

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) 39/2024

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**

Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 9052 0563

Email: cmooffice@health-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: HSS (MD) 39/2024

Date: 8 November 2024

Dear Colleagues

**THE 2024/25 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 in providing Health and Social Care services.

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

Working for a Healthier People

As you are aware, 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 whilst also reducing the chances of passing these infections on to others.

During this autumn's influenza vaccination programme the offer of vaccination includes all health and social care staff as set out in [HSS\(MD\) 35/2024](#).

Although no longer a formal recommendation from the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations, this autumn there continues to be an offer of COVID-19 vaccination to frontline health and social care workers, and staff working in care homes for older adults.

Public Health Agency (PHA) data from the 2023/24 programme shows that the overall uptake rate by HSCWs was 21.5% for influenza and 16.6% for COVID-19. This showed a significant drop from 37.5% for influenza and 36.3% for COVID-19 achieved in 2022/23.

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. Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine will help to directly protect you against this disease.

It is important 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.

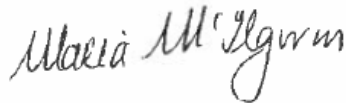
In the context of the current pressures facing our workforce, it is essential that we focus on ensuring that staff are given the best available protection. Therefore, we are actively seeking your support and help to promote our influenza and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.

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>

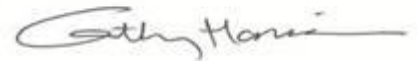
Yours sincerely



Prof Sir Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer



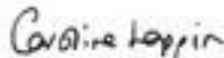
Maria McIlgorm
Chief Nursing Officer
And on behalf of Chief Allied
Health Professionals



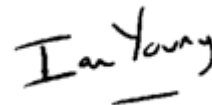
Prof Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer



Aine Morrison
Chief Social Worker



Caroline Lappin
Chief Dental Officer



Prof Ian Young
Chief Scientific Advisor

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*)
Directors of Pharmacy HSC Trusts
Director of Social Care and Children, SPPG
Family Practitioner Service Leads, SPPG (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians and School Medical Leads*)
Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)
Directors of Children's Services, HSC Trusts
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
Professor Donna Fitzsimons, Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery QUB
Professor Neal Cook, Head of School of Nursing, Ulster University
Heather Finlay, CEC
Maurice Devine, Open University
Professor Paul McCarron, Head of School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Ulster University
Professor Gavin Andrews, Head of School, School of Pharmacy, QUB
Postgraduate Pharmacy Dean, NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development, QUB
Michael Donaldson, Head of Dental Services, SPPG (*for distribution to all General Dental Practitioners*)
Raymond Curran, Head of Ophthalmic Services, SPPG (*for distribution to Community Optometrists*)
Trade Union Side
Clinical Advisory Team
Louise McMahan, Director of Integrated Care, SPPG
Dr Camille Harron, NIMDTA
Prof Pascal McKeown, QUB
Prof Alan Smyth, QUB
Prof Louise Dubras, Ulster University

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>