

Flu

It's time for all care home, supported living and other social care staff to get their free flu vaccination

Seasonal influenza (flu) is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. The illness ranges in severity and can sometimes lead to hospitalization and death.

Anyone can catch flu, even healthy people, and serious flu-related problems can happen to anyone at any age. Some people are at higher risk of developing serious complications if they become sick with flu. High risk groups include the very young, the elderly, pregnant women, health workers and those with serious medical conditions.

Flu symptoms come on very quickly and can include:

- a sudden high temperature
- an aching body
- feeling tired or exhausted
- a dry cough
- a sore throat
- a headache
- difficulty sleeping
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea or tummy pain
- feeling sick and being sick

Symptoms are similar for children, but they can also get pain in their ears and appear less active.

How to avoid getting flu

The best way to avoid getting flu is to get the flu vaccine. Flu vaccines are safe and effective. They're offered every year on the NHS to help protect people at risk of flu and its complications.

The best time to have a flu vaccine is in the autumn before flu starts spreading. But you can get vaccinated at any time throughout the winter months.

Who is eligible for a free flu vaccine?

People who are eligible for a free flu vaccination from 1st September 2023 include:

- those aged 65 years and over
- those aged 6 months to under 65 years in clinical risk groups (as defined by the [Green Book, chapter 19 \(Influenza\)](#))
- pregnant women
- all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2023
- primary school aged children (from Reception to Year 6)
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers in receipt of carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person
- close contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- frontline workers in a social care setting without an employer led occupational health scheme, including those working for a registered residential care or nursing home
- registered domiciliary care providers, voluntary managed hospice providers and those who are employed by those who receive direct payments (personal budgets) or Personal Health budgets, such as Personal Assistants

All social care staff are advised to get a flu vaccination to protect themselves, friends and family members, colleagues, and the people they care for.

Cumberland Council's IPC team spent some time talking to care home managers about the flu vaccination as part of some research earlier this year.

One of the questions the IPC team asked was: **Why did you prioritise the flu vaccination?**

Here are just a few of the answers the IPC team received.

The home is small in size and we wanted to reduce the risk of flu spreading fast.

It was a no brainer!

Staff were conscious that they had some older, vulnerable colleagues and wanted to protect them.

It's the staff's job to keep residents safe. Residents have the right to be kept safe in their own home. Staff see vaccination as part of this.

To protect the residents, each other and family.

Staff would rather be at work than off sick.

IPC Advice, Support, Information & Resources:

- Advice, support, and information for care home staff on the management of all infections: E.g., Covid 19; MRSA; CDI; *E. coli*; Scabies
- Advice & support to undertake a range of care home IPC audits to national standard.
- Support safe hospital discharge for residents who have been treated for an infection.
- IPC annual training programme (2023/24) & bespoke IPC courses for care home managers, clinical staff, IPC link champions, care and domestic staff.
- Advice & support on new builds & extensions to meet IPC specifications.

A wide range of excellent **IPC policies and procedures** are available to help you to manage infections in your care homes. Please follow the link below: [Care Services Cumberland - Policies and Procedures | Cumbria County Council](#)

Training Dates for Your Diary

September 2023

- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 28th September 10am-11.30am. For all staff in the setting. Please [Click here to join the meeting](#)

October 2023

Webinars

- Oral hygiene webinar 11th October 2023 2pm-3.30pm for all staff in the setting. Please [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- AMR (Antimicrobial resistance) webinar 24th October 2023 2pm-3:30pm for all staff in the setting. Please [Click here to join the meeting](#)