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Chief Medical Officer

Maria McIlgorm
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Cathy Harrison
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Aine Morrison
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Caroline Lappin
Chief Dental Officer

Suzanne Martin
Chief Allied Health
Professions Officer

Prof Ian Young
Chief Scientific Advisor



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

HSS(MD) 51/2022

BY EMAIL

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/SPPG/HSC Trusts/
NIAS

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

OOHs Medical Managers *(for onward distribution to staff)*

RQIA (for onward circulation to independent sector
health and social care providers)

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Our Ref: HSS(MD) 51/2022

Date: 9 November 2022

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST

Dear Colleagues

**LETTER TO ALL FRONTLINE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKERS -
ENCOURAGING EVERYONE TO BE VACCINATED FOR INFLUENZA AND
COVID-19 THIS AUTUMN / WINTER**

Firstly, we would like to express our sincere thanks to every health and social care worker across Northern Ireland for the dedication and commitment you have demonstrated while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and as we continue to rebuild our health and social care services.

Achieving a high uptake of both the influenza vaccination and COVID-19 vaccination is an important priority for our Health and Social Care (HSC) system this coming autumn as vaccination remains one of the key drivers in reducing hospitalisations and fighting the spread of infections within our health and care settings.

As you are aware, seasonal influenza and COVID-19 viruses have the potential to add substantially to the winter pressures usually faced by the HSC. 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 shows that the uptake by our frontline health and social care workers of both vaccinations to date is low.

As health and social care workers, we all have a shared professional responsibility to take appropriate steps to protect our patients' health and the health of the public. By being vaccinated yourself (unless exempt) and endorsing both influenza vaccination and COVID-19 vaccination among your colleagues, you will help 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. Frontline health and social care workers were singled out by JCVI to be included in the autumn COVID-19 booster programme. Therefore, it is essential that we set an example to the public and take 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 more important than ever 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 still 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 trust that you are conveying this important message to encourage vaccination uptake across your respective organisations.

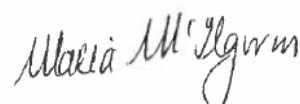
Yours sincerely



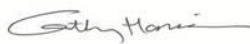
Prof Sir Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer



Aine Morrison
Chief Social Work
Officer/Deputy Secretary



Maria McIlgorm
Chief Nursing Officer



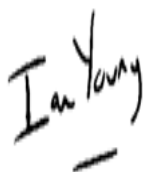
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Circulation List

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
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency
Assistant Director of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, SPPG (*for onward distribution to Community Pharmacies*)
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Director of Social Care and Children, SPPG
Family Practitioner Service Leads, SPPG (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)
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Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)
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RQIA (*for onward transmission to all independent providers including independent hospitals*)
Joe Brogan, Assistant Director, Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) (*for onward distribution to SPPG Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team and community pharmacists*)
Regional Medicines Information Service, Belfast HSC Trust
Regional Pharmaceutical Procurement Service, Northern HSC Trust
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Raymond Curran, Head of Ophthalmic Services, SPPG (*for distribution to Community Optometrists*)
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Louise McMahon, Director of Integrated Care, SPPG

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>