

Influenza vaccination:

Principles for collaboration across Great Britain

Influenza (flu) is a common virus which can have serious consequences and leads to thousands of deaths each year. The flu vaccine provides the best protection against this virus and wide uptake of the vaccine is vitally important for those at higher risk.

This winter more than ever, with COVID-19 still circulating, a concerted effort is needed to help reduce all avoidable risks. Ensuring a high uptake of flu vaccination is critical to keep people well and negate excessive pressure and strain on NHS services. UK Government and the NHS will be promoting and driving the uptake of the number of vaccinations this year and all parts of the UK are taking appropriate steps towards preparedness for winter pressures.

In order to reach the number of people who will require a flu vaccine this year the The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) have developed these principles:

- **General practice and community pharmacy should take a collaborative approach to delivering the flu vaccine programme;**
- **The skills and experience of all eligible, trained and available healthcare professions should be utilised to ensure widespread take-up of the vaccine;**
- **The safety of staff undertaking the administration of vaccinations is paramount.**

The RCGP and the RPS believe that a well-coordinated, collaborative approach to flu vaccination is crucial across primary care. This should include mechanisms to ensure any possible competition between health care providers does not impact negatively on GP or pharmacy practice or lead to unnecessary tensions between the professions. We have developed the following recommendations to assist professionals and commissioners in planning for flu vaccinations:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Local Medical Committees and Local Pharmaceutical Committees / NHS Boards and Community Pharmacy Committees / Local Health Boards and Clusters / Commissioners must work together to plan flu vaccinations in their area. This includes identifying aspects of the programme which may be more effectively delivered in one setting or another and agreeing coordinated messaging.
2. General Practice and Pharmacy teams must be supported by NHS Boards / commissioners to undertake flu vaccinations in a safe environment and utilise all trained healthcare professionals to support the delivery of flu vaccinations in their locality. Current primary care guidance is available and covers vaccinations. Additional resources can also be found on our respective websites at <https://www.rpharms.com/coronavirus> and <https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/mod/page/view.php?id=10550#RCGP>
3. Information systems must be established nationally by the NHS to enable the flow of data between community pharmacies and general practice. These systems should not increase the workload for healthcare professionals or their staff. Such systems will prevent any duplication of vaccinations.
4. NHS bodies must ensure that any healthcare professional undertaking flu vaccinations is adequately and equitably resourced, including access to appropriate PPE, and appropriately trained
5. Healthcare professionals providing flu vaccination should focus on person-centred care and act in a professional manner towards each other. They must not issue any information that unfairly or inaccurately represents the service provided by other commissioned providers.
6. Innovative and inclusive methods of delivering flu vaccination, particularly to vulnerable groups such as homeless and others who are hard to reach, should be explored and supported by local NHS Boards and commissioners, following guidance issued by the NHS.
7. Government must work with NHS bodies and providers to ensure adequate vaccine supply to deliver an expanded flu programme.

