

- To:
- Integrated care boards – chief executives
 - GP practices
 - Community pharmacies
 - Primary care networks
 - NHS trusts – chief executives
 - Local government chief executives
 - Health and justice healthcare providers
 - Directors of public health
 - School-aged immunisation service providers
- cc.
- Regional directors
 - Regional directors of commissioning

NHS England
Wellington House
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15 August 2024

Dear colleagues,

Flu and COVID-19 Seasonal Vaccination Programme: autumn/winter 2024/25

Thank you for your continued commitment to the flu and COVID-19 vaccination programmes and for the planning you have undertaken to date in readiness to deliver autumn/winter vaccinations.

Vaccination is a high priority action for the NHS, to protect people from serious illness and to support NHS and adult social care resilience.

Ensuring that eligible people receive high quality information about vaccination from people they trust, and providing a convenient offer in which people have confidence, are critical actions to maximise protection.

The government has accepted final advice from the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#) (JCVI) regarding a COVID-19 autumn/winter 2024/25 vaccination programme.

The groups to be offered a COVID-19 vaccine in autumn/winter 2024/25 are:

- residents in a care home for older adults
- all adults aged 65 years and over
- persons aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group, as defined in tables 3 and 4 of the COVID-19 chapter of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Green Book on immunisation against infectious disease

The JCVI also advises that health and social care service providers may wish to consider whether vaccination provided as an occupational health programme to frontline health and social care workers is appropriate in future years; and that ahead of such considerations, health departments may choose to continue to extend an offer of vaccination to frontline health and social care workers and staff working in care homes for older adults in autumn 2024.

The government has decided that frontline health and social care workers and staff working in care homes for older adults will continue to be offered COVID-19 vaccination in the autumn 2024 programme in England.

The cohorts eligible for the flu programme are the same as those set out in the [National Flu Immunisation Programme 2024 to 2025 letter](#).

Campaign timing

As stated in the [National Flu Immunisation Programme 2024 to 2025 letter](#), flu vaccinations for pregnant women, and all children's flu cohorts, will commence from Sunday 1 September 2024.

The main flu and COVID-19 vaccination campaign will commence on Tuesday 3 October 2024.

Vaccination of all COVID-19 cohorts will start on 3 October at the same time as all other adult flu cohorts, as set out in the flu letter.

An October start date reflects JCVI advice that the flu vaccine's effectiveness can wane over time in adults and so a later start date is preferable.

The advice differs for children, because flu circulates in this age group earlier and protection lasts longer. This was set out in the flu letter on 12 March and reconfirmed on 18 June 2024.

The start date for COVID-19 vaccinations aligns to flu to support co-administration of flu and COVID-19.

Payment will only be made for flu and COVID-19 vaccinations administered from the service commencement date onwards.

We anticipate that most flu and COVID-19 vaccinations should be completed by Friday 20 December 2024.

Outreach activities for COVID-19 vaccination should continue to be delivered to underserved communities until Friday 31 January 2025. Flu vaccinations will be available until Monday 31 March 2025.

Next steps

[Care homes and housebound](#)

Regions should work with primary care networks and providers to prioritise vaccinations of residents in older adult care homes and those who are housebound.

[National Booking Service \(NBS\)](#)

The NBS will be opened for participating sites to post COVID-19 and flu appointments from Monday 16 September 2024. It will be open for bookings from the public from Monday 23 September 2024.

The last available appointment date on NBS will be Friday 20 December 2024 for both flu and COVID-19.

[Vaccine details](#)

Details of the vaccine to be used in autumn/winter 2024/25 will be confirmed shortly, and we are not anticipating any supply constraints. Initial volumes of vaccine supply will be made available prior to the start of the programme. More details will follow.

[COVID-19 site sign-up](#)

Regional teams have already identified providers through the site sign-up process for COVID-19 vaccination services.

[Outreach](#)

It is vital that the autumn/winter 2024/25 vaccination delivery network includes outreach services to meet the needs of communities that are currently disadvantaged, particularly those who are more deprived. For example, providers may want to consider how to design services for people who struggle to make appointments during working hours.

We would expect that any provider would make reasonable efforts to reach the whole eligible population.

Where possible, these outreach services should be aligned across all vaccinations – and with wider prevention efforts – to ensure that we are taking all opportunities to improve the health of unvaccinated and under-vaccinated communities.

Vaccination of health and social care workers

For frontline health and social care workers and staff working in care homes for older adults we are asking employers to signpost these staff to the most convenient COVID-19 vaccination offer. This may be through NBS, where staff can self-declare their eligibility.

Trusts should offer COVID-19 vaccinations at the same time as their occupational health offer for flu vaccination.

In line with the existing flu occupational health offer, payments will not be made to trusts for vaccinating staff.

Social care staff without an employer-led occupational health scheme can continue to access the flu vaccination through their GP, community pharmacy or NBS.

Training materials

Updated training materials for COVID-19 will be made available in advance of the programme.

National protocols and patient group directions will be published before the start of the COVID-19 programme. These are already available for the flu programme.

Other vaccinations

We ask local teams to pay special attention to other vaccinations alongside the seasonal programme and to co-administer vaccines where it is appropriate and clinically safe to do so.

In particular, local teams should look to signpost and, where possible, provide other vaccines to those who are eligible (for example, shingles to those in eligible age groups, and pertussis for those who are pregnant).

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine

RSV accounts for around 30,000 hospitalisations in children aged under 5 and is responsible for 20 to 30 infant deaths. It also causes around 9,000 hospital admissions in those aged over 75.

As you will know, the RSV vaccine will be [routinely offered for the first time this year](#) from September to those turning 75 years of age.

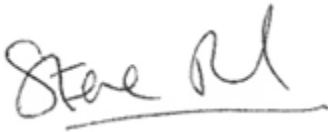
This will be a year-round offer alongside a catch up for those aged 75 to 79, up until Sunday 31 August 2025. We are asking local teams to vaccinate those who are eligible at the earliest opportunity to give them vital protection ahead of winter.

The RSV vaccine should also be offered to **pregnant women** from 28 weeks of pregnancy to protect infants. Where Trust providers have commissioned maternity services to deliver the RSV vaccine, maternity providers should already be working to identify pregnant women in their care who will be eligible and inviting them for their vaccination from the beginning of September. General practice will be commissioned through the GP contract as a component of Essential Services, to offer and provide RSV vaccination in pregnancy on an opportunistic or on request basis from 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Promotion of the vaccine offer by health professionals is vital, particularly to those at highest risk, and NHS England will issue a series of communications toolkits to support this.

Thank you for your ongoing support and participation in the flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme, which continues to provide protection to the most vulnerable in society.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Russell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Steve Russell

Chief Delivery Officer and National Director for Vaccinations and Screening
NHS England