

Flu Vaccination Programme 2020-21

Communications toolkit: Increasing uptake of the flu vaccination for people with learning disabilities

This communications toolkit supports the 2020/21 roll out of the Winter/Flu campaign and is integrated with the Help Us Help You campaign which runs from October 2020 across all STP/ICS's to ensure that flu and winter messaging is visible to all. Developed in the context of supporting the national Public Health England Flu Immunisation Programme and the National NHS Winter Pressures Campaign Plan, it aims to support health and social care systems to increase awareness and uptake of the flu vaccination in two of the identified 'at risk' groups – individuals with a learning disability and their carer's (family member or paid support staff).

In addition to encouraging flu vaccine uptake, people with learning disabilities should be receiving their Annual Health Check to help address recognised health inequalities.

Designed for and distributed to the local STP Learning Disability & Autism Programme Boards, Clinical Commissioning Group's, Community Learning Disability Teams, Health & Social Care Providers, GP practices, pharmacies, charities and advocacy groups across the south west of England.

When

Messaging will run throughout winter as part of the national Public Health England Flu Campaign and the National NHS Winter Pressures Campaign. Support this by scheduling relevant messaging targeting this at-risk, often overlooked, group throughout winter.

Keep an eye out for direction on at-risk group target weeks from the South West NHS England and Improvement communications team.

Why

Utilise this toolkit to help address very real health inequalities and the shorter life expectancies of people with learning disabilities. Individuals with a learning disability have poorer physical and mental health compared to others, with only 37% dying aged 65 and over compared to the general population at 85%.

Respiratory conditions remain the most significant causes of premature mortality for people with a learning disability where deaths have been reviewed as part of the [LeDeR programme](#). Bacterial pneumonia was stated as a cause of death for 24% of adults and 20% of children whose deaths were notified in 2019/20, with aspiration pneumonia cited in a further 17% of adult and 3% of children's deaths. In total, these respiratory conditions accounted for 2,162 deaths of people with a learning disability.

Children and adults with learning disabilities are [clearly identified as a clinically 'at risk' group](#), eligible for a free flu vaccine as part of the national flu vaccine programme. Carers (family member or support worker) are also eligible to help protect the people they look after.

NHS England & NHS Improvement has issued a [letter](#) to social care organisations confirming that health and social care staff are entitled to a free flu vaccination.

This toolkit will help health and social care organisations meet their legal obligation to put reasonable adjustments in place to ensure equal access to healthcare services for people with disabilities. This means that services should be making changes that help people with learning disabilities have a flu vaccination. These might be changes at a service level e.g. sending out an easy-read leaflet about why it is important to have a flu vaccination. It might be changes at an individual level e.g. offering a longer visit to someone who needs more time.

All organisations that provide NHS or adult social care have a legal responsibility to follow the [Accessible Information Standard](#). The standard aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are provided with information that they can easily read or understand with support so they can communicate effectively with health and social care services.

Key messages

Audience insight research has shown that people are more likely to want to get the flu vaccine this year because of COVID-19 but they are worried about safety. A *key message* must be that the NHS is safe i.e. you are safe going for your flu vaccination. In addition, feedback from experts by experience highlighted a dislike for the word's 'jab' and 'injection', hence focussing on the word vaccine this year to avoid putting people off.

For Health and Social Care organisations to use with people with learning disabilities:

- It is safe to have your flu vaccine this year.
- Get the flu vaccine as soon you can to stay well this winter.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse or a pharmacist about getting your free flu vaccine.
- The flu vaccine is quick and can protect you from getting very ill.
- The flu vaccine does not always stop you getting the flu. But if you get the flu your symptoms will be milder.
- The flu vaccine is free because you need it. If you do not get the vaccine you could get very ill and have to go to hospital.
- Do not let anything stop you from getting your flu vaccine. The doctor, nurse or pharmacist will look after you.
- You can take a family member or friend along with you to get your flu vaccine.
- If you think you have flu, stay home and rest until you feel better. Call NHS 111 if you have other health conditions or feel very unwell.
- While at the doctors getting your flu vaccine, ask about having your annual health check. Annual health checks are free and can help you stay fit and healthy.

For Health and Social Care organisations to use with carers of people with learning disabilities:

- Family carers can get a [free flu vaccination](#) as well as [health and social care workers](#).
- People with learning disabilities are less likely to get the flu if the people around them have also been vaccinated.

- The flu vaccination cannot give you flu. The vaccine offers protection against the flu. If you do get it still, then the symptoms will be milder.
- The flu vaccine will give you, and the person you care for, the very best chance of not falling very ill with the flu this winter.
- It is safe for you and the person you care for to go and get your flu vaccine this year.
- Care for someone with a learning disability? Get the flu vaccine so you do not get ill or pass the virus on.
- Carers can have a free flu vaccine. Protect the person you care for and organise your flu vaccine today.
- Ask the doctor about the person you care for receiving their annual health check. Annual health checks are free and help keep them well.

What GP surgeries can do

1. GP surgeries should give a clear message that people with learning disabilities and their carers (family member and support workers) are entitled to a free flu vaccination.
2. People on the learning disability register should have it recorded in their notes that they “need a flu vaccine” – there is a specific Read / Snowmed code for this.
3. Practices can use this [easy read flu invitation letter template for people with learning disabilities](#).
4. Talk to people at their annual health check about why it is important that they have the flu vaccination.
5. Put reasonable adjustments in place to help people with learning disabilities have their flu vaccination. This could be extra time, photo cards or an accompanying friend.
6. The person seeing the patient may need to assess the patient’s capacity to decide to have the flu vaccine. If they do not have capacity for this decision, then this should not be a barrier to the flu vaccination being given; there would need to be a decision taken by the health professional that this is in their best interests.
7. Consider the nasal spray flu vaccine as a reasonable adjustment. [PHE guidance](#) outlines the nasal spray can be used for people with a severe needle phobia. The nasal vaccine is not as effective as the injection, but some protection is better than none.
8. Capitalise on attendance and offer the pneumococcal vaccine within the same appointment.
9. Learning disabilities will be shown as a separate category on ImmForm this year. You will be able to see the uptake for this cohort

Learning disability focussed campaign resources

Videos:

- [South West GP practices: planning your 2020 / 2021 flu clinics](#) – not learning disability specific but help in terms of seeing how a practice will be running flu clinics this winter.

Leaflets:

- [Protect yourself from flu - Easy Read leaflet](#)
- [Helping stop you getting flu: information for people with low literacy](#)
- [ER childhood nasal flu leaflet](#)

Posters:

- [Protect yourself from flu - Easy Read poster](#)
- [Get your free flu vaccine poster](#)

Templates:

- [Easy read flu invitation letter template for people with learning disabilities](#) – health professionals can use this template to invite people with learning disabilities to get vaccinated at their local surgery.

Flu awareness videos

- **Don't let anything stop you – Misfits drama group**

Coming soon

- **Camilla gets her flu vaccine: “It’s just one prick, one prick and that’s it!”**

Access and share this short [awareness video](#) featuring Camilla, who has a learning disability, and a nurse explaining the importance of getting the flu vaccine for people with learning disabilities. Designed with easy read subtitles and accessible language it can be used by professionals (health and social), carers and families to show people with learning disabilities what they can expect when getting the flu vaccination. Share widely via your networks and corporate digital channels.

Template newsletter copy – to adapt as required and share with staff, members and wider stakeholders **with a clear focus on individuals with learning disabilities, their families and carers*

Care for someone with a learning disability?

They – and you – are entitled to a FREE flu vaccination.

Anyone can catch flu. Flu is caused by a bug called a virus. Flu is not like a cold, it can make you, your loved one or the person you care for feel ill. If someone is very ill with the flu they might even have to go to hospital.

Having the flu vaccine can help stop you from catching the flu and passing it onto other people. The vaccine is free for people with a learning disability and their carer's (family member or support worker).

Do not let anything stop you from getting your flu vaccination. The flu vaccine is quick and easy. After the vaccine you may feel a bit hot, have a sore arm and ache a bit, but you would feel a lot worse if you caught the flu.

Contact your doctor or pharmacist today.

Template copy for sharing resources - copy to use for sharing the resources with GP practices

The national flu campaign to encourage uptake of the free flu vaccination, particularly amongst at risk groups, has launched.

Individuals with a learning disability are identified as an 'at risk' group and are therefore entitled to a free flu vaccine. As are their carers, whether that is a family member or paid support staff who care for the individual day-to-day.

As such, **[INSERT ORGANISATION]** will be promoting advice and raising awareness of the importance of individuals with a learning disability, their families and carers, getting the flu vaccination throughout winter.

We would be very grateful if you could help us raise awareness with your **[patients / members / customers]** too by sharing and displaying the easy read poster in your buildings / waiting rooms.

Hear from and share this short [video](#) of Camilla. Camilla had her free flu vaccine to stop getting ill over winter.

Please see below the latest press release from NHS England urging all people with Learning Disabilities to get their free flu vaccination, and all carers. This press release is accompanied with a video in editors notes and being used on our @NHSEnglandSW twitter platform.

I would like to thank you in advance for sharing this important health message with your audiences ahead of winter.

Template press release – for adaption with local data/spokesperson

Press Release

Embargoed: [INSERT DATE]

FLU: People with a learning disability are at greater risk of developing serious illness

People who have a learning disability can be more susceptible to the effects of flu and are therefore at increased risk of developing complications such as bronchitis or pneumonia.

As the NHS emerges from the covid pandemic, anyone with a learning disability is encouraged to get their free vaccination and annual health check to help stay well this winter.

Carers of anyone with a learning disability are also entitled to the free vaccination. All carers (family member or support worker) are urged to ensure they are registered at their local GP practice as a carer of someone with a learning disability. Individuals should also be on their GP Learning Disability Register to access the very best care.

Now is the time that GP practices and community pharmacies are carrying out vaccinations for those at risk.

The vaccine offers the best level of protection from the flu virus, and it's important to have the vaccine every year, especially as the flu virus strain changes every year.

Anyone who is defined as being in an 'at risk' group should contact their surgery and arrange an appointment to have the vaccine.

Having the vaccine sooner provides the individual with protection over a longer period of time; it also helps reduce the chances of spreading the virus to family and friends.

[Insert name and job title or NHS spokesperson] said:

"Flu is a very unpleasant illness. The symptoms can be miserable for many of us, but it can lead to more serious complications for those who fall within certain clinical 'at risk' groups. Some people with a learning disability can be more susceptible to flu and can go on to

develop more serious complications like pneumonia. Respiratory conditions remain the most significant causes of premature mortality for people with a learning disability where deaths have been reviewed as part of the LeDeR programme.

“I’d urge people to make sure they have the vaccination as soon as possible. They should also ask to have their Annual Health Check. Carers of anyone with a learning disability should also get the free vaccine from their GP surgery or community pharmacy, the sooner the better to get the best possible protection.”

ENDS

Notes:

1 NHS Video demonstrates the ease with which a person with a learning disability can have the flu vaccination:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYgH181Xijs>

2 The flu vaccine is also free for patients in the following at risk groups:

- Those aged 65 years or over (including those becoming age 65 years by 31 March 2021)
- Those aged from 6 months to less than 65 years of age with a serious medical condition such as:
 - Chronic (long term) respiratory disease, such as severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or bronchitis.
 - Chronic heart disease – (such as heart failure).
 - Chronic kidney disease (at stages three, four or five).
 - Chronic liver disease.
 - Chronic neurological disease such as Parkinson’s disease or motor neurone disease
 - Diabetes
 - Splenic dysfunction
- Reduced immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment)
- Morbidly obese (defined as BMI of 40 and above)
- All pregnant women (including those women who become pregnant during the flu season)
- All children aged 2 and 3 years

- All children in school years R through to year 5
- People living in long-stay residential care homes, or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow the introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality.
- People who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an older or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill
- Consideration should also be given to the vaccination of household contacts of immunocompromised individuals, specifically individuals who expect to share living accommodation on most days over the winter and therefore for whom continuing close contact is unavoidable

3 Access full details about the [LeDeR programme](#). Notably bacterial pneumonia was stated as a cause of death for 24% of adults and 20% of children whose deaths were notified in 2019/20, with aspiration pneumonia cited in a further 17% of adult and 3% of children's deaths. In total, these respiratory conditions accounted for 2,162 deaths of people with a learning disability.

4 About **[Organisation name]**

[INSERT INFO ABOUT ORGANISATION]

5 Further enquiries to: **[INSERT MEDIA LINE]**

6 Twitter: **[INSERT SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES]**

Advocate letter to request the flu vaccination – for carers, families to use when requesting the flu vaccination

Dear GP or Pharmacist,

I am eligible for a free flu vaccination. Please help me stay well this winter.

All children and adults with learning disabilities and their carers (family member or paid supporter) are identified as eligible for a flu vaccine as part of the National Flu Immunisation Programme.

Preventing flu can be particularly important for people with a learning disability. Flu can lead to pneumonia and sepsis, which many people with a learning disability are much more vulnerable to than the general population.

People with learning disabilities are less likely to get the flu if the people around them have also been vaccinated. Family carers can get a free flu vaccination as well as health and social care workers.

Services should make changes that help people with learning disabilities have a flu vaccination. Reasonable adjustments are a legal requirement and may be required for a person with a learning disability who might not otherwise get the vaccination. These could be sending out an easy-read leaflet about why it is important to have a flu vaccination, offering a longer visit to someone who needs more time, or where appropriate, the nasal vaccine.

Whilst the nasal vaccine is not proven to be as effective as the injectable vaccine, it is better than not having the vaccine at all. See Public Health England guidance for more information

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-vaccinations-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/flu-vaccinations-supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities>
2. www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/leder/LeDeR_Annual_Report_2018%20published%20May%202019.pdf
3. www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/Flu_Injection_resource.pdf

Social media messaging **please utilise the below list by sharing, adapting or retweeting from @NHSEnglandSW. Keep an eye out for tweets to retweet from our @NHSability account too.*

Individuals with a learning disability:

- The #flu vaccine is free for people with a #learningdisability. Get it to prevent being ill. Talk to your doctor. #StayWellThisWinter
- FREE #flu vaccines for people with a learning disability – let's spread the word! (not the flu) @mencap_charity @BILD_tweets
- People with a #learningdisability can have a free #flu vaccine. Contact your doctor and #StayWellThisWinter
- If you have a learning disability you need to be protected from flu. Talk to your doctor about getting it as soon as possible.
- Spread the word: FREE flu vaccines for individuals with a learning disability and their carers.
- Find out more about flu and get protected to avoid being very ill this winter - [Protect yourself from flu - Easy Read leaflet](#)

Carer focussed:

- Care for someone with a #learningdisability? Get your free #flu vaccine so you do not get ill or pass the virus on.
- Look after yourself and your loved one – get the flu vaccine. It's FREE for carers too @CarersUK
- The [flu letter](#) is very clear – care for an individual with a learning disability and you can get a free flu vaccine to protect yourself and them.

Social media graphics **high res versions can be found downloaded from our online [resource hub](#).*

The following graphics are available for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram this year:



Easy read materials about the flu vaccine are available.



Carers should have a flu vaccination to protect loved ones.



Looking after someone with a learning disability (family member or support worker)?
Get your free vaccination.



People with a learning disability should have a flu vaccination.

Evaluation

To date, Public Health England Screening and Immunisation teams have not had access to the required information in order to record flu vaccinations uptake in individuals with a learning disability. Likewise, there is no way to access data on the exact number of family members or carers specifically supporting people with learning disabilities who opt to get the flu vaccine. However, carer is a category, and **this is the first year (2020-21) uptake data for people with learning disabilities will be recorded, which will help us benchmark for 2021-22.**

Each STP/ICS should evaluate their winter communications plans and the effectiveness of handling specific incidents to, identify what worked well and what would be improved next year. Including looking at specific at-risk groups who face health inequalities e.g. people with learning disabilities.

If you use this toolkit, please [let us know](#) what activity you carried out to support people with learning disabilities and their carers. Your feedback will be included in the wider evaluation and help inform future campaigns. Without your feedback and evaluation insight we have little evidence to justify the usefulness of developing similar resources.