

Gateway ref: 16518

To:

All Directors of Adult Social Services
All Directors of Children's Services
Social Care Reference Group

cc:

All Deputy Regional Directors of Social Care
Social Partnership Forum
Care Quality Commission
Health Protection Agency
National Centre for Independent Living
SHA Flu Leads

31 August 2011

Dear Colleague

The Seasonal Flu Immunisation Programme 2011/12

This letter contains information for all commissioners and providers of social care services about the annual seasonal flu immunisation programme 2011/12.

The Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Nursing Officer and the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer wrote jointly to the NHS on 25th May 2011 giving details of the target groups for this year's immunisation programme. As in previous years, these include clinical risk groups and frontline health and social care workers. A copy of the letter is available at

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Professionalletters/Chiefmedicalofficerletters/DH_127048

In order to protect service users, commissioners and providers of social care should ensure that vaccination is available to those who fall within the clinical risk groups.

The risk groups include those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an older or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill. Vaccination should be given on an individual basis at the GP's discretion. The risk groups also include all people aged 65 years and over, and those living in long-stay residential care homes or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality. In addition, employers of frontline social care workers in all sectors will want to consider making the vaccination available to their staff.

As in previous years, responsibility for funding the seasonal flu vaccine and its administration to staff (other than those that are in a clinical risk group) lies with employers. The Department of Health funding for the vaccination of frontline social care workers was only available for the (H1N1) swine flu vaccine during 2009/10 and does not continue for seasonal flu.

I can confirm that there will be no national advertising campaign for seasonal flu vaccination this winter. It is crucial, therefore, that employer organisations offer the seasonal flu vaccine to their frontline workers and encourage them to take every opportunity to promote the flu vaccination to their eligible patients.

Employers may wish to commission a GP, PCT or pharmacy to supply and administer the seasonal flu vaccination to their staff on their behalf. The updated Code of Practice for Health and Adult Social Care on the prevention and control of infections (available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_122604), and related guidance, reminds both NHS and social care bodies of their responsibilities. These are to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that health and social care workers are free of, and are protected from, exposure to communicable infections during the course of their work, and that all staff are suitably educated in the prevention and control of infections.

The seasonal flu immunisation given to social care workers who are employed to provide personal care acts as an adjunct to good infection control procedures. As well as reducing the risk to the person of infection, the reduction of influenza infection among staff and reduced staff absenteeism have also been noted as benefits.

We are aware of social care employers who have achieved good rates of uptake of seasonal flu immunisation in previous years and we would encourage them to continue with this important work.

Deciding which social care staff should be offered vaccination is a matter for individual employers. The Department of Health would particularly encourage the vaccination of those staff who provide personal care.

Should you require further information please contact the Department at:
www.info.doh.gov.uk/contactus.nsf/memo?openform

Thank you for your continuing efforts to protect both those you work to support and your employees.

Yours sincerely

David Behan

**Director General, Social Care, Local Government and Care Partnerships
Department of Health**