



Department
of Health &
Social Care

CARE

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To:

Local Authority Chief Executives
Directors of Adult Social services
Care home providers and managers
Domiciliary care providers and managers

27 September 2024

Seasonal vaccination 2024

Dear Colleagues,

We are committed to supporting adult social care services in providing people and their carers with the support they need this winter. Vaccination continues to form a crucial part of our defence against respiratory diseases. This letter provides further advice on vaccinations following the [winter preparedness letter](#) published on 17 September 2024.

COVID-19 Vaccination Eligibility

The primary aim of the COVID-19 vaccination programme continues to be the prevention of severe disease arising from COVID-19. Those at higher risk of serious outcomes are advised to top up their immunity by taking up the offer of a vaccination this autumn. On the advice of the independent expert Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) all those aged 65 or over, all those living in care homes for older adults and those aged between 6 months and 64 years old who are in a clinical risk group will be eligible for vaccination this autumn.

The JCVI has not advised offering the vaccine to front line health and social care workers, staff in care homes for older adults, unpaid carers and household contacts of people with immunosuppression as part of the national programme. These groups have previously been offered vaccination on the basis that it indirectly protected those more vulnerable they were in contact with. The JCVI advice is that in the era of highly transmissible Omicron sub-variants, any protection offered by the vaccine against



transmission of infection from one person to another is expected to be extremely limited.

The JCVI advised that health and social care service providers may wish to consider whether vaccination provided as an occupational health programme is appropriate for Health and Social Care workers (HSCW) in the future. Recognising that the detailed process for considering and potentially establishing a new occupational health programme would not be feasible this year, the JCVI advice stated that ahead of such considerations, health departments may choose to continue to extend an offer of vaccination to frontline HSCWs and staff working in care homes for older adults in autumn 2024. Ministers have therefore decided to continue to offer vaccination to front line health and social care staff as well as staff working in care homes for older adults in the autumn 2024 vaccination programme in England.

Further information on the autumn programme can be found in the NHS Systems letter via the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/flu-and-covid-19-seasonal-vaccination-programme-autumn-winter-2024-25/>

Flu Vaccination Eligibility

The cohorts eligible for the flu programme are set out in the [National Flu Immunisation Programme 2024 to 2025 letter which was published earlier this year](#). Vaccination teams will be making contact with residential care homes to arrange visits for residents. As with previous campaigns, we must maintain our efforts to encourage and promote the benefits of vaccinations to all who are eligible so that we can reduce the risk of infection. Vaccinating care workers helps to prevent the transmission of flu, protecting care workers themselves and the people they care for.

Timings

The main flu and COVID-19 vaccination campaign will commence on **Thursday 3 October 2024**. An October start date reflects JCVI advice that the flu vaccine's effectiveness can wane over time in adults and so a later start date is preferable. The start date for COVID-19 vaccinations is the same to allow for potential co-administration of flu and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Social care staff without an employer-led occupational health scheme can continue to access the flu vaccination through their GP, community pharmacy or National Booking Service. For COVID-19 vaccination, employers can signpost staff to the most convenient vaccination offer which may be through the [National Booking Service \(NBS\)](#), where staff can self-declare their eligibility.

The [National Booking Service](#) opened for bookings from the public from Monday 23 September 2024. The last available appointment date on NBS will be Friday 20



December 2024 for both flu and COVID-19 vaccinations. We anticipate that most flu and COVID-19 vaccinations should be completed by Friday 20 December 2024. Outreach activities for COVID-19 vaccination will continue to be delivered to underserved communities until Friday 31 January 2025. Flu vaccinations will be available until Monday 31 March 2025.

RSV Vaccination

[Vaccination programmes to protect against respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\)](#) began in September 2024 for the first time. RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms, but can lead to severe illness for young infants and older adults. The vaccine will help to protect lives and prevent severe illness in those most vulnerable to RSV. In line with JCVI advice, the RSV vaccine is being offered to adults who turn 75 on or after 1 September 2024 and those already aged 75 to 79. Individuals will remain eligible until the day before their 80th birthday, except for people who turn 80 in the first year who have until 31 August 2025 to get vaccinated. Those who are eligible should come forward as soon as they are invited by their GP. Pregnant women are also being offered vaccination from 28-weeks of pregnancy, to protect newborn babies.

Vaccinations remain some of the best defences we have and will help to ease some of the pressures being felt on adult social care and NHS services at this busy time.

I would be grateful for your support in continuing to encourage anyone eligible to come forward to take up the offer of vaccination. Sources to aid this are available via the [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Kind regards,

Claire Armstrong

Director of Adult Social Care Data, Assurance and Resilience

Annex A – Eligible groups by vaccine

Vaccine	Eligibility	Access	Start Date
Flu	<p>The following groups relevant to ASC are to be offered flu vaccination in line with the announced and authorised cohorts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those aged 65 years and over • those aged 18 years to under 65 years in clinical risk groups • those in long-stay residential care homes • carers in receipt of carer’s allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person • close contacts of immunocompromised individuals • frontline workers in a social care setting without an employer led occupational health scheme including those working for a registered residential care or nursing home, registered domiciliary care providers, voluntary managed hospice providers and those that are employed by those who receive direct payments (personal budgets) or Personal Health budgets, such as Personal Assistants • pregnant women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vaccination teams in care homes - GP - Community pharmacy - National Booking Service. <p>The NBS will be opened for participating sites to post COVID-19 and flu appointments from Monday 16 September 2024. It will be open for bookings from the public from Monday 23 September 2024. The last available appointment date on NBS will be Friday 20 December 2024 for both flu and COVID-19.</p>	<p>Flu vaccinations for pregnant women, began on Sunday 1 September 2024.</p> <p>For all other eligible cohorts, the main flu programme will commence from Thursday 3 October 2024</p> <p>Flu vaccinations will be available until Monday 31 March 2025.</p>

COVID-19	<p>On the advice of the expert Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation all those aged 65 or over, all those living in care homes for older adults and those aged between 6 months and 64 years old who are in a clinical risk group will be eligible for vaccination this autumn.</p> <p>Additionally, vaccination will be offered to all frontline health and social care workers as well as staff in care homes for older adults.</p>	<p>Regional teams have already identified providers through the site sign-up process for COVID-19 vaccination services. This includes delivery via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community pharmacy - General Practice - Vaccination in care homes/at home for the house bound - National Booking Service. <p>The NBS will be opened for participating sites to post COVID-19 and flu appointments from Monday 16 September 2024. It will be open for bookings from the public from Monday 23 September 2024.</p>	<p>The autumn 2024 COVID-19 vaccination campaign will start in England from Thursday 3 October 2024.</p>
RSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adults turning 75 on or after 1 September 2024 - Adults aged 75-79 years - Adults turning 80 in the first year (up to 31 August 2025) - Pregnant women from 28 weeks until full term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GP -Maternity services 	<p>Sunday 1 September 2024</p>