

E: immunisationprogrammes@gov.scot

Directors of Education

28 August 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Childhood Flu Immunisation Programme 2020/21

Thank you very much for contributing to the successful childhood flu immunisation programme in 2019/20 by supporting the work of the NHS to offer the flu vaccine to all primary school children. Given the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable in society this year, it is imperative that we do all we can to reduce the risk of our population from contracting seasonal flu. Delivering the childhood flu immunisation programme this winter will help to protect against children contracting flu themselves but also to protect against children transmitting flu to any vulnerable people they come into contact with. A letter from Scotland's Chief Medical Officer with full details for the programme has been issued and can be viewed at: [https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO\(2020\)17.pdf](https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/cmo/CMO(2020)17.pdf)

Vaccine uptake rates confirm that the programme last year continued to be successful with around 71% of primary school children getting vaccinated (maintaining the high level of uptake seen in 2019/20). The target for uptake rates for all primary school children is 75%. This reflects the success of the programme in schools and is an achievable target. The programme is now a well-established part of the routine childhood immunisation programme and this would not have been possible without the support of you and your staff.

As has been the case in previous years, primary school children will normally be given the vaccine at school. I am aware that holding the vaccination sessions in schools can be logistically challenging in a normal year, and recognise that there will be additional challenges this year in light of COVID-19. NHS Health Board teams will continue to work very closely with your school heads to minimise any disruption to your schools and to ensure that children will have the opportunity to receive the flu vaccine in a timely manner while maintaining good Infection Prevention & Control (IP&C) practices and physical distancing. I also appreciate that there may be some concerns about the handling of paper consent packs. I would therefore like to provide some reassurance around this by highlighting paragraphs 36 and 37 within the Scottish Government guidance on preparing for the new school term document available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020/>. These paragraphs explain that books and other resources can be taken home and that on return to the school they should be quarantined for 72 hours as the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surface is likely to have decreased significantly after this time.

To support the programme in schools, Public Health Scotland have produced a flu education pack for education staff. It includes:

- A briefing paper explaining 'Flu immunisation for primary school children in Scotland'
- Classroom activities and links to Curriculum for Excellence (with suggested learning opportunities)
- An online video called "You and Flu" (that can be shown to children in advance of flu immunisation sessions)
- Sample flu invitation letter (contained in the consent pack sent home with children)
- Primary school flu leaflet (contained in the consent pack sent home with children)
- Flu consent form guidance

Posters for staff rooms and parent/carer notice boards, a supply of leaflets and a cover letter will be delivered to all primary schools for the attention of the Head Teacher in accordance with the schedule agreed with child health departments within each NHS Board. The rest of the education pack materials will be available to download from Public Health Scotland's website at www.publichealthscotland.scot/flueducationpack. I hope that you find the pack useful.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter to all the head teachers in your area. In addition, please consider suggesting that a reference to the programme is added to school newsletters/bulletins or via school websites to help heighten awareness. Parents/carers can be directed to www.nhsinform.scot/childflu.

You may also wish to consider reminding school staff that the flu vaccine is also offered to people with certain medical conditions, or who are pregnant, who can get the free flu vaccine at a local NHS flu clinic (not at school). Visit www.nhsinform.scot/flu-local-clinics for more information.

A similar letter is being sent to Directors of Public Health and Health & Social Care Partnership Leads as we feel that it is important for you all to continue to link together to support the delivery of this important programme.

Once again thank you for your help in enabling us to provide this important protection to children in Scotland. We value your support and the part you play in helping to achieve a high uptake of the childhood flu vaccine.

Yours faithfully,

Charles Willis

Vaccinations Division
Scottish Government