

Dear Colleagues

ADULT FLU IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME 2020/21

1. We are writing to provide you with new information about the adult seasonal flu immunisation programme following our last letter dated 14 October 2020.
2. We would like to begin by thanking you for all the hard work you are doing as part of the health and social care response to the global Covid-19 pandemic and in ensuring the success of this year's seasonal flu immunisation programme. We know that this has been an extremely challenging time for all staff across the health and social care sector.
3. Given the impact of Covid-19 on the most vulnerable in society, it is imperative that we do all that we can to reduce the impact of seasonal flu and Covid-19 on those most at risk. It is therefore essential that we prioritise the delivery of the Covid-19 programme at pace to protect those at risk, prevent ill health in the population and minimise further impact on the NHS and social care services.

Planning Reprioritisation

4. We recognise that delivering the seasonal flu and Covid-19 programmes this year has become more challenging than ever before because of the impact of Covid-19 on our health and social care sector. As a result, we have considered how best to operationalise the realignment of resource to support acceleration of the Covid-19 vaccination programme.
5. Flu surveillance indicates that overall levels of seasonal flu remains very low and therefore the risks associated with flu are considerably lower than in previous years. Equally, given we have prioritised the flu vaccine to those in the highest clinical risk, even with this low level of prevalence, those in greatest need have already received protection, with higher

**From Chief Medical Officer
Chief Nursing Officer
Interim Chief Pharmaceutical
Officer**

Dr Gregor Smith
Professor Fiona McQueen
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For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
Medical Directors, NHS Boards
Nurse Directors, NHS Boards
Primary Care Leads, NHS Boards
Directors of Nursing & Midwifery,
NHS Boards
Chief Officers of Integration
Authorities
Chief Executives, Local Authorities
Directors of Pharmacy
Directors of Public Health
General Practitioners
Practice Nurses
Immunisation Co-ordinators
CPHMs
Scottish Prison Service
Scottish Ambulance Service
Occupational Health Leads

For information

Chairs, NHS Boards
Infectious Disease Consultants
Consultant Physicians
Public Health Scotland
Chief Executive, Public Health
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vaccination uptake rates being achieved across all Health Boards this year. It is however, clear that in terms of risk, Covid-19 remains far more prevalent than seasonal flu. The new variant 'VOC – 202012/01' poses a further risk to public health, given the increased transmissibility of this variant.

6. Recognising that change is required, and to operationalise the realignment of resource to support acceleration of the Covid-19 vaccination programme, Scottish Ministers have indicated that they are content that we will not call forward any future cohorts (55-59 year olds and those over 50 years not otherwise eligible).
7. Given there is sufficient flu vaccine stock available, we would propose to continue to mop up the balance of the most at risk groups (including pregnant women) on an opportunistic basis.

Communication materials

8. The public should be signposted to <http://www.nhsinform.scot/flu> for up to date information on the programme.

Resources

9. NHS Boards are asked to ensure that immunisation teams are appraised of this development that will allow for the acceleration of the Covid-19 vaccination programme

Action

10. NHS Boards and GP practices, are asked to note and implement the arrangements outlined in this letter for the 2020/21 adult seasonal flu immunisation programme. It has been important that every effort was made this season to maximise uptake this winter, and colleagues are asked that those who are most clinically at risk should continue to be offered vaccination.
11. We would like to take this opportunity, once again, to express our gratitude for your continuing support in all of the planning and delivering of the flu immunisation programme this season and a heartfelt thank you for all your hard work in these most challenging of circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Gregor Smith

Fiona McQueen

Alison Strath

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Chief Medical Officer

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