Communications toolkit for use by NHS organisations’ communication teams

Important: this toolkit is not a media pack for distribution to journalists. It is designed for NHS communication teams only and gives you everything you need to perform your own local/regional media work.
The NHS Employers organisation is running the national NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign this year on behalf of the Social Partnership Forum.

The campaign aims to increase staff flu vaccinations across England because vaccinations are currently much lower than they could be. This is important both to prevent the spread of flu amongst staff, their families and their patients, as well as reducing staff sickness rates.

The campaign materials (posters etc) will be very visible within NHS organisations from early in September 2011 and throughout the flu season.

Your local flu lead and some of your senior managers will already be aware of this campaign, but now we need your help to support the campaign through your local media.

Our common sense campaign benefits patients and staff, so it reflects well on your organisation to be involved.

This communications toolkit aims to do the hard work for you, giving you all the facts and some template materials to work with.

We hope you are able to use it as appropriate for your organisation, whether promoting this important campaign in your local media or placing articles on your internal and external websites.

You can find out more on our campaign website at: www.nhsemployers.org/flu or contact the flu fighters hotline for flu leads on 0844 334 5252.

This toolkit contains:

- Key messages
- Useful facts
- Directions to useful source documents
- Flu myths
- Sample/template press release for your use
- Sample/template articles for your internal and external web sites
- Graphics and photography
- Contact details
The national NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign aims to increase uptake of staff seasonal flu vaccinations throughout the NHS in England. It also aims to embed a cultural shift towards it being considered standard to receive these vaccinations.

The NHS Employers organisation was asked to coordinate this national NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign by the Social Partnership Forum in partnership with the health trade unions and the Department of Health.

The NHS has a million front-line staff, but only 34.7 per cent of them were vaccinated against seasonal flu for 2010/11. Vaccination rates have improved across all front-line staff groups since the previous year, but this campaign aims for more significant change.¹

The NHS already faces challenges around maintaining its workforce during times of increased sickness, so it is vital to reduce the impact of flu to protect patient care.

Only comprehensive staff vaccinations can almost eliminate the risk of flu spreading from staff to colleagues, their families and their patients, for whom flu can be fatal in some cases.

Staff vaccinations can help the NHS achieve its goal to find £15–£20 billion in efficiency savings by reducing the cost of sickness absence. In February 2011 the Audit Commission reported that the estimated direct cost of sickness absence was £1.3 billion to NHS trusts and foundation trusts and £330 million to primary care trusts, even before adding the additional cost of replacing them with bank or temporary agency staff.

It is essential that the many unhelpful myths about the flu vaccine are dispelled because they deter people from being vaccinated and harm public health. This campaign aims to achieve this, while recognising how hard it is to change such beliefs. One example is the myth that there is a risk to pregnant women from taking the vaccine, whereas in fact it is beneficial.

Flu is not just dangerous to older people. People aged between 15 and 64 were most affected by flu last season, and 70 per cent of deaths (415) occurred in that age group.

Between 12 September 2010 and 4 May 2011 a total of 602 confirmed fatal flu cases from across the UK were reported to the Health Protection Agency, while wider flu-related deaths are estimated to be far higher.

NHS staff and managers are passionate about their work and patient care, so we are confident that they will respond well to this campaign.

Learn why staff vaccinations are so important and receive the latest news about the campaign by following it at www.nhsemployers.org/flu, or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) or Twitter (@nhsflufighter).

¹ Department of Health published figures: ‘Seasonal influenza vaccine uptake amongst front-line healthcare workers (HCWs) in England Winter season 2010/11’. 359,080 staff were vaccinated out of the 1,035,219 healthcare workers who give ‘direct patient care’.

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**Key messages**

- The national NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign aims to increase uptake of staff seasonal flu vaccinations throughout the NHS in England.
- The NHS Employers organisation was asked to coordinate this campaign.
- Staff vaccinations can help reduce the cost of sickness absence.
- It is essential to dispel myths about the flu vaccine.
- Flu can be fatal, even for people aged 15-64.
- Between 12 September 2010 and 4 May 2011, 602 confirmed fatal flu cases were reported.
- NHS staff and managers are passionate about their work and patient care.

Learn why staff vaccinations are so important and receive the latest news about the campaign by following it at www.nhsemployers.org/flu, or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) or Twitter (@nhsflufighter).
Useful facts

- Front-line health worker seasonal flu vaccinations last winter increased to 34.7 per cent, up from 26.4 per cent during the previous winter. (From the Department of Health)

- 1,035,000 staff were considered to be ‘front-line’ among the 1.3 million total NHS staff. (From the Department of Health)

- The North West Strategic Health Authority achieved the highest uptake of all strategic health authorities last winter, achieving 51.4 per cent, and has played a significant role in informing this campaign. You can view your own organisation’s uptake here: www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_127117.pdf

- The Boorman Review said that £555 million could be saved if current NHS staff absence rates were reduced by a third through improvements to health and well-being.

- NHS staff in England spent an average of 4.24 per cent of their working days off sick between January and March 2011, falling from 4.48 per cent for the same period in 2010. Between October and December 2010 the average was 4.47 per cent, falling from 4.64 per cent for the same period in 2009. This refers to any sickness absence, not only flu. (From the NHS Information Centre)

- The following groups are identified as ‘at risk’ from seasonal flu (and can get free jabs if they are NHS patients):
  - pregnant women
  - anyone with a long-term condition, including diabetes, asthma, kidney disease or heart or chest problems
  - people undergoing medical treatment who may have a compromised immune system
  - people with a neurological condition such as multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
  - everyone over the age of 65.

- The Department of Health reports this year that a snapshot survey of the public (not just staff) in 2008 found that, of those eligible people who don’t have the jab:
  - 32 per cent said it was because they are fit and healthy
  - 27 per cent said they don’t feel at risk
  - 14 per cent didn’t know they were eligible
  - 13 per cent said they rarely get flu
  - 9 per cent have never given it a thought
  - 9 per cent said they are too young to get the jab
  - 6 per cent said they won’t get round to it
  - 6 per cent said they don’t like needles
  - 4 per cent said they don’t believe the flu jab works.
These are excellent sources of information and statistics which you might find useful when preparing your communications activities.


- For Department of Health information on front-line staff vaccine uptake in 2009/10, including by individual trusts and by staff groups: [www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_121011](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_121011)

- For NHS Information Centre information on staff sickness, including by staff group or down to individual trusts (note that this does not describe whether or not flu was the cause): [www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/workforce/sickness-absence](http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/workforce/sickness-absence)

- For Health Protection Agency information about the impact and fatalities resulting from flu, although this does not say which were NHS staff: [www.hpa.org.uk/Topics İnfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza/](http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics İnfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza/)

You may find it useful to compare your sickness absence rates with your staff uptake rates, both of which are available using the above links. They may reveal encouraging or concerning trends in your trust that you will want to be aware of.
Myths that must be ‘busted’

We are highlighting all of these myths in materials that are being given to staff throughout England.

**Myth: Flu is a mild illness so I don’t need to be vaccinated**
For the majority of people who catch it, flu is simply unpleasant. For some, however, it is much more serious. Globally, seasonal flu accounts for about three to five million causes of severe illness annually and between 250,000 and 500,000 deaths.

**Myth: Health professionals who have never had the flu don’t really need the vaccine**
Vaccination isn’t just about keeping you safe and well, it’s about protecting your colleagues, family or patients who may be more susceptible to the virus. Just because you’ve not had the flu before doesn’t mean you won’t get it this year or pass it on. You can carry and pass the virus on to others without having any symptoms yourself.

**Myth: The side effects of the vaccination are really bad**
For the most part, seasonal flu vaccine side effects are mild or often non-existent. They are usually a slight soreness around the site of the injection and occasionally some aching of muscles or a slightly raised temperature. These symptoms should go away after a couple of days and are a lot less serious than actually having flu.

**Myth: I’ve had the flu jab before so I don’t need it again**
People should be vaccinated against seasonal flu every year. We don’t know how long last year’s vaccination will last and for this reason we strongly recommend that even if you were vaccinated last year, you should be vaccinated again this year.

**Myth: Healthy people shouldn’t be concerned about getting seasonal flu**
The reason that free flu jabs are offered to all staff is because anyone can pick up the virus. If you can catch it, you can pass it on to those who are at more risk of serious illness. This could include your friends, family, patients or work colleagues. Generally, 15–20 per cent of the population gets flu each year – healthy people included.

**Myth: The flu jab isn’t safe**
The risk of having a serious (anaphylactic) reaction to the seasonal flu vaccine is less than one in a million. It is much less than the risk of getting seriously ill from having the flu itself.

The only people who should not have the vaccine are those who have a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of seasonal flu vaccine or to any part of the vaccine. If you have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to hens’ eggs, you may still be able to be vaccinated, but under specialist clinical supervision, or have an egg-free flu vaccine.

**Myth: The flu jab can give you the flu**
It is impossible to get flu from the having the flu jab. This is because the vaccine doesn’t contain any live viruses. A very small number of people experience side effects which are similar to those of the flu, such as aching muscles, but this is simply your immune system responding to what it thinks is an attack from flu.
**Myth:** It hasn’t been properly tested
The seasonal flu vaccine is one of the safest vaccines in the world and is given to millions of people in the UK each year. The specific strains of flu that are included may change from one year to the next but that does not affect the safety of the vaccine or change it in any other way.

**Myth:** I’ve heard the vaccine doesn’t work
Studies show that trivalent seasonal influenza vaccines give about 70 to 80 per cent protection to healthy adults against infection by influenza virus strains that are well matched with those in the vaccine. This is thanks to the work of the World Health Organization and others who help ensure the closest possible match between the vaccine and circulating flu strains.

**Myth:** I can’t have the jab because I’m pregnant
Pregnant women should have the flu vaccination at any stage of their pregnancy. Importantly, having the vaccination when pregnant helps protect their baby from flu over the first few months of life.

**Myth:** I had a reaction to the swine flu jab so can’t have the seasonal flu jab
Almost everybody can have the vaccine, but you should not be vaccinated if you have had a serious allergy to the seasonal flu vaccine in the past. If you have a serious allergy to hens’ eggs, you can still be vaccinated under specialist clinical supervision, or have an egg-free flu vaccine.

**Myth:** You’re infectious after having the jab, so you shouldn’t have close contact with anyone for a period of time after you’re immunised
The vaccine won’t make you infectious to anyone, so it’s safe to carry on as normal.
Press release template
for you to adjust and send to local media

This is only a sample of what you could send. The areas in orange indicate segments that would need to be changed, but you are welcome to consider other changes.

Press Release

FLU FACES A FIGHT IN STOCKWOOD THIS WINTER

Stockwood NHS Trust participates in largest ever campaign to get NHS staff vaccinated

Stockwood’s healthcare will get a shot in the arm this year - quite literally - because Stockwood NHS Trust is joining a major national campaign to get more NHS staff vaccinated against seasonal flu.

The campaign aims to get as many staff vaccinated as possible to protect their patients, as well as their colleagues and family. It also aims to embed a cultural change so that these vaccinations become seen as routine.

Only about a third of all front-line NHS staff in England (34.7 per cent) had their seasonal flu jabs last year and this needs to increase.


The NHS loses over 4 per cent of its staff’s working days because of sickness absence. Staff are asked not to come into work if they are sick if they risk spreading disease to colleagues or vulnerable patients. Receiving the vaccination will increase the number of staff who are able to stay at work.

Norma Healthy, Chief Executive of Stockwood NHS Trust, said:

“NHS staff in Stockwood are passionate about patient care and I am very confident we will see them queuing up for vaccinations as this campaign builds momentum. Unfortunately there are so many universal myths about vaccinations that even NHS staff can be deterred from having them, so our priority will be to bust those myths. These are challenging times for the NHS but this staff vaccination programme is one simple, common-sense and efficient way to keep improving healthcare.”

This National NHS Staff Seasonal Flu Vaccination Campaign and all its informative materials are provided for Stockwood NHS Trust by the not-for-profit NHS Employers organisation. NHS Employers was asked to run this first ever national staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign by the Social Partnership Forum, which brings together NHS employers, trade unions and the Department of Health to discuss, debate and involve partners in the development and implementation of the workforce implications of policy.
Dean Royles, director of the NHS Employers organisations, said:

“We are delighted to have the support of ORGANISATION for this staff flu vaccination campaign. Everything the NHS does is about delivering excellent patient care and it is easy to forget that staff must look after their own health too. We hope to achieve a significant increase on uptake of jabs in previous years and leave flu with far fewer opportunities to spread. We wish ORGANISATION every success in this important effort to protect patients and staff this winter.”

Most NHS staff are less at-risk of serious harm from flu than their patients, who often have chronic illnesses or are over 65 years old. However staff themselves are still vulnerable. Seventy per cent of fatal influenza cases occurred among people aged between 15 and 64 last winter - a total of 415 confirmed cases[3].

Flu vaccinations are provided to staff without charge whereas members of the public seeking flu vaccinations must check to see if they are in the appropriate risk groups. Some of the many myths about seasonal flu vaccination that we aim to ‘bust’ include:

- ‘Healthy people shouldn’t be concerned about getting seasonal flu’. In fact, the reason that free flu jabs are offered to staff is because anyone can pick up the virus. If you can catch it, you can pass it on to those who are at more risk of serious illness. This could include your friends, family, patients or work colleagues. Generally, 15–20 per cent of the population gets flu each year – healthy people included.

- ‘The side effects of the vaccination are really bad’. In fact, for the most part, seasonal flu vaccine side effects are mild or often non-existent. They are usually a slight soreness around the site of the injection and occasionally some aching of muscles or a slightly raised temperature. These symptoms should go away after a couple of days and are a lot less serious than actually having flu.

- ‘The flu jab isn’t safe’. The risk of having a serious (anaphylactic) reaction to the seasonal flu vaccine is less than one in a million. It is much less than the risk of getting seriously ill from having the flu itself.

The only people who should not have the vaccine are those who have a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of seasonal flu vaccine or to any part of the vaccine. If you have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to hens’ eggs, you may still be able to be vaccinated, but under specialist clinical supervision, or have an egg-free flu vaccine.

- ‘The flu jab can give you the flu’. In fact, it is impossible to get flu from the having the flu jab. This is because the vaccine doesn’t contain any live viruses. A very small number of people experience side effects which are similar to those of the flu, such as aching muscles, but this is simply your immune system responding to what it thinks is an attack from flu.

- ‘I can’t have the jab because I’m pregnant’. In fact, pregnant women should have the flu vaccination at any stage of their pregnancy. Importantly, having the vaccination when pregnant helps protect their baby from flu over the first few months of life.

Anyone can learn why staff vaccinations are important and receive the latest news by following the campaign on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) or Twitter (@nhsflufighter).

ENDS

Notes for editors:

- Department of Health published figures: ‘Seasonal Flu Vaccine Uptake 2010/11 (Frontline Healthcare Workers - All Trusts)’. 359,080 staff were vaccinated out of the 1,035,219 healthcare
workers who give 'direct patient care'.


● More information about the National NHS Staff Seasonal Flu Vaccination Campaign is available at: http://www.nhsemployers.org/flu.

● YOUR ORGANISATION’S DETAILS

● The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. See www.nhsemployers.org for more information.

Contact details:

[INSERT CONTACT DETAILS HERE]
XXX XXXXX NHS Trust participates in largest ever campaign to get NHS staff vaccinated

Stockwood's healthcare will get a shot in the arm this year - quite literally - because Stockwood NHS Trust is joining a major national campaign to get more NHS staff vaccinated against seasonal flu.

The campaign aims to increase NHS staff vaccination uptake across England while also embedding a cultural change so that these vaccinations become seen as routine.

Vaccinations are important for protecting staff, their families and their patients, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to flu. Vaccinations also reduce sickness absence during the busy winter period and help reduce the costs associated with absence.

Only about a third of all front-line NHS staff in England (34.7 per cent) had their seasonal flu jabs last year and this needs to increase.

We will work with staff to make it as quick and easy as possible for them to receive vaccinations and this can be a challenge, for example for staff who spend all their time working out in the community.

This National NHS Staff Seasonal Flu Vaccination Campaign is led by the NHS Employers organisation and has provided a wealth of information for our staff. NHS Employers was asked to run this first ever national staff flu vaccination campaign by the Social Partnership Forum, in partnership with the health trade unions and the Department of Health.

Although this campaign is about staff vaccinations, the NHS can of course also offer vaccinations to patients. Non-staff members of the public who can get the flu jab free of charge on the NHS include:

- pregnant women;
- anyone with a long term condition including diabetes, asthma, kidney disease or heart or chest problems;
- people undergoing medical treatment who may have a compromised immune system;
- people with a neurological condition such as multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy; and everyone over the age of 65.

More information is available at www.nhsemployers.org/flu and also on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) and Twitter (@nhsflufighter).
Inject even more into patient care - arrange your flu vaccination now!

This year we are participating in the first ever National NHS Staff Seasonal Flu Vaccination Campaign. You have probably seen the Lego men everywhere, encouraging you to become a ‘Flu Fighter’ and ask occupational health for a jab.

We hope you find the campaign compelling because it really is a great idea to get vaccinated. We all need to pull together and do our very best to stop flu spreading among staff, our families and our patients.

With your support we hope to become one of the most vaccinated trusts in England.

Our occupational health officers and colleagues will do their very best to support you when you ask to be vaccinated. We’ll try to make it as swift as possible, so it does not take up much of your time.

Please take the time to read their information about staff vaccinations, especially the ‘mythbusting’ items that may help to reassure you if you have any concerns. For example, neither being pregnant nor having been vaccinated a year ago should stop you from having a vaccination this year. Also 70 per cent of fatal influenza cases occurred among people aged between 15 and 64 last season, whereas you might have expected more of these tragic deaths to be among older people.

Only a third of front-line NHS staff were vaccinated last year and we strongly believe this should increase. It isn’t only front-line staff who should be considering this and, for example, flu has caused problems with a significant outbreak in the ambulance service’s call centre.

So please help give our Trust a ‘shot in the arm’ this year and request your vaccination today at XXXXXXXCONTACT DETAILSXXXXXXXX

More information is available at www.nhsemployers.org/flu and also on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) and Twitter (@nhsflufighter).
The campaign materials you will see within your organisation utilise various images, both of Lego toys and virus ‘splats’. Our agreement with Lego only extends to us using their image internally in staff-facing environments, therefore we ask you not to issue the Lego imagery to media or to place it on public-facing web pages or in any public areas.

Copies of these materials can be downloaded from the flufighter website www.nhsemployers.org/flu

Lapel badges

A 5 leaflet

A 4 poster

Web Banners

Getting started guide

PowerPoint

Graphics and photography

Not funny!

Become a flu fighter and protect yourself, your family and your patients by getting a flu jab. Don’t delay, book your flu jab early.

Not funny!

I’m a flufighter

I’m a flufighter

I’m a flufighter

I’m a flufighter

Funny what some people believe, like thinking that the flu vaccine can give you the flu. It can’t, because it doesn’t contain the live virus.

Protect yourself, your family and your patients by getting a flu jab. Don’t delay, book your flu jab early.

Contact your occupational health team today.

This guide sets out what you need to do now to ensure that your campaign over the autumn and winter is successful. It will allow you to hit the ground running when national campaign materials are sent to you early in September 2011.

Partnership working at all levels is important to ensure that your campaign is a success. Involving your local staff side representatives during this planning stage is vital, as well as during the delivery of the campaign itself.

We hope you find this simple checklist useful for the first couple of months of your campaign. You can keep in touch with the development of the national campaign on our website at www.nhsemployers.org/flu

Keep an eye out for our activities on twitter at www.twitter.com/nhsflufighter, and on Linked-in and Facebook over the next few weeks.

Your staff-facing seasonal flu vaccination campaign starts now.

A5 leaflet

A4 poster

Lapel badges

Web Banners

Getting started guide

PowerPoint
This toolkit aims to give you all the resources you need to resolve media enquiries locally. However, we remain keen to support you if you have a question. Your contact is:

**Flu fighter hotline**
0844 334 5252