



Public Health  
England

# Accessing the flu vaccine strategic reserve in England 2014/15

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## About Public Health England

Public Health England's mission is to protect and improve the nation's health and to address inequalities through working with national and local government, the NHS, industry and the voluntary and community sector. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

Audience	NHS England Area Directors, Clinical Leaders of Clinical Commissioning Groups, General Practices, Screening and Immunisation Leads, Directors of Public Health, Local Authority Chief Executives, PHE Centre Directors, Community Pharmacies, Chief Pharmacists of NHS Trusts, Chief Executives of NHS Foundation Trusts, and Chief Executives of NHS Trusts
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## Summary of guidance for accessing the flu vaccine strategic reserve in England

If your practice has no stock or is running out of flu vaccines:

1. First try contacting all suppliers to buy additional vaccines
2. If none are available, find out if this is a temporary or permanent situation; if temporary, then place an order
3. If no further flu vaccines are available from the suppliers, then speak to wholesalers or community pharmacies to see if any supplies are available
4. If no stock is available, you can submit a request to order additional flu vaccine from [www.immform.dh.gov.uk](http://www.immform.dh.gov.uk)
5. Vaccine suppliers advise Public Health England on their stock levels and the strategic reserve will only be accessible when there is no vaccine available to order from suppliers
6. Vaccines should be ordered sparingly to ensure equitable distribution
7. Vaccines will usually be delivered within two working days, once orders have been placed on ImmForm

For further information please read the attached document.

# 1 Scope

This document describes the circumstances under which the flu vaccine strategic reserve will be made available to the NHS in England and how these vaccines can be ordered via ImmForm. This is outlined as a flowchart in [Figure 1](#).

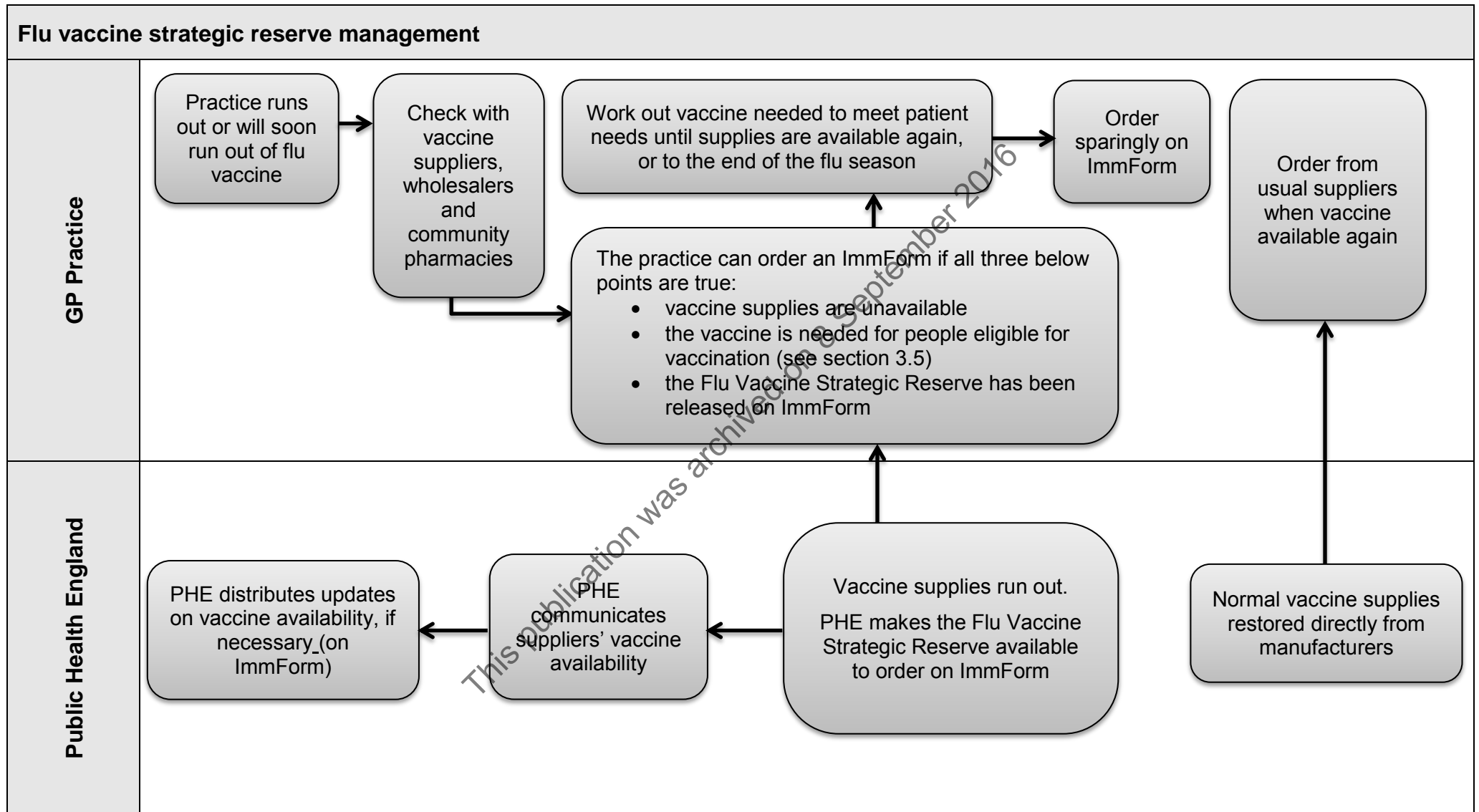
# 2 Background

Public Health England (PHE) holds a strategic reserve of around 400,000 doses of inactivated trivalent influenza vaccine for use in England in the 2014/15 flu season. The strategic reserve is held to provide in the event of manufacturing failures or supply issues, and where uptake of flu vaccine exceeds that which was expected.

PHE has asked immunisers to ensure they have adequate supplies for the 2014/15 season, allowing for greater uptake than in previous years. GPs and other providers should have ordered sufficient flu vaccine for their clinical needs, and the stockpile is intended only as an 'insurance policy'.

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**Figure 1. Flu vaccine strategic reserve management flowchart**



## 3 Further information

### 3.1 Under what circumstances will the strategic reserve be made available?

Vaccine will only be made available from the strategic reserve during the 2014/15 season if the below points are all true:

- suppliers' vaccines are no longer available (either exhausted or a temporary delay sufficient to disrupt clinical services)
- some NHS service providers can no longer access vaccine to meet demand

At this point, there may be stock in other parts of the supply chain in the NHS. Immunisers should attempt to obtain this before accessing the strategic reserve.

The strategic reserve will no longer be accessible once suppliers' vaccines are restored after temporary unavailability.

### 3.2 Is there still stock available from suppliers?

Vaccine suppliers' contact details can be found in the Green Book influenza chapter <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-the-green-book-chapter-19> and the Department of Health, Public Health England and NHS England annual flu letter of 28 April 2014: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-immunisation-programme-2014-to-2015>.

### 3.3 How will health professionals find out if the strategic reserve is available?

PHE will post updates on the ImmForm website to advise health professionals of the availability of vaccine from the strategic flu reserve. Screening and immunisation leads based in NHS England area teams will also be advised by email when the strategic reserve is available. The strategic reserve is only for patient groups defined in 3.5 below.

### 3.4 How can health professionals access the strategic reserve or find out about other sources of flu vaccine?

Before attempting to access the flu vaccine strategic reserve, immunisers should first try to obtain further stock from suppliers, wholesalers or community pharmacies.

Vaccines from the strategic reserve will be made available through ImmForm, and should only be ordered after the healthcare professional has attempted to secure additional vaccine as described above.

### 3.5 Who can be immunised with vaccine from the strategic reserve?

In line with the aim of the national flu immunisation programme, the strategic reserve is for the protection of people at the highest risk of adverse outcomes from influenza infection.

The priority groups are:

- people aged 65 and over
- pregnant women (any trimester)
- people in clinical risk groups, as described by the Green Book and the Department of Health, Public Health England and NHS England annual flu letter of 28 April 2014: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-the-green-book-chapter-19> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-immunisation-programme-2014-to-2015>

Carers can also be immunised from the strategic reserve (persons in receipt of a carer's allowance, or who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill).

Health and social care workers can be immunised with vaccine from the strategic reserve for the indirect protection of their patients and clients.

In the event of the strategic reserve running low, people at highest risk of adverse outcomes will be prioritised over carers, and carers prioritised over health and social care workers. If it is necessary to restrict supply of the strategic reserve to particular groups on clinical grounds, this will be done on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an advisory body made up of independent experts.

Based on current evidence (risk ratios of death or serious disease), the strategic reserve is unlikely to be made available to additional patient or population groups. Release of the strategic reserve is unlikely to be an effective method of preventing disease in any additional risk groups, as additional risk groups are only likely to be identified towards the end of the flu season and vaccination would not result in an immune response in time to provide good protection. Data will be gathered this season to inform future JCVI advice.

The strategic reserve must not be used for retail and commercial immunisation services.

### 3.6 Which brand of vaccine is in the strategic reserve? Is it suitable for all ages and clinical needs?

Vaccines have been ordered by PHE from a number of suppliers. This reduces the likelihood of the strategic reserve being seriously affected should a problem occur with a single supplier.

The vaccines cover a range of clinical needs and ages. Health professionals accessing the strategic reserve will likely have a choice of flu vaccines and should order the vaccine(s) best suited to their patient population. There is information in the Green Book on suitability of each product for different age groups and clinical needs such as severe egg allergy (anaphylaxis). More detailed information is available from the suppliers' summaries of product characteristics ([www.medicines.org.uk](http://www.medicines.org.uk)).

There was a competitive tender process to procure the vaccines and the choice of vaccines does not represent a PHE recommendation of any particular flu vaccine or supplier.

### 3.7 How much vaccine can a practice order?

Health professionals should be sparing when ordering stock from the strategic reserve and only order what they need. Attempts should first be made to obtain stock from other supply routes. Ordering too much vaccine could block other patients from being immunised against flu. Large orders will not be processed until they have been verified with the practice by the ImmForm helpdesk.

Stock levels will be monitored and a cap may be introduced to ensure equitable distribution. This will be publicised on the [ImmForm website](#).

### 3.8 How quickly will the vaccine arrive once ordered on ImmForm?

The vaccine should arrive within 48 hours if placed on ImmForm by 11:55am. Orders placed in the morning are more likely to arrive the next day than those ordered in the afternoon. Large orders may take longer to arrive, as they will first need to be verified with the ImmForm helpdesk by the practice to confirm the doses are required.

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