



Department of Health

Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

18 October 2017

The Care Provider Alliance
c/o United Kingdom Homecare Association
Sutton Business Centre
Restmor Way
Wallington
SM6 7AH

Seasonal influenza vaccination for care workers in the independent care sector

We are writing to you in your role as Chair of The Care Provider Alliance. Thank you for your letter of 20 September highlighting the vital role care workers in the independent and voluntary sector play in delivering care.

We are pleased to confirm that last week NHS England announced that for this winter they will expand the GP and national pharmacy influenza vaccination service so that paid care workers in the independent and voluntary social care sector are also able to access the flu vaccine via local GPs and pharmacies free of charge. This will supplement the existing responsibility of employers of these staff to ensure that they are vaccinated.

Flu immunisation should be provided to social care staff employed in England by a registered residential care home, registered nursing home or registered domiciliary care provider who are directly involved in the care of vulnerable patients/clients who are at increased risk of exposure to influenza, as identified in the Seasonal Influenza Directed Enhanced Service and the Green Book.

As you will know, flu is a serious illness in vulnerable patients, potentially causing deaths and complications such as pneumonia. The virus can cause severe disruption in communities, care homes, nursing homes, and hospitals. Last week's announcement recognises the vital role these staff play in caring for our most vulnerable patients and how important it is they do not contract or pass on influenza.

Flu immunisation remains the most effective method to help protect against infection. As set out in the Green Book: 'Healthcare workers have a duty of care towards their patients, which includes taking reasonable precautions to protect them from communicable diseases'. Immunisation of health and social care workers in direct contact with

patients/clients both protects them and reduces the transmission of influenza within health and social care premises. The vaccination of those working in the independent care sector this winter will therefore help prevent the potential spread of the virus to some of the most vulnerable in our communities, as well as help reduce pressure on wider NHS and social care services at a time when we need them most.

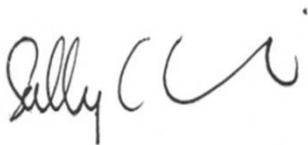
As a key leader in your sector, please will you cascade this letter to the 11 main national care associations you represent? This will enable it to reach the owners and managers of all registered social care providers, covering residential care homes, nursing homes and home care, thereby inform them of this important development. NHS England will be confirming the mechanism for how care workers access the new free service shortly.

All social care providers, nursing homes, residential care homes and domiciliary care providers should ensure any of their staff directly involved in delivering care are offered immunisation, either as part of their existing occupational health responsibilities, or the expanded GP and national pharmacy service when arrangements for this are confirmed. This will supplement the existing responsibility of employers of these staff to ensure that they are vaccinated and we would urge you to ensure arrangements already in place to vaccinate care workers continue. The Department of Health has also funded NHS Employers to extend the successful flu fighter campaign to support the care home sector this winter.

We would therefore be most grateful if you could use your communication channels and networks to share this announcement and continue to encourage vaccination uptake.

Once again, thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

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| PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES | PROFESSOR JANE CUMMINGS | LYN ROMEO |
| CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER | CHIEF NURSING OFFICER FOR ENGLAND | CHIEF SOCIAL WORKER FOR ADULTS |

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