

Flu news round up

Further Welsh Health Circular published

On 14 August, Welsh Government issued a second flu Welsh Health Circular [WHC \(2020\) 013: The National Influenza Immunisation programme 2020-21 \(2\)](#) announcing plans to offer an extended flu programme in 2020/21. The key messages outlined in [WHC 2020-009](#) remain unchanged.

The expanded flu vaccination programme is part of plans to reduce as far as possible severe cases of influenza, keep individuals out of hospital and surgeries during an inevitable winter peak of COVID-19 cases, and to relieve winter pressures on acute services.

To support this extension additional flu vaccine is being procured for the UK including Wales. The additional vaccine will become available in November and December. Further information about this will be provided in due course when the supply for Wales has been confirmed.

Key changes to the programme for 2020/21 include:

- To significantly increase flu vaccination coverage and achieve a minimum 75% vaccine uptake across all eligible groups
- Eligibility will be extended to the following groups:
 - Household contacts of those on the NHS Shielded Patient List
 - Adults resident in Welsh prisons who do not fall in other eligible categories
 - Additional age cohorts, starting with those aged 60 to 64 years, moving to people aged 55 to 59 years and then 50 to 54 years. These cohorts should be called on a phased basis as advised **only when additional stock becomes available in November/December, not before.**
- People with a learning disability - this group are now **all eligible** and no longer need to be clinically assessed as vulnerable
- Robust plans should be in place for tackling health inequalities for all groups to ensure equality of access. It is essential to maximise flu vaccination uptake in those who are living in the most deprived areas and in those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities
- Eligible children whose parents/guardians object to the porcine gelatine content of live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) should be offered a suitable alternative injectable vaccine. Parents should contact their GP surgery to arrange this.



LAIV ordering arrangements 2020/21

This season LAIV (Fluenz Tetra) vaccine is expected to arrive earlier than in previous years. Initially, priority will be given to GP ordering to help support increased uptake in two and three year olds and older children in at risk groups for flu.

Ordering via ImmForm is expected to open on the following dates **subject to confirmation** as delivery schedules may still change.

- GP practices – on **Friday 28 August**. Initially, the majority of practices will have an order limit of **5 packs (50 doses)** per week. This limit will be kept under review.
- School programme - anticipated to open between **9 and 16 September**. Welsh Government will confirm the actual date nearer the time.

Flu leaflets - pre-ordering now available

Pre-orders for the following 2020/21 flu leaflets can now be placed online at the [Health Information Resources](#) website. Orders will be fulfilled when the leaflets are available.

- [General flu vaccine leaflet – Flu get protected! 2020/21](#)
- [Child flu vaccine leaflet – Flu protect your child 2020/21](#)



Flu Training

The following flu training slide sets have been updated for the 2020/21 season:

- [Influenza vaccine safety in individuals who are egg allergic](#) V1
- [Influenza 2020/21 template training slide set](#) V1
- [Childhood flu programme 2020/21 template training slide set](#) V1

The following eLearning modules have been updated for the 2020/21 season:

- [FluOne: Information for all health and social care staff](#) V1
- [FluTwo: Flu training for immunisers and those who advise on flu vaccination 2020/21](#) V1

This season, the flu training resources are version controlled, as we anticipate further detail from Welsh Government on this year's flu programme. The information in version 1 (V1) is based on up-to-date guidance as of 13 July 2020.

These training resources will be updated when new recommendations or policy are published. Staff who have completed version 1 of the training will not need to repeat it, however they will need to read any future Welsh Health Circulars (WHC) or flu letters outlining any changes. Clinicians must follow their code of professional conduct in relation to their competencies, whether this is providing immunisation advice and or administering the annual flu vaccine.

Both modules can be accessed in the usual way for NHS Wales staff via their Electronic Staff Record (ESR). Staff who work outside of NHS Wales should visit the [Immunisation eLearning webpage](#) for details how to access the module.

For information and guidance relating to the 2020/21 flu vaccination programme visit the VPDP [Influenza - 2020/21 season](#) intranet page.

Elearning report

The VPDP [flu elearning 2019/20 end of season activity report](#) provides a summary of elearning activity for both the FluOne and FluTwo modules across organisations in Wales for 2019/20 flu season.

School programme resources

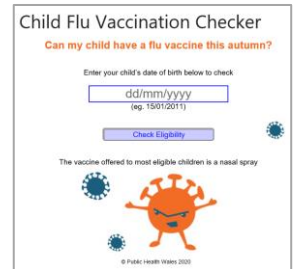
The following resources to support the 2020/21 school flu programme are now available to download from [2020/21 childhood Influenza Vaccination Programme Intranet page](#).

- Template flu vaccine letter to primary school parents [English/Welsh](#)
- 2020 Template child flu consent form for school programme [English/Welsh](#)
- Answers to some common questions about children's flu vaccination for parents ([English/Welsh](#))

Child flu eligibility tool

This [online tool](#) supporting the public in identifying if their child is eligible for a flu vaccine has been updated for 2020/21. Any websites where the tool is embedded will automatically update. The tool is also available in [Welsh](#).

If you would like the codes to embed this tool on your website contact phw.vaccines@wales.nhs.uk.



Maintaining immunisation programmes during COVID-19

On 7 July, Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services, issued a [statement regarding maintaining immunisation programmes](#) as a key priority to protect public health.

The statement encourages everyone who receives an immunisation invitation to attend when contacted. This includes parents and carers of infants and pre-school children, pregnant women, school age children and at risk adults. Attending for appointments will continue to be important into the autumn when the seasonal flu vaccination campaign begins.



Maintaining immunisation programmes in schools

Welsh Government has issued a jointletter to headteachers from the Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing Officer and the Director of the Education Directorate ([Welsh/English](#)) to support the recovery and maintenance of the national school immunisation programme.

The letter outlines the importance of maintaining school-based immunisation programmes and thanks school staff for their continued support. Schools are asked to continue to engage with the school nursing service to enable them to provide immunisations in school premises during COVID-19.

Delivering mass vaccination at a time of COVID-19

The [Royal College of General Practitioners](#) (RCGP) has developed [guidance on delivering mass vaccination during COVID-19](#). It is written with the understanding that a number of mass vaccination programmes may need to be delivered during 2020 to 2021, while COVID-19 continues to be in general circulation. The document explores different approaches to delivering large-scale vaccination programmes in this context. The guidance is intended to be generic, and applicable to various potential vaccines which may need to be delivered to a large population in a short time frame. It does not cover the clinical aspects of delivering immunisations.

The [Royal College of Nursing](#) (RCN) has also developed guidance: [Immunisation services and Large-scale vaccination delivery during COVID-19](#). The resource was initially written for the influenza programme but the RCN recognise that as a web resource it can be amended as needed for COVID-19 vaccine. The aim of this guidance is to make sure services are reactive to the needs of the population while remaining safe and accessible to all. This guidance can be used to support the setting up of mass vaccination centres but also for scaling up of current immunisation service provision.

COVID-19 FAQs

A new [COVID-19 FAQ page](#) has been created with some useful frequently asked questions (FAQs) on managing immunisation services throughout the pandemic.

Domiciliary immunisation guidance

The [Domiciliary immunisation guidance](#) has recently been updated to ensure it provides guidance and advice relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The effect of COVID-19 on timeliness of childhood vaccinations

During the COVID-19 pandemic, VPDP are producing [monthly reports on timeliness of vaccine uptake in children](#). The [third report](#) is now available with more detailed interactive data on uptake by [residence](#) and [GP cluster](#) (NHS Wales Intranet).

In June 2020, the proportion of children receiving their vaccinations within the first two weeks of being eligible was higher than in previous months for the third dose of '6 in 1' and first dose of MMR. The proportion of children receiving their '4 in 1' vaccination within the first two weeks of being eligible was slightly lower than in May, but higher than in previous months. Trends indicate vaccine uptake for children due immunisations during the pandemic lockdown period are within the range of previous trends. Data in the report is subject to reporting lag, which varies by region. Thanks to all our colleagues for their hard work in continuing to maintain these important immunisation services in these challenging times.

Shingles

GP practices are asked to consider actively offering shingles vaccination this summer before pressures on services increase this autumn and winter. Increasing shingles uptake in Wales will help to relieve additional pressure on primary and secondary care in what is likely to be a challenging season.

Those who reached 80 years of age during the brief suspension of the shingles programme this year have until **31 August 2020** to receive the vaccination ([Welsh Government, June 2020](#)). It is unlikely that this small group will be included in patient group directions (PGDs) so vaccinations given to these individuals should be by patient specific direction (PSD).

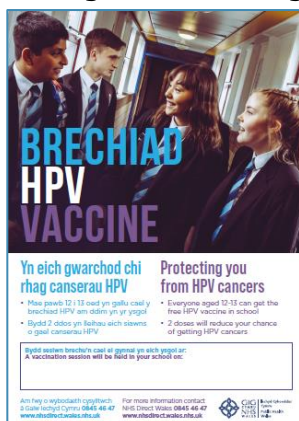
A new [FAQ](#) has been added to the [Shingles/Chicken pox FAQ intranet page](#) in relation to the brief programme suspension. More information about the shingles vaccination programme is available on the VPDP [Shingles vaccination programme from 1st April 2019](#) intranet page.



HPV programme during COVID-19

The Joint Committee on Immunisation and Vaccination (JCVI) issued a [statement on delivering HPV vaccination programmes during COVID-19](#) on 16 July 2020 advising that the priority for the delivery of the routine HPV immunisation programme is for all eligible children to receive at least the first dose of HPV vaccine. This includes prioritising the catch up of those who failed to get the first dose due to school closures.

During this challenging time with COVID-19, the JCVI considers that the interval between the first and second dose can be extended by a number of years without compromising protection or the boosting effect of the second dose. Evidence strongly indicates that one dose of HPV vaccine will provide protection in the short to medium term.



Delivery or catch up of the second dose should be considered at the appropriate time, for example alongside the teenage boosters, when circumstances support this according to local planning of immunisation services.

Further information and resources to support the HPV immunisation programme is available on the [VPDP Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Immunisation Programme intranet page](#).

Vaccine supply

For updates on any current vaccine supply issues see the current [PHE Vaccine Update](#).

This e-bulletin is compiled by the [Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme](#) (VPDP) Public Health Wales and distributed monthly. It is designed to be read on screen, with clickable links to further information online. If you are currently reading a hard copy, an online version can be found on the NHS Wales intranet at <http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/immunisation>. Comments would be welcomed at phw.vaccines@wales.nhs.uk