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**Flu vaccination awareness:**

**Community engagement**

**September 2020**

**Content**

Thank you for helping to raise awareness of the 2020 to 2021 flu vaccination programme and for supporting us by sharing messages with people in your community.

In this toolkit you will find the following to support you:

1. Background information
2. Media release
3. Suggested web copy
4. Common questions
5. Mythbusters
6. Links to flu vaccination leaflets and posters
7. Social media
8. **Background:**

Flu kills over 11,000 people every year, on average, some years it’s much more and it hospitalises many more each year. Narrative of messaging:

* This is anything but an average year.
* The flu virus spreads from person to person, even amongst those not showing any symptoms.
* It can cause severe complications, particularly for high risk groups.
* Keep your guard up against the flu virus.
* Get the flu jab.
* Whilst the threat may be invisible, the protection against it is clear.
* Protect yourself and others with the flu vaccination (check if you are eligible for a free flu jab)

**A guide to content of information for eligible patients and their parents/carers**

While we wait for the national public flu messaging campaign to launch in October, we are keen to raise awareness in local communities in Surrey about why those eligible for a free flu vaccine should get it.

Please share the following messages on the importance of flu vaccination with people in your community who are eligible. Tell them that they can have a free flu vaccination and explain why they are being offered it, using language they can understand and considering cultural sensitivities. This includes explaining:

* How serious flu and its complications can be (make it clear it is not just a bad cold).
* That flu can affect anyone, but if a person has a long-term health condition the effects of flu can make it worse, even if the condition is well managed and they normally feel well.
* That flu vaccination is safe.
* That having a flu vaccination is the single best way of helping to protect against catching or spreading flu.
* That they should get the vaccination as soon as it becomes available to maximise their protection throughout the flu season.
* Any myths about flu vaccination: dispel these myths, including the belief that it can give you flu.
* The need to have a flu vaccination every year.
1. **Media Release**

Millions of people in the South East of England to be vaccinated against the flu virus this winter

Flu vaccination clinics across the South East of England are underway this September and Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership is encouraging anyone who is eligible for a free flu vaccination to book an appointment with their GP or pharmacist, as soon as they receive an invitation.

This year, the NHS is aiming to vaccinate around 4.5 million people in the South East – up from 2.6 million last winter – to help prevent the spread of flu. Every year the flu virus kills people and hospitalises many more. This year it is even more important people who are most at risk of flu have their free flu vaccination. All clinics will run in line with infection prevention control and social distancing measures will be in place.

For the first time, children in school Year 7, and household contacts and carers of those on the NHS Shielded Patient List, are all eligible for the free vaccination. These groups are in addition to people aged over 65, those under 65 with long-term health conditions, pregnant women, children aged 2 and 3 and children in primary school.

Vaughan Lewis, Medical Director for NHS England and NHS Improvement’s South East region says: “This year with both the flu virus and Covid-19 circulating flu immunisation is more important than ever to reduce infections, protect each other and protect the NHS.

“There is an expanded list of priority groups this year and we are offering the vaccine to children aged from 2 to 11, as well as those over the age of 65 and anyone with chronic illness including diabetes and weight problems. So, if you have a Body Mass Index of more than 40 or a chronic illness or learning disability, look after yourself and protect the NHS by having the flu jab.

“People aged between 50 and 64 who are not in a clinical at-risk group may also be offered a free flu vaccination later in the year, providing there is enough vaccine available. This is to ensure that those who are most at risk are vaccinated first. Anyone of any age, including those between 50-64, who is a household member or a carer of a shielded patient, is eligible for the flu vaccination from September onwards and should contact the GP practice they are registered with or their pharmacy to book an appointment.

“Flu is a highly infectious disease that is spread from person to person and infects the respiratory system, where it can lead to pneumonia and other complications. The flu viruses are constantly changing and this is one of the main reasons why people should be vaccinated annually. The symptoms, that come on very quickly, include fever, chills, headaches, aches and pains in the joints and muscles, and extreme tiredness. The best way to avoid getting the flu is by having the vaccination. Doing so reduces the risk of developing the illness significantly.”

Dr Charlotte Canniff, NHS Surrey Heartlands CCG Clinical Chair says “It is vital that those who are eligible have the flu vaccine every year as it helps protect against different strains which evolve each year. It is particularly important that those who are at increased risk of flu, and their carers, get the vaccine as it is one of the most effective ways to reduce harm”.

For a full list of priority groups and other information about this year’s flu vaccine, visit [www.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/) and search for flu vaccine.

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1. **Suggested web copy**

Getting the flu vaccination is a great way of protecting yourself from flu this winter, especially for those who are at a greater risk of developing potentially serious complications. It's also the most effective way of reducing the spread of the virus with those we come into contact with, helping ensure Surrey residents stay fit and well this winter.

The flu vaccination is available every year on the NHS to help us all against the risk of flu and its complications, and for many Surrey residents, it is completely free if you fall into one of the groups below. This year, with COVID-19 in circulation, it’s more important than ever that eligible groups are vaccinated to protect them from flu and the vaccine will be offered to more than 30 million people. The expansion of the flu programme means that many more people will be eligible to receive the free vaccine for the first time, but may not realise this.

**Those eligible for a free flu vaccination:**

* Pregnant women
* Children aged 2- 11 years old (on the 31 August 2020)
* Member of a shielding household
* 65+ years old
* Have a long-term condition (see a full list on the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/who-should-have-flu-vaccine/#flu-vaccine-for-people-with-medical-conditions)).
	+ a heart problem
	+ a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
	+ a kidney disease
	+ lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as steroid medication or cancer treatment)
	+ liver disease
	+ had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
	+ diabetes
	+ a neurological condition, e.g. multiple sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy
	+ a learning disability
	+ a problem with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell disease, or you have had your spleen removed
	+ are seriously overweight (BMI of 40 and above)
* Those living in a residential or nursing home
* The main carer of an older person or disabled person*(Action for Carers provide more information on the*[*Surrey Carers flu voucher scheme*](https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/how-we-help/wellbeing/free-flu-jabs-for-carers/)*)*
* Frontline health and social care workers

People aged between 50 and 64 who are not in a clinical at-risk group may also be offered a free flu vaccination later in the year, providing there is enough vaccine available.

1. **Common questions**

**Where can I get my free flu jab?**

If you're eligible for a free flu vaccination, you can have it at:

* Your GP surgery
* A local pharmacy offering the service
* Your midwifery service if they offer it for pregnant women

Most community pharmacists now offer flu vaccination to adults (but not children) who are at risk of flu, including pregnant women, people aged 65 and over and people with long-term health conditions.

**Discover flu vaccine FAQs** on the[NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-vaccine-questions-answers/).

1. **Mythbusters**

Myth #1: It’s just flu why should I get vaccinated?
Fact! The impact of flu on frail and vulnerable patients can be fatal and outbreaks can cause severe disruption in communities.

Myth #2: The vaccine gives you flu
Fact! Flu vaccine has a good safety record and will help protect you. It cannot give you flu.

Myth #3: I’m fit and healthy so feel it’s unlikely I’ll get flu
Fact! Everyone is susceptible to flu, even if you are in good health and eat well

Myth #4: I’ve never had flu so don’t think I pose much of a risk to others
Fact! You can be infected with the virus and have no symptoms but can still pass flu virus to others including family, friends, patients or care home residents.

Myth #5: I had the flu vaccine last year so I don’t need it again this year

Fact! The flu vaccine can’t give you lifelong protection and each year the virus changes so you need to have it every year to ensure you’re protected.

Myth #6: I’m just one person, I can’t stop flu spreading

Fact! Having the vaccination can encourage your colleagues to do likewise.

Myth #7: Getting flu is just like having a heavy cold

Fact! Flu is much worse than having a cold and can have you bed ridden for a few days. Flu symptoms come on suddenly and sometimes severely, and include fever, chills, headaches, aching muscles a cough and sore throat.

Myth #8: Good infection control is sufficient in preventing flu
Fact! Good infection control measures reduce spread of flu and other acute respiratory infections but are not sufficient alone to prevent them

**Pregnant women:**

Myth #9: Only pregnant women in the third trimester should have the flu jab
Fact! Pregnant women are at increased risk from flu and the flu vaccine can be safely administered during any trimester

Myth #10: Having flu while pregnant won’t harm my baby

Fact! Having flu during pregnancy may be associated with premature birth and smaller birth size and weight

Myth #11: Having the flu jab isn’t going to give any protection against flu to my new-born baby
Fact! Flu vaccination during pregnancy provides passive immunity against flu to infants in the first few months of life

Myth #12: The flu vaccine could harm me or my baby
Fact! No study to date has demonstrated an increased risk of either maternal complications or adverse foetal outcomes associated with inactivated flu vaccine

1. **Flu vaccination leaflets and posters**

**The flu vaccination winter 2020 to 2021: who should have it and why**

This leaflet explains how you can help protect yourself and your children against flu this coming winter, and why it’s very important that people who are at increased risk from flu have their free vaccination every year. You'll find different language versions of this leaflet on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-who-should-have-it-this-winter-and-why).

**Protect yourself from flu - easy read resources**

These resources are aimed at people who have, or care for someone with a learning disability and adults with low literacy. You'll can find these resources on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-leaflet-for-people-with-learning-disability).

**Protecting your child against flu**

The leaflet explains which children are eligible for flu vaccination, as well as describing the disease and the vaccine. You'll find the leaflets and posters in various languages on the [GOV.UK website.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccination-leaflets-and-posters)

1. **Social media**

Please follow us and retweet, like and share our flu messaging

@HealthySurrey on Twitter:
<https://twitter.com/HealthySurrey>

@scchealthysurrey on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/scchealthysurrey/>

@SyheartlandsCCG on Twitter:
<https://twitter.com/SyHeartlandsCCG>

@NHSSurreyHeartlandsCCG on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NHSSurreyHeartlandsCCG/>