



Department of Health

*From the Chief Medical Officer,
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Nicola Close
Chief Executive
Association of Directors of Public Health

Sent by email: enquiries@adph.org.uk

Dear Nicola

Vaccination of health and social care workers against flu, 2013/14

I am writing to seek your active support to increase flu vaccine uptake among the members of the Association of Directors of Public Health. You will be aware that one of the groups recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to be vaccinated against flu is health and social care workers.

It is the responsibility of employers to make the vaccine available free of charge to employees if a local risk assessment indicates that they are needed. However, vaccine uptake in frontline health care workers over the last few years has remained disappointingly low (45.6% in 2012/2013). Coverage in Trusts ranges from 8% to over 85%. Given this huge variation in coverage, there is considerable scope for improvement.

With winter approaching, the NHS's annual seasonal flu vaccination programme has commenced. Although last winter was another quiet flu season for England, some countries experienced more severe flu, a reminder that flu can be dangerous and remains highly unpredictable. It is therefore important that those recommended to receive the vaccine are vaccinated.

We would appreciate your help to promote the following key points to your members:

- As part of their duty of care to their patients or residents, care professionals should do everything in their power to protect them against infection. This includes getting vaccinated against flu. The General Medical Council's 2013 good medical practice guidance for doctors includes under bullet 29 the following statement: "You should

be immunised against common serious communicable diseases (unless otherwise contraindicated)".

- The impact of flu on frail and vulnerable patients, in communities, care homes and in hospitals, can be fatal.
- Getting vaccinated against flu can help protect you and your family.
- Even if an individual is asymptomatic, they can still pass on flu to patients or residents.
- Having the flu vaccination can be a powerful message to colleagues, patients and residents.

The Secretary of State has asked that we aim for at least 75% of health and social care staff being vaccinated and Trusts will put future winter funding at risk if they do not reach this target. We know this will be challenging but we must aim high and ensure people understand that the flu vaccine is important.

To help you in encouraging your members to get vaccinated, NHS Employers has an excellent communications pack that you may find useful:

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/NHS%20Flu%20fighter%20communications%20toolkit%20for%202013-14.pdf>

I would like to thank you in advance for your support in this important matter.

Yours sincerely



**PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER
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