



Flu vaccination guidance for social care and hospice providers

This information is for social care and hospice care providers. It gives details on the benefits of providing staff flu vaccination and options for providing the service to increase uptake.

As we continue to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that the focus on the flu virus is not lost. Flu is a serious virus that can cause severe respiratory illness, and at times can lead to death. In England, an average of 13,500 people die every year from flu, and thousands more need hospital treatment. We want to ensure that those delivering care and those being cared for are as well-protected from the flu virus as they can be. Having the flu vaccine provides the best protection and helps prevent individuals from getting flu and from spreading it to other people.



Vaccinating your staff against flu is important

Flu can be a serious illness, particularly for older people or those with other health conditions. Care workers look after people at much higher risk from flu, so it is important that they help protect themselves and those receiving care from the virus.

Vaccination helps reduce the spread of flu among staff, helping to avoid staff flu related illness and the need to provide locum cover.

For information on flu vaccination for [personal care assistants](#), [social care workers](#) and [carers](#) please see specific flu vaccination guidance available.

Providing the vaccine to staff

Frontline workers who are in direct contact with people who receive care and support services should be encouraged to get the flu vaccine provided by their employer to protect themselves and those they care for.

It is your responsibility as an employer to help protect your staff, the people using your services, and to ensure the overall safe running of your organisation. You should commission or implement a service which makes access to the flu vaccine easy for all staff, encourages staff to get vaccinated, and monitors the delivery of the programme. This may be via an occupational health service if you have access to one. Alternatively, you can arrange for a GP Practice or local pharmacy to vaccinate staff on site, or purchase digital or paper flu vouchers online, which staff can use at eligible pharmacies.

Frontline staff employed by the following types of providers without employer-led occupational health schemes are also eligible for a free flu vaccine via the NHS complementary scheme:

- A Care Quality Commission (CQC)-registered residential care or nursing home
- A CQC-registered domiciliary care provider
- A voluntary managed hospice provider
- Direct Payment (personal budgets) or Personal Health Budgets, such as Personal Assistants

Staff can access the NHS complementary scheme by presenting at their registered GP practice or community pharmacy and self-identifying as a social care worker. Social care workers may need to present ID at GP Practices and pharmacies when they arrive for their vaccination.

If asked to provide proof some of the things they could use are:

1. A letter from your employer
2. An ID badge
3. A payslip

Further information about increasing social care worker flu vaccinations, including good practice guidance material, is available on the [NHS England](#) website. Marketing resources are available to download and order from the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Plan for success

Steps you may wish to take to encourage good uptake of the flu vaccine amongst your staff members:

- have a written, up to date flu vaccination policy either as a stand-alone document or as part of another policy, for example infection control – these should cover both resident and staff vaccination
- identify a lead member of staff with responsibility for running the flu vaccination campaign
- plan the campaign early so that all staff members are aware of the process and can access the vaccines – set a target for uptake
- use resources such as posters, leaflets, and digital tools, which can be downloaded from the [Campaign Resource Centre](#) – you will need to register or sign in to access the materials for this campaign, but it will take under a minute
- consider using a ‘declination’ form where staff sign and give a reason for non-vaccination – this can improve uptake as it makes refusal a conscious decision rather than ‘not getting round to it’; it can also provide useful information to inform planning for future seasons
- at the end of the season review the campaign, discuss and record successes, challenges and learning points for next year
- all CQC registered adult social care providers are required to provide vaccination data via Capacity Tracker (CT) on a monthly basis as part of the mandated data collection. This includes the number of employees, and for care homes, residents, known to have received the flu vaccine

The vaccination is required every year

Flu viruses change over time. The vaccines are made each year in advance of the flu season and protect against the strains of the virus that are most likely to circulate that year. It is unknown when flu will start circulating this year, but it is usually late autumn.

The best time to have a flu vaccine is in the autumn, from October to end of November, however, it is still possible to have the flu vaccine later in the winter, although it's best to get it earlier before flu starts circulating.

Regulations and Code of Practice

Workplace safety regulations require you as an employer to prevent or reduce exposure to hazardous substances, including pathogens such as flu.

This includes providing vaccination where appropriate. Employees should not be charged for this. The Health and Social Care Act 2008 Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance, states that control of flu virus includes vaccination. Registered health professionals such as nurses, physiotherapists, dieticians, occupational therapists and social workers are required by their codes of practice to take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of harm to service users, carers and colleagues.

The flu vaccine is safe and effective

The flu vaccine has a good safety profile. The injectable vaccine does not contain any live viruses and cannot cause flu. However, individuals may have a mild fever and aching muscles a few days after having the vaccine. See the [NHS flu vaccination](#) for more information.

Co-administration with the COVID-19 vaccine

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that the flu and COVID-19 vaccines may be given at the same time. To that effect, NHS vaccination teams will be encouraged to deliver co-administration of both flu and COVID-19 vaccines in care homes, to both staff and residents, where this is operationally possible.

However, co-administration will not always be an option for all social care workers – for example due to different staff shift patterns, personal choice, and vaccine availability. It is therefore important that as an employer, you are encouraging your staff members to get their flu and COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible.





www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

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