

Report of Director of Public Health

Report to Executive Board

Date: 18 November 2020

Subject: The National Flu Immunisation Programme 2020 to 2021

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

1. Main issues

- Influenza (flu) prevention is a vital element of wider proactive public health actions during winter to protect the vulnerable.
- In light of the risk of influenza and COVID-19 co-circulating this winter, and the risk of serious illness for people who are infected with both; the national influenza immunisation programme and its effective local implementation will be absolutely essential to protecting vulnerable people and supporting the resilience of the health and care system over this period.
- Delivery of this year’s National Flu Immunisation Programme 2020 to 2021 (Appendix A), the most extensive in history, will be particularly challenging given the current COVID-19 pandemic and will require, more than ever before, a collaborative city wide approach and response.
- The National Influenza Programme 2020 to 2021 has been expanded this year so more than an extra 100,000 people in Leeds will be eligible for the vaccine in Leeds, the expanded cohort includes:
 - Household contacts of those on the NHS Shielded Patient List
 - Children of school Year 7 age
 - Health and social care workers employed through Direct Payment
 - 50-64 year old age group subject to vaccine supply

- NHS Leeds CCG have led the development of a comprehensive implementation plan, the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan (Appendix B). The aim of this plan is to deliver on the increase in the cohort of eligibility and ensure effective uptake of the influenza vaccination with support from partners, including Leeds City Council's Public Health and Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
- The leadership, learning and effective citywide approach that influenced and enabled the development of the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan will inform the COVID-19 vaccine delivery programme. Leeds City Council and its Public Health are already fully engaged in the development of this programme.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan, led by NHS Leeds CCG, contributes to the wider proactive, preventative winter plan for the city and supports the council's role in improving health and reducing health inequalities as set out in the Leeds Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- There is strong alignment between the Best Council Plan's elements of Health & Wellbeing, Age-Friendly Leeds and Child Friendly City and the successful delivery of the NHS Leeds CCG Flu Plan. The linked Plans are key drivers in protecting vulnerable people and supporting the resilience of the health and care system.

3. Resource Implications

- There are no extra or immediate resource implications. However, there has been a reorientation of Public Health staff to provide extra capacity to the influenza agenda due to Health Protection's focus on COVID-19 and an additional resource (£20K) from Adults and Health to ensure care homes staff are effectively immunised.

Recommendations

The Executive Board are asked to:-

- Note the content of the National Influenza Immunisation Programme 2020 to 2021, in particular the expanded cohort.
- Note the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan and support its recommendations specifically in relation to ensuring equality of uptake amongst all key target groups and targeted support in areas of deprivation and in order to tackle health inequalities.
- Agree for an update on immunisation uptake in Leeds in light of COVID-19 and note the updated figures will be available in May 2021.
- Note the Acting Chief Officer for Health Protection and Sexual Health will take the lead on this.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Executive Board on the key actions taken in Leeds on the National Flu Immunisation Programme 2020 to 2021; to outline the

changes in the programme from previous years and to share progress on the development of the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan.

2. Background information

2.1 Actions to increase influenza vaccination uptake are part of a wider public health focus led by the Public Health Weather and Health Impact Group (WHIG). The Group ensures prevention plans are in place to protect against the hazardous effects of adverse weather on health. Each year the WHIG lead on a system wide winter prevention plan focussing on 3 key priorities:

- reducing infections and outbreaks including influenza
- reducing the hazardous impact of cold on vulnerable people,
- supporting people living with frailty

2.2 Like most of the country this is the first time Leeds has had a formalised plan as previously areas used national plans as their guide. The development of our first plan has been informed and enabled by our excellent track record of comprehensive city wide planning that has increased the uptake of influenza vaccine. The Leeds Influenza plan will continue to build on existing good practice in Leeds.

2.3 Leeds uptake rate 2019-2020 – Please note this is a CCG rate which will include GP surgeries with higher percentages and surgeries with room for improvement.

- Over 65 = 76% - the national target was 75%
- 6 months to 64 at risk = 44.1% (uptake ambition 75%)
- Pregnant women = 48.5% (uptake ambition 75%)
- 2 year old = 40.6% (uptake ambition 75%)
- 3 year old = 44.2% (uptake ambition 75%)
- Frontline health and social care workers = LYPFT 83%, LCH 80%, LTHT 80.5% (uptake ambition 100% offered)

2.4 As indicated by Public Health England (PHE) in May, service providers and employers should focus on achieving maximum uptake of the influenza vaccine in existing eligible groups, as they are most at risk from influenza or in the case of children transmission to other members of the community. This year's increase of the eligible cohort is part of the long term plan to increase coverage across all groups. Appendix A pages 9 and 10 provides the full list of those eligible in 2020/21 as part of the NHS funded flu vaccination programme. This includes individuals meeting existing influenza vaccination eligibility criteria.

2.5 Emerging evidence has indicated that people infected with both influenza and COVID-19 are more than twice as likely to die as someone with the new coronavirus alone.

2.6 An analysis by Public Health England (PHE) of cases from January to April 2020 found that people with the two viruses were more at risk of severe illness. Most cases of coinfection were in older people, and more than half of them died. (BMJ 2020; 370). This emerging evidence clearly suggests that coinfection with influenza and COVID-19 produces poor outcomes. As Influenza is currently vaccine

preventable, it is vitally important that Leeds optimises all opportunities to gain high coverage across all at risk groups.

- 2.7 Nationally there is enough flu vaccine for everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated before the flu season starts, which is usually in December. Flu vaccine is delivered to GP practices, pharmacies and other services in batches in the run up to and over flu season. This year, early demand for flu vaccine has been higher than usual. This has meant that while a lot of people have been able to get vaccinated, some people have not been able to get vaccinated straight away as some GP practices and pharmacies have used their early supplies of flu vaccine, due to the level of demand. If people are eligible and haven't been able to get their vaccination yet, they will still be able to have it before flu season starts.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan has been developed with full engagement and agreement from all members of the Leeds Health Protection Board. This has included consultation and scoping of intended outcomes, identification and mitigation of risks as well as monitoring and reporting of uptake rates (across key groups and in different geographical areas) and issues of concern.
- 3.2 Each year the NHS prepares for the unpredictability of influenza. For most healthy people, flu is an unpleasant but usually self-limiting disease with recovery generally within a week. However, there is a particular risk of severe illness from catching flu for:
- older people
 - the very young
 - pregnant women
 - those with underlying disease, such as chronic respiratory or cardiac disease
 - those who are immunosuppressed
- 3.3 The objective of the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan is to support NHS England in the local delivery of the National Influenza Programme by:
- Maximising the uptake for those people in the eligible cohorts for vaccination, including those in at-risk groups.
 - Raising awareness of the details of the national and local influenza vaccination programme across all partners.
 - Promoting the uptake of the influenza vaccination by those in the eligible cohorts by delivering local communications and awareness campaigns which support the national communications programme recognising the impact of COVID19.
 - Supporting providers to deliver the national influenza programme in the safest, most effective and efficient way possible supporting a partnership approach between providers and other stakeholders.
 - Reducing health inequalities by ensuring accessibility to the vaccination across all communities.

3.4 Governance

- 3.4.1 The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan is a live document to reflect emerging challenges and mitigation. The Plan has been developed with partners and approved and monitored by the Leeds Health Protection Board and NHS Leeds CCG governance arrangements.
- 3.4.2 The Leeds Flu Vaccination Operational Group chaired by PHE brings together partner organisations to oversee, monitor and provide direction in the delivery of a high-quality seasonal influenza programme to the local population with strategic oversight by the Primary Care Operational Group.
- 3.4.3 In addition to the Leeds Flu Operational Group there are a number of task and finish subgroups. These include a Primary Care Network (PCN) Lead Nurse Flu Group, Communications Task & Finish Group, Increasing Uptake in Pregnant Women, and Data Monitoring & Analysis Group. The sub-groups provide the opportunity to share good practice and ensure collective arrangements and monitoring updates. Further oversight is also provided through the Stabilisation and Reset Group (Health Silver).
- 3.5 This year as part of wider planning for winter, and subject to vaccine availability the vaccination will be additionally offered to:
- household contacts of those on the NHS Shielded Patient List. Specifically individuals who expect to share living accommodation with a shielded person on most days over the winter and therefore for whom continuing close contact is unavoidable.
 - children of school Year 7 age in secondary schools (those aged 11 on 31 August 2020).
 - health and social care workers employed through Direct Payment (personal budgets) and/or Personal Health Budgets, such as Personal Assistants, to deliver domiciliary care to patients and service users
 - PHE aim to further extend the vaccine programme in November and December to include the 50-64 year old age group subject to vaccine supply. This extension is being phased to allow the prioritisation of those in at risk groups first. The expanded cohort of 50-64 years olds has been identified as a challenge due to the vaccine supply currently available. We are planning to deliver through large scale hub clinics subject to there being sufficient supply.
- 3.6 Leeds City Council (Adults and Health) are again funding an additional vaccination programme of sessions delivered by Leeds Community Healthcare for Care home, hospice, supported living and domiciliary care. This programme offers a tailored vaccination option to health and social care workers in care homes, hospices, supported living and domiciliary care across the City. This will address issues of accessibility and contribute towards a substantial reduction of site closures, service capacity reductions due to staff shortages and increase the quality of care being provided. This programme is to boost uptake in this staff cohort and complement the existing occupational health and enhanced service delivery already in place through GP Practices and Pharmacies.
- 3.7 Community pharmacy programme - The partnership between GP practices, PCNs and Community Pharmacies is crucial to increasing uptake. PCNs have been encouraged to collaborate with their local pharmacies to maximise uptake of flu

vaccination and provide patient choice. To date the CCG has identified that the majority of GP Practices have engaged with their local pharmacy.

- 3.8 GP practices are working together as (PCN) Primary Care Networks to maximise uptake. For example, Wetherby PCN has held a drive through Flu clinic at Bramham Park and Seacroft PCN has held a drive through clinic at the old fire station in Gipton.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults has been briefed on the report on the 3rd November.
- 4.1.2 This report has been in consultation with Adults & Health's DLT.
- 4.1.3 The development of the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan has been in partnership and consultation with the membership of the Leeds Health Protection Board.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 It is essential to increase influenza vaccination levels for those who are living in the most deprived areas; older people, people with long term conditions and from BAME communities. The Plan is a significant development to ensure equitable uptake compared to the population as a whole and help protect those who are vulnerable and more at risk if they are to get COVID-19 and influenza. It will therefore require high quality, dedicated and culturally competent engagement with individuals, local communities, employers and faith groups.
- 4.2.2 Leeds has a continued commitment to focus on reducing health inequalities and ensuring equity of access to the flu vaccination programme across the City. Uptake will be monitored across the health system and any areas of low uptake will be addressed. Where areas of inequalities are identified, as a system the Plan promotes appropriate action is taken to address these barriers. This will include a focus on vaccination of BAME patients and also those with enhanced communication requirements.

From November a supply of inactivated influenza vaccine is expected to be made available to NHS providers of the children's influenza programme, for healthy children whose parents/guardians object to the porcine gelatine content of Fluenz® Tetra (LAIV). Arrangements for this supply have not yet been finalised and further details will be communicated as soon as they are available.

The CCG support practices to implement a plan to improve delivery of vaccinations to people with a learning disability. For example, adults with a learning disability a nasal spray can be used if the patient is needle phobic. Easy read communication is also being developed

Immunisation providers and partners will ensure they have robust plans in place for tackling health inequalities for all underserved groups to ensure equality of uptake.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 As a local authority and one of the largest employers in the city, it is important that Leeds City Council supports the national influenza vaccination programme and Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan. The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan supports the Best Council Plan's Health and Wellbeing ambition for Leeds to be the best city for health and wellbeing. The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan is evidence of a strong commitment to partnership working across health and care services to the shared vision in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan supports Age-friendly Leeds in promoting and delivering opportunities for older people to be healthy, active, included and respected. A large proportion of Leeds City Council's staff live in the city and also work in front-facing roles, thus potentially influencing both community and workplace transmission. In addition to the personal impact of influenza, there is also the costs in relation to sickness absence of those affected – both monetary and on the ability to deliver crucial services.

4.3.2 Climate Emergency

The spread of viral infections and diseases is linked to global warming and air pollution. Balancing influenza outbreak prevention and management with action on climate is complex with many challenges. Both require monitoring, robust analysis and communicating the urgency of action and simple advice on what to do. With influenza and infection outbreaks, including COVID-19, effective responses have shown the importance of step-change planning, providing quick, clear information across multiple platforms and robust local profiling and interpretation.

4.3.3 Health and Wellbeing partners in Leeds are aware for the need for even more vigorous action on the climate emergency to be proactive and alert for flu and infection outbreaks.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 The costs of vaccination to the eligible cohort is within NHS arrangements.

4.4.2 The costs of the Council's staff immunisation programme is within Health and Safety arrangements.

4.4.3 Leeds City Council (Adults and Health) are funding £20,000 for an additional vaccination programme delivered by Leeds Community Healthcare for health and social care staff in care home, Working Age Adults, hospice, supported living and domiciliary care.

4.4.4 It is important that the council spends money wisely and council's staff immunisation programme does not seek to replicate the national free vaccination programme or to provide vaccinations with a lower risk of workplace transmission. Therefore, Leeds City Council prioritise certain roles to receive a vaccination through the council's staff immunisation programme e.g. frontline health and care staff.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 There are no legal, or access to information implications arising from this report.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 There are no risks identified with the publication of the 'National flu immunisation programme 2020 to 2021'.
- 4.6.2 The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan is under the governance of NHS Leeds CCG.
- 4.6.3 The national ambition for uptake for all eligible groups is 75% and this poses some challenges for Leeds when comparing to 2019/20 achievement; with our areas of focus and improvement needing to be children, 'at risk' and pregnant women. The 'at risk' cohort includes:
- those aged from six months to less than 65 years of age, in a clinical risk group such as those with:
 - chronic (long-term) respiratory disease, such as severe asthma
 - chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or bronchitis
 - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - chronic kidney disease at stage three, four or five
 - chronic liver disease
 - chronic neurological disease, such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease,
 - learning disability
 - diabetes
 - splenic dysfunction or asplenia
 - a weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment)
 - morbidly obese (defined as BMI of 40 and above)
- 4.6.4 The programme last year was significantly hindered by vaccine supply delays. This year the vaccine will again be delivered in phases which will again impact on uptake levels. A further challenge this year is that immunisation will be by appointment scheduling due to Covid secure planning. However, plans are in place to minimise the risk to uptake rates
- 4.6.5 The Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan has identified a principle of "Making Every Contact Count" whereby if a health care professional can safely immunise an eligible patient during an existing consultation then that immunisation should be given. This principle is to reduce the number of patients attending other settings and make best use of available resources across the system.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 It is likely that influenza viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread this winter. Health and social care systems could be overwhelmed treating both patients with influenza and patients with COVID-19. This means having an influenza vaccine during 2020-2021 is more important than ever. While getting an influenza vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, there are many important benefits, such as:

Influenza vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalisation, and death.

Having an influenza vaccine can also save healthcare resources for the care of patients with COVID-19.

- 5.2 Through the collaboration and innovative practices being adopted by partners and immunisation providers the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan is providing structure and assurance for delivering the ambitions set out nationally. The largest risks relate to COVID-19, potential sickness impact on staffing, the extended cohort and vaccine availability and would urge that partners continue to work and monitor performance through our existing governance structure and provide additional support locally where we identify any issues or challenges throughout the campaign.

6. Recommendations

The Executive Board are asked to:-

- Note the content of the National Influenza Immunisation Programme 2020 to 2021, in particular the expanded cohort.
- Note the Leeds Seasonal Flu Vaccination Plan and support its recommendations specifically in relation to ensuring equality of uptake amongst all key target groups and targeted support in areas of deprivation and in order to tackle health inequalities.
- Agree for an update on immunisation uptake in Leeds in light of COVID-19 and note the updated figures will be available in May 2021.
- Note the Acting Chief Officer for Health Protection and Sexual Health will take the lead on this.

7. Background documents¹

None.

8. Appendices

Appendix A

The national flu immunisation programme 2020 to 2021- update 5
August 2020, Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England.
Groups included in the national flu immunisation programme (pages 9 and 10).

Appendix B

Leeds Seasonal Flu Delivery Plan 2020-21.

Appendix C

Equality Assessment.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.