

Prof Sir Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer

Maria McIlgorm
Chief Nursing Officer
and on behalf of Chief Allied Health Professionals

Prof Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Aine Morrison
Chief Social Worker

Caroline Lappin
Chief Dental Officer

Prof Ian Young
Chief Scientific Advisor



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

HSS (MD) 47/2023

FOR ACTION

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/HSC
Trusts/NIAS

Deputy Secretary SPPG

GP Medical Advisers, SPPG

All General Practitioners and GP Locums (for onward
distribution to practice staff)

OOHs Medical Managers (for onward distribution to
staff)

**PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION
LIST**

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Our Ref: HSS (MD) 47/2023

Date: 11 September 2023

Dear Colleagues

**THE 2023/24 SEASONAL INFLUENZA AND COVID-19 VACCINATION
PROGRAMMES FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKERS**

Firstly, we would like to express our sincere thanks to every health and social care worker across Northern Ireland for your continued dedication and commitment as we continue to rebuild our health and social care services.

Achieving a high uptake of both the influenza vaccination and COVID-19 vaccinations is an important priority for our Health and Social Care (HSC) system this coming autumn as vaccinations save lives and keep people well.

As you are aware, seasonal influenza and COVID-19 viruses have the potential to add substantially to the winter pressures usually faced right across the HSC system. Given the current pressures being experienced across the HSC system it is more important than ever that we all do what we can to try and ease those pressures by reducing our chances of becoming ill while also reducing the chances of passing these infections on to others. The offer of vaccination with both the influenza and COVID-19 vaccines to frontline staff has been recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the

independent expert committee that advises the 4 UK Health Departments on all vaccination matters.

Public Health Agency (PHA) data from 2022/23 shows that while many thousands of frontline HSC staff took up the offer of vaccination, the overall uptake of both vaccinations was disappointing: 36.3% for COVID-19 and 37.5% for influenza.

As health and social care workers, we all have a shared professional accountability to protect our patients' health and the health of the public. By being vaccinated yourself (unless medically exempt) and endorsing both influenza vaccination and COVID-19 vaccination among your colleagues, you can help increase confidence in vaccination and thereby increase uptake rates. Getting vaccinated is one of the simplest ways of protecting yourself, your family, and the people we support from influenza and COVID-19. Therefore, it is essential that we set an example to the public and our colleagues by taking up the offer of vaccination, while also encouraging other eligible groups to receive their vaccines in order to help protect themselves, their communities and our health service.

In the context of the current pressures facing our workforce, it is essential that we focus on ensuring that frontline staff are given the best available protection. We are actively seeking your support and help this year to promote our influenza and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. Health and social care workers can conveniently access vaccination from HSC Trusts vaccination clinics and over 300 community pharmacies across Northern Ireland. Full information on eligibility and how to obtain your vaccination is available at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/get-covid-19-vaccination-northern-ireland>

We would be grateful if you could convey this important message to encourage vaccination and increase the uptake of COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations across your respective organisations for 2023/24.

Yours sincerely

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Circulation List

Director of Public Health/Medical Director, Public Health Agency (*for onward distribution to all relevant health protection staff*)

Assistant Director Public Health (Health Protection), Public Health Agency

