



Public Health  
England



# NHS public health functions agreement 2019 -20

**Service specification No.13A  
Seasonal influenza immunisation programme for children**

NHS England and NHS Improvement



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## **Service specification No.13A**

### **Seasonal influenza immunisation programme for children**

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Promoting equality and addressing health inequalities are at the heart of NHS England and NHS Improvement values. Throughout the development of the policies and processes cited in this document, we have:

- Given due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (as required under the Equality Act 2010); and
- Given due regard to the need to reduce inequalities between patients in access to, and outcomes from, healthcare services and to ensure services are provided in an integrated way where this might reduce health inequalities (in accordance with the duties under sections 13G and 13N of the NHS Act 2006, as amended).

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## Service specification No.13A

This is a service specification to accompany the 'NHS public health functions agreement 2019-20 (the '2019-20 agreement').

This service specification is to be applied by NHS England and NHS Improvement in accordance with the 2019-20 agreement. Where a specification refers to any other published document or standard, it refers to the document or standard as it existed at the date when the 2019-20 agreement was made between the Secretary of State and NHS England and NHS Improvement, unless otherwise specified.

Any changes in other published documents or standards may have effect for the purposes of the 2019-20 agreement in accordance with the procedures described in Chapter 3 of the 2019-20 agreement.

Service specifications should be downloaded in order to ensure that commissioners and providers refer to the latest document that is in effect.

The 2019-20 agreement is available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) (search for 'commissioning public health').

All current service specifications are available at [www.england.nhs.uk](http://www.england.nhs.uk) (search for 'commissioning public health').

This service specification is not intended to replicate, duplicate or supersede any other legislative provisions that may apply. It must always be read in conjunction with the [core service specification](#) and the online version of the [Green Book](#).

# 1 Purpose of the seasonal influenza immunisation programme for children

1.1 This service specification relates to the extension of the influenza vaccination programme to children.

Those to be offered immunisation in 2019/20 are:

- all children aged two to ten (but not eleven years or older) on 31 August 2019.

Providers should:

Arrange provision for all those aged two and three (but not four years or older) on 31 August 2019 (date of birth on or after 1 September 2015 and on or before 31 August 2017) usually through general practice;

Arrange provision for children in reception year and school years 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6  
Arrange provision for children in special schools and those who are home schooled.

Reception year is defined as four rising to five years old (date of birth between 1 September 2014 and on or before 31 August 2015)

Year 1 is defined as five rising to six year olds (date of birth between 1 September 2013 and on or before 31 August 2014)

Year 2 is defined as six rising to seven year olds (date of birth between 1 September 2012 and on or before 31 August 2013)

Year 3 is defined as seven- rising to eight year olds (date of birth between 1 September 2011 and on or before 31 August 2012)

Year 4 is defined as eight rising to nine year olds (date of birth between 1 September 2010 and on or before 31 August 2011)

Year 5 is defined as nine rising to ten year olds (date of birth between 1 September 2009 and on or before 31 August 2010)

Year 6 is defined as ten rising to eleven year olds (date of birth between 1 September 2008 and on or before 31 August 2009)

1.2 This includes:

- children aged 2-3 years in clinical risk groups who are already covered by the existing programme. Vaccination of these children should take place in primary care settings and as soon as vaccine is available; and

1.3 Please note:

- Any children in clinical risk groups not included in the age ranges stated in paragraph 1.1 are covered in Service Specification No.13 Seasonal influenza immunisation programme (2019-20 programme).

- Some children may be in School Years Reception, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 but outside of the date of birth ranges for those years (eg. if a child has been accelerated or held back a year). It is acceptable to offer and deliver immunisations to these children with their classroom peers.
- 1.4 The 201/20 vaccination programme extends the annual routine immunisation programme against influenza to more age groups of children who are not in the 'at risk' categories for a flu immunisation. The purpose of the service specification is to enable NHS England and NHS Improvement to commission influenza immunisation services of sufficient quantity and quality to significantly lower the number of infections and outbreaks caused by flu viruses. Coverage should be equitable across England as well as within upper tier local government areas and within the context of populations with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
  - 1.5 This specification provides a brief overview of the vaccine, including the disease it protects against, the context, evidence base, and wider health outcomes. It must be read in conjunction with the Core service specification, National immunisation programme, the online version of the [Green Book](#), in particular the influenza chapter which is updated as needed based on advice from the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#) (JCVI), the [annual flu letter](#) and any guidance or information issued by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), PHE or NHS England and NHS Improvement. This service specification should also be read in conjunction with service specification 13, the seasonal flu immunisation programme.
  - 1.6 This specification will also promote a consistent and equitable approach to the provision of the commissioning and delivery of influenza immunisation for children across England.
  - 1.7 It is important to note that this programme will change and evolve in the light of emerging best practice and scientific evidence. Guidance is issued annually through the [Flu Plan and related 'annual flu letter'](#). NHS England and NHS Improvement and providers will be required to reflect these changes accordingly in a timely way as directed by the national schedule.
  - 1.8 This service specification is not designed to replicate, duplicate or supersede any relevant legislative provisions that may apply e.g. the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The specification will be reviewed and amended in line with any new recommendations or guidance, and in line with reviews of the Section 7A agreement.

## 2 Population needs

### Background

#### Influenza

- 2.1 Influenza is an acute viral infection of the respiratory tract. There are three types of influenza virus: A, B and C. Influenza A and influenza B are responsible for most clinical illness.
- 2.2 The disease is characterised by the sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, myalgia and extreme fatigue. Other common symptoms include a dry cough, sore throat and stuffy nose.
- 2.3 The risk of serious illness from influenza is higher amongst children under six months of age, older people and those with underlying health conditions such as respiratory disease, cardiac disease or immunosuppression, and pregnant women.

#### Influenza vaccine key details

- 2.4 The genetic make-up of the flu virus is unstable and new strains often emerge therefore vaccination is required annually.
- 2.5 The vaccine will provide protection against the strains of seasonal influenza that the World Health Organization (WHO) specifies as the most likely to cause disease each year.
- 2.6 All authorised influenza vaccines need to meet immunogenicity, safety and quality criteria set by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), with the assessment of efficacy based on meeting or exceeding indicated requirements in serological assessments of immunogenicity.
- 2.7 The vaccine recommended by JCVI for the children covered by this service specification is a live attenuated intranasal influenza vaccine (LAIV). This vaccine has a good safety record profile in children aged two years and older.



## 3 Scope

### Aims

- 3.1 The aim of the routine influenza immunisation programme is to protect those who are most at risk of serious illness or death should they develop influenza. This extension of the programme to children is to lower the impact of influenza on children and lower influenza transmission to other children, adults and those in clinical risk groups at any age.

### Objectives

- 3.2 The aim will be achieved by delivering an evidence-based, targeted immunisation programme that:
- identifies the eligible population and ensures effective timely delivery with optimal coverage based on the target population;
  - is safe, effective, of a high quality and is independently monitored;
  - is delivered and supported by suitably trained, competent healthcare professionals who participate in recognised ongoing training and development in line with national standards;
  - delivers, manages and stores vaccine in accordance with national guidance; and
  - is supported by regular and accurate data collection using the appropriate returns.

### Direct health outcomes

- 3.3 In the context of health outcomes, the influenza vaccination programme aims to:
- protect the health of specified groups, individuals and the wider population;
  - protect those who are most at risk of serious infection or death should they develop influenza;
  - reduce the transmission of infection, and thereby contribute to the protection of vulnerable individuals who may have suboptimal response to their own immunisation;
  - achieve appropriate coverage across all groups identified; and
  - minimise adverse physical/psychological/clinical aspects of immunisation (e.g. anxiety, adverse reactions).

### Baseline vaccine coverage

- 3.4 Local services must aim for 100% of relevant individuals to be offered immunisation in accordance with the Green Book and other official DHSC/PHE/NHS England and NHS Improvement guidance. This also includes reference to performance indicators and key deliverables that are set out in Annex B of the NHS Public Health Functions Agreement (Section 7A) for 2019-20.
- 3.5 In proceeding with the phased implementation of the extension of seasonal influenza vaccination to children, NHS England and NHS Improvement in 2019-20 will seek to achieve a sufficient national level of performance in relation to each key deliverable.

## 4 Service description / care pathway

### Local service delivery

4.1 The delivery of immunisation services at the local level is based on evolving best practice. This section of the document specifies the high-level operational elements of the seasonal influenza immunisation programme for children, based on the best practice that NHS England and NHS Improvement must use to inform local commissioning, contracts and service delivery. There is also scope to enable NHS England and NHS Improvement and providers to enhance and build on specifications to incorporate national or local service aspirations that may include increasing local innovation in service delivery. However, it is essential, in order to promote a nationally aligned, high-quality programme focusing on improved outcomes, and that all the core elements that are set out in the core service specification are included in contracts and specifications. All providers must also ensure they are familiar with the contra-indications of Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) as detailed in the Green Book.

### Target population

4.2 Those to be offered immunisation in 2019-20 are those detailed in paragraph 1.1.

### Vaccine schedule

4.3 The guidance in the influenza chapter of the Green Book should be followed:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-the-green-book-chapter-19>

4.4 In order to provide early protection, providers must aim to complete the vaccination as early as possible after the flu vaccine becomes available and before flu viruses start to circulate, which is often before Christmas in UK.

4.5 Scheduling of vaccinations should take account of the short shelf life of LAIV.

4.6 Sufficient immunisation appointments must be available so that children can receive vaccinations on time. Vaccinating children as soon as the vaccine is available will provide them with protection should the flu season prove to be early.

### Vaccine ordering

4.7 As in previous years, PHE will centrally procure flu vaccine for all children to be offered immunisation in the 2019-20 flu season, including those aged from six months to less than 18 years in clinical risk groups. The centrally procured vaccines will include alternative inactivated vaccines for those children who are not recommended to be immunised with LAIV.

4.8 Centrally procured vaccines should be ordered via the ImmForm website ([www.ImmForm.dh.gov.uk](http://www.ImmForm.dh.gov.uk)) as per the usual mechanisms for the routine childhood immunisation programme, details of which are given in the core specification. Full details on the ordering process will be set out in the annual flu letter which is due to be published in spring 2019.

4.9 Apart from this central procurement of vaccines for children less than 18 years of age, it remains the responsibility of general practices to order sufficient flu vaccine for older eligible patients direct from the manufacturers.