of walk-in vaccination centres are available on the NHS website. Several GP practices are offering the vaccination at their practice for eligible patients. Patients whose GP is not offering Covid-19 vaccination can access Covid-19 vaccination through community pharmacy and at Highfield Hospital. Nearly all local GP practices are delivering Covid-19 vaccination in care homes – in instances where this is not the case, community pharmacy is delivering vaccination to care home residents.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Vaccination programmes are a national requirement, monitored through monthly returns to NHS England. Planning for and protecting people against harms and threats is a key element to a number of policy areas.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There will be financial impacts in the implementation of the national programmes – vaccinations within primary care and to risk groups is covered through national arrangements and financial agreements. 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.

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

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

Ensuring high uptake of flu vaccination amongst children protects not only the children themselves, but also the wider population, because children frequently transmit flu to other members of the community. Children who catch flu will be absent from school, and this may have a detrimental impact on their education.

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

Flu vaccinations protect the workforce for the reasons already given above.

##### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Respiratory infections and outbreaks contribute to winter pressures on the health and social care system and are responsible for a large proportion of excess winter deaths. Cases of flu and Covid-19 place a significant burden on primary and secondary health care systems.

Flu and Covid are largely preventable illnesses. Ensuring good uptake of vaccination for risk groups and health and social care staff, will prevent illness and death within Halton.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**  
None.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**  
None.

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Failing to adequately implement the national flu plan and protect our community from additional seasonal threats and harms puts the population at significant risk of outbreaks, increased burden of illness and ill-health and challenges local households and communities. Failure to plan and mitigate against identifiable risks is a corporate and an integrated health and care system risk.

## 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 All plans are developed with the basis of reducing inequalities in mind and are developed in line with all equality and diversity issues within Halton taking into account the implications for, and impact upon, individuals with protected characteristics.

## 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

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

'None under the meaning of the Act.'