

Making Every Contact Count (MECC): Covid-19 and flu vaccination information for frontline staff

Aim of this briefing

1. To give frontline staff the knowledge they need to inform residents they work with about who is eligible to get their free Covid-19 and flu vaccination this autumn/winter
2. To give frontline staff the knowledge they need to inform residents why it is important that they get their free Covid-19 and flu vaccination this autumn/winter and where they can go to get these
3. To give frontline staff the skills to have conversations around vaccinations with residents they work with

Key messages re: Covid-19 and flu vaccination

Eligibility for both the Covid-19 and flu vaccine programmes is as follows:

Covid-19 vaccination eligibility	Flu vaccination eligibility
Anyone over 65 years of age	Anyone over 65 years of age
Anyone in a clinical risk group *	Anyone over 6 months old in clinical risk groups
Frontline health & social care workers	Frontline health & social care workers
Those aged 12+ who are household contacts of those who are immunocompromised	Household contacts of those who are immunocompromised
Carers aged 16+ and staff working in care homes for older adults	Carers, those in receipt of carers allowance or main carer of an older or disabled person
Residents in older adult care homes	Residents in long-stay residential care homes
Pregnant people	Pregnant people
Staff who work in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) schools	Eligible school-aged children (Reception to Year 11)
	Children aged 2 or 3 on 31 August 2023

*Includes those with specific underlying health conditions e.g. cardiovascular diseases, immunosuppression, severe mental illness; individuals with learning disabilities; and younger adults in long-stay nursing and residential care settings.

Benefits of getting vaccinated:

- Getting vaccinated against Covid-19 and flu is the best way of protecting yourself and others by reducing the risk of catching either disease this autumn/winter.
- People over the age of 65, people in a clinical risk group, people who are immunocompromised, or pregnant people are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from both Covid-19 and flu. Getting vaccinated helps to:
 - reduce your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from Covid-19 or flu
 - reduce your risk of catching and spreading Covid-19 or flu
 - protect against different strains (variants) Covid-19 or flu
- Make sure you get a free vaccination if the above criteria include you, anyone you live with or care for.

Where to get vaccinated in the borough:

- There are several GP practices and pharmacies offering the free Covid-19 and flu vaccines this autumn/winter however, not all sites offer both.
- For an up-to-date list of pharmacies and primary care clinics offering Covid-19 vaccines, please look at the [Council website](#).

- Residents can book their vaccination appointment at a site of their choosing online via the national booking system for [Covid-19](#) and [flu](#) vaccinations (via the NHS website), by phone (NHS 119) or through the NHS app.

Having conversations with residents about vaccines

Conversations are a highly effective way of relaying reliable information and helping people to decide whether they want to get vaccinated. The World Health Organisation (WHO) have 4 key tips for having effective conversations with residents about vaccines:

1. Listen with empathy
2. Ask open-ended questions
3. Share trusted information
4. Explore reasons for wanting to get vaccinated

More detail on each of these tips is available on the World Health Organisation (WHO) [website](#).

Debunking myths about Covid-19 and flu vaccination

There are many myths around vaccinations in general and in particular the Covid-19 vaccination. Although only a small proportion of people believe these myths, it's important to challenge these and provide information from trusted sources which disprove these.

Responding to common concerns with factual statements about vaccines:

- **Vaccine safety:** Covid-19 and flu vaccines are extremely safe and have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness – most side effects are mild and tend to disappear within a couple of days ([NHS](#)). Infection with Covid-19 is much more likely to cause serious side effects than the Covid-19 vaccine ([British Heart Foundation](#))
- **Vaccine ingredients:** All of the ingredients in Covid-19 vaccines are safe with nearly all of the ingredients found in foods that we eat every day ([Centre for Disease Control](#))
- **Vaccines and autism:** Vaccines do not cause autism or any other neurodevelopmental disorders ([NHS](#))
- **Natural immunity vs. vaccine-derived immunity:** Natural immunity from infection is no better than vaccine-acquired immunity (and you avoid the risks that come with getting a Covid-19 or flu infection) ([Centre for Disease Control](#))
- **Covid vaccine doesn't give you Covid-19:** Covid-19 vaccines do not give you Covid-19 ([Centre for Disease Control](#))
- **Pregnancy & fertility:** Covid-19 and flu vaccines do not cause problems during pregnancy and do not compromise your ability to get pregnant ([NHS](#))
- **Effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccine:** The Covid-19 vaccine is by far the most effective way to reduce the risk of hospitalisation and death ([Office of National Statistics](#))
- **Importance of getting boosters:** Seasonal vaccines are offered because viruses change, and protection from vaccination (or natural infection) fades over time, so it's important to get a booster vaccination if you're eligible ([NHS Nottinghamshire](#))
- **Getting Covid-19/flu vaccines together:** Getting your flu and Covid-19 vaccines at the same time is safe and any increase in side effects is mild ([NHS Nottinghamshire](#))
- **Tracking or spying devices:** No vaccines contain micro-chips or any other device ([UNICEF](#))
- **Vaccines safely used for decades to reduce disease:** Vaccines have been widely and safely used in the UK since the 19th century as a way to reduce the number of people falling seriously ill. They prevent millions of deaths worldwide every year. They have eradicated or significantly diminished diseases like smallpox, polio and tetanus that used to kill or disable millions of people. Other diseases like measles and diphtheria have reduced to a very low number of cases each year since vaccines were introduced ([NHS](#)).

- **The Covid-19 vaccine has been tested rigorously:** Although Covid-19 is a new disease, work to develop vaccines to protect us against this family of coronaviruses had already begun about 20 years ago. The clinical trials to test the vaccines were carried out more quickly than normal by overlapping the different trial stages. No stage was missed out in the COVID vaccine trials and the trials were subject to the same strict regulatory requirements as any other vaccine. The vaccines approved for use in the UK were tested in trials with over 20,000 people. In many cases, these trials are larger than trials for other drugs and vaccines which have been licensed ([University of Oxford](#)).

Signposting residents to more information

It can be difficult for residents to find information that they trust about vaccines. At the same time, misinformation can spread like wildfire via social media websites and through word-of-mouth. This is why it is important to give residents reliable sources of information so that they can make an informed choice about whether or not they want to get vaccinated. Websites such as the following are a good start for people wanting to learn more about the Covid-19 and flu vaccines:

- NHS (<https://www.nhs.uk/>)
- Centre for Disease Control (<https://www.cdc.gov/index.htm>)
- UK Government website (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
- World Health Organisation (<https://www.who.int/>)
- Your local General Practitioner (GP)
- BBC news (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news>)

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