Flu fighter communications toolkit – for use by communications teams in NHS organisations

National NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign
2012/13
The NHS Employers organisation is running the national NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign for the second year running, on behalf of the Social Partnership Forum.

The campaign aims to increase uptake of the seasonal flu vaccine among NHS frontline healthcare workers across England. This is important in preventing the spread of flu among staff, their families and their patients, as well as reducing staff sickness rates.

The flu fighter campaign materials (posters and so on) will be very visible within NHS organisations from early in September 2012 and throughout the flu season.

Your flu lead and some of your senior managers will already be aware of the flu fighter campaign, but we need your support in broadcasting the importance of NHS staff being vaccinated against flu in your local media.

We recommend that your communications team form links with human resources, occupational health, and any other department that may be involved in the promotion and delivery of the flu vaccine.

Our common sense campaign benefits both patients and staff, so it reflects well on your organisation to be involved. We need your help to support the campaign through your internal and external channels; this 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 this to support your organisation in the fight against flu, 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 fighter team at flufighter@nhsemployers.org or on 0844 334 5252.

You can follow and support the campaign digitally by joining the conversation on twitter @NHSFlufighter.

This toolkit contains:

- key messages and facts
- directions to useful source documents
- flu facts
- sample/template press release for your use
- sample/template articles for your internal and external websites
- 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 frontline staff, but only 45 per cent of them were vaccinated against seasonal flu for 2011/12. Vaccination rates have improved since the previous year, but this campaign aims for further significant change.

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, before adding the cost of replacing them with bank or temporary agency staff.

It is essential that the 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.

The Boorman Review estimated that £555 million could be saved if NHS staff absence rates were reduced by a third through improvements to health and wellbeing.

Flu is not just dangerous to older people. In 2010/11 people aged between 15 and 64 were most affected by flu, with 70 per cent of deaths (415) occurring in that age group.

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

The North West Strategic Health Authority achieved the highest uptake of all strategic health authorities last winter, achieving 56.1 per cent.

Learn why staff vaccinations are so important and receive the latest news about the campaign at www.nhsemployers.org/flu on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) or join the conversation on Twitter – #flufighter (@NHSFlufighter).
Flu facts

Flu kills
For the majority of people who catch it flu is unpleasant, but for some it can lead to chest infections, severe complications and death. Globally, seasonal flu accounts for about three to five million causes of severe illness annually and between 250,000 and 500,000 deaths.

The flu vaccine is safe
The risk of having a serious (anaphylactic) reaction to the seasonal flu vaccine is less than one in a million: much lower than the risk of getting seriously ill from having the flu itself.
If you have had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a flu vaccine before, please talk to a clinician before getting vaccinated.
If you have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to hens’ eggs, you should enquire about vaccines with a very low egg content and be vaccinated under clinical supervision.

The vaccine is one of the safest in the world
Seasonal flu vaccine 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 vaccines are still thoroughly tested and are safe.

The flu jab can’t give you the flu
It is impossible to get flu from the having the flu jab because the vaccine doesn’t contain live viruses. A very small number of people experience side effects such as aching muscles, but this is simply the immune system responding to the vaccine.

The side effects of the vaccination aren’t bad
For the most part, seasonal flu vaccine side effects are mild or often non-existent. The most common side effect is soreness around the site of the injection and occasionally aching muscles. These symptoms are a lot less serious than having flu.

Health professionals need to protect patients
Vaccination isn’t just about keeping yourself safe, it’s about protecting your colleagues, your family and your patients. You can carry and pass the virus on to others without having any symptoms yourself, so even if you consider yourself healthy, you might be risking the lives of others.

You need the vaccine every year
If you were vaccinated last year you helped to fight the flu and took an extra step towards excellent patient care. Please do the same again this year. You won’t be protected against the new strains of flu circulating.

Vaccination works
The World Health Organization cites clean water and vaccination as the two interventions that have the greatest impact on public health – vaccination works. Trivalent seasonal influenza vaccines generally give 60–80 per cent protection against infection.
Pregnant women can be vaccinated
Pregnant women can have the flu vaccination at any stage of their pregnancy. Having the vaccination when pregnant is beneficial and helps protect the baby from flu over the first few months of life.

Healthy diets won’t prevent flu
Your diet could well be helping to boost your immune system, but eating well will not protect you from flu. The best way to protect yourself, family and patients against flu is by getting the flu jab.

Handwashing is very important, but it won’t stop flu
It is vital to follow universal infection prevention procedures and wash your hands, but once flu has been passed on to your family, colleagues or your patients, clean hands won’t keep flu at bay. Book your flu jab as soon as possible, and encourage those around you to do the same.

Anyone can get the flu
One of the most common reasons for not getting vaccinated is “I’ve never had flu before”. There’s no such thing as natural immunity to influenza; with new strains circulating this year, it’s best to get vaccinated against flu.
Useful source documents

These are excellent sources of information and statistics which you might find useful when preparing your communications activities.

- Department of Health information on frontline staff vaccine uptake in 2011/12, published 26 June 2012, including data for individual trusts and by staff groups:

- Department of Health information on frontline staff vaccine uptake in 2010/11, published 6 September 2011, including data for individual trusts and by staff groups:

- Department of Health information on frontline staff vaccine uptake in 2009/10, including data for individual trusts and by staff groups:

- 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):

- 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/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza](http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/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.
Press release templates for you to adjust and send to local media

To support you in achieving the best possible local media coverage, both print and online, we have supplied you with two press releases about this year’s staff seasonal flu campaign for you to adjust, publish and issue to your local media. The first of these press releases will help you launch your local staff-facing seasonal flu campaign, and the second will allow you to promote the results of your local flu vaccination uptake when national figures are released by the Department of Health.

Press Release

XXXTRUSTXXX fights flu this season

XXXTRUSTXXX has joined the largest ever NHS staff vaccination campaign with a programme of local activity to protect its staff and patients from flu

XXXTRUSTXXX is aiming to make great strides in reducing the spread of flu this season by vaccinating as many frontline staff as possible. It is joining the national NHS flu fighter staff vaccination campaign, which will support trusts in England to improve staff flu vaccination uptake this flu season.

Every year in the UK, flu kills hundreds of people who are elderly, very young or weakened by illness. XXXTRUSTXXX takes patient safety very seriously and will be working hard to encourage its nurses, doctors and other frontline staff to get vaccinated – helping to prevent them from catching flu or passing the virus on to patients.

The vaccinations will be provided free of charge at a range of times and locations to suit all frontline staff, including night workers and those out in the community. XXXMORE LOCAL CAMPAIGN INFORMATION HERE, LIVELY STAFF-LED EVENTS ETC, PLUS HOW MANY STAFF WERE VACCINATED LAST YEARXXX.

XXXTRUST CHIEF EXECUTIVE QUOTE HEREXXX

Dean Royles, director of the NHS Employers organisation, said:

“The bottom line is that staff who are protected against flu can’t pass it to their patients.

“The NHS sees millions of patients every year whose age or poor health means flu could have a serious impact on their lives. This is why it’s so important for staff to choose to get their vaccinations. If we reduce the chances of staff contracting flu, we can really drive down the possibility of passing it on to patients.

“We really want to make staff aware that vaccinations are safe and extremely effective. Traditionally, the take up of vaccinations among staff has been low, but with the fantastic support of NHS organisations including XXXTRUSTXXX, we can drive up vaccinations and protect patients. I hope this year we will see flu vaccinations become commonplace for NHS staff and I’m sure our patients want to see the same.”
Support provided by the national NHS flu fighter campaign includes guidance and lively factual campaign materials, which explain the dangers of flu and why vaccination offers safe and highly effective prevention against its spread to vulnerable patients.

The NHS flu fighter campaign, now in its second year, aims to raise awareness about the benefits of vaccination against flu and educates staff about the availability of the free vaccine. Flu jabs for NHS staff are not compulsory, so can only be given to those who request them.

Last year, the national campaign encouraged an additional 100,000 NHS staff in England to be vaccinated – an increase from 34.7 to 45 per cent of the frontline workforce compared to the previous year (1). The campaign is run by the NHS Employers organisation and aims to continue increasing staff vaccinations until they become routine practice for all staff, helping to stop flu in its tracks and protect patients.

In 2010/11, influenza caused 602 deaths in England. 70 per cent of fatal influenza cases occurred among people aged between 15 and 64 where normally a higher number of deaths tend to be among older people (2). Nearly 9,000 patients were admitted to hospital with influenza in England in 2010/11, of which 2,200 were admitted to intensive care (2,3).

XXX MENTION YOUR LOCAL OBJECTIVES OR STAFF VACCINATION FIGURES HERE XXX.

Social media is a core part of what makes NHS flu fighter successful, allowing staff and trusts to actively support the campaign, discussing the importance of the flu jab and reporting uptake on an open network. More information is available at www.nhsemployers.org/flu and also on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) and Twitter @NHSFlufighter – join the conversation #flufighter.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

- (1) 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 frontline healthcare workers.

- (2) Health Protection Agency published figures from May 2011’s Surveillance of influenza and other respiratory viruses in the UK 2010-2011 report.

- (3) Estimates of hospital admissions from Hospital Episode Statistics (2010/11); estimates of critical care admissions taken from HPA annual influenza report based on bed days and a mean length of stay of seven days.

- NHS flu fighter was launched last year and is England’s first ever national NHS staff flu vaccination campaign. The NHS Employers organisation was selected to run the campaign by the Social Partnership Forum, which brings together the Department of Health, unions and employers to help the NHS apply workforce policy effectively.
XXXTRUST’s staff rank highly among England’s most vaccinated against flu

A local campaign by XXXTRUST to vaccinate its frontline staff against flu has delivered great results, according to government figures recently published/published today.

The Department of Health’s Winterwatch report shows that XXX (XX per cent) of the trust’s frontline staff had received their flu jabs by XXXMONTH/DATE (1). This compares to the national average of XX per cent and places the trust XXth highest among the 402 health trusts in England.

XXXDRAFT TRUST CEO QUOTEXX:

“We are really proud that so many of our staff are choosing to be vaccinated. They’re finding time during their busy working days to get the jab because they want to stay fit, stay at work and to help prevent our patients from catching flu. We’ve all worked hard to promote the update of flu vaccination and it’s paid off, helping keep flu at bay this season.”

Staff vaccinations are important to keep flu levels down in the NHS. Every year in the UK, flu kills hundreds of people that are elderly, very young or weakened by illness. In 2010/11 influenza caused 602 deaths in England (2).

XXXEXAMPLES OF INSPIRING LOCAL INITIATIVESXXX.

To encourage greater uptake of vaccinations, the trust joined NHS flu fighter – a national campaign run by the NHS Employers organisation. NHS flu fighter provides guidance and lively factual campaign material, supporting the trust and its staff to become flu fighters and raise awareness of why flu vaccinations are important, safe and effective.

NHS flu fighter launched last year as the first ever national NHS staff flu vaccination campaign. It aims to continue to increase uptake of staff flu vaccinations until annual vaccination becomes routine for all staff, helping to stop flu in its tracks and protect vulnerable patients.

The vaccinations are being provided free of charge at a range of times and locations to suit all frontline staff, including night workers and those out in the community. Flu jabs for NHS staff are not compulsory, so can only be given to those who request them.

Dean Royles, director of the NHS Employers organisation that runs the national NHS Flu fighters campaign, said:

“XXXTrust and its staff have gone the extra mile to keep themselves healthy and their patients safe. I hope one day flu vaccinations will become commonplace for NHS staff. It’s a big challenge to change people’s habits but XXXTrust has got to grips with the issue brilliantly.”

The current national average of staff receiving the vaccine is XX per cent. This is an increase from XX per cent by the same time last year. At the end of winter 2011/12 a total of 45 per cent (3) of frontline staff had been vaccinated, which increased from 34.7 per cent the previous year following the first annual NHS flu fighter campaign.

Social media is a core part of what makes NHS flu fighter successful, allowing staff and trusts to actively support the campaign, discussing the importance of the flu jab and reporting uptake on an open
network. More information is available at www.nhsemployers.org/flu also on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nhsflufighter) and Twitter @NHSFlufighter – join the conversation #flufighter.

The NHS Employers organisation is running NHS flu fighter on behalf of the Social Partnership Forum, bringing together NHS employers, trade unions and the Department of Health.

Although this campaign encourages the uptake of staff flu 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.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

- (1) Department of Health Winterwatch – find out the latest statistics for the uptake of flu vaccination among NHS staff.
- (2) Health Protection Agency published figures from May 2011’s Surveillance of influenza and other respiratory viruses in the UK 2010-2011 report.
- (3) Department of Health published figures: Seasonal Flu Vaccine Uptake 2010/2011 (Frontline Healthcare Workers - All Trusts). 359,080 staff were vaccinated out of the 1,035,219 frontline healthcare workers.
- NHS flu fighter was launched last year and is England’s first ever national NHS staff flu vaccination campaign. The NHS Employers organisation was selected to run the campaign by the Social Partnership Forum, which brings together the Department of Health, unions and employers to help the NHS apply workforce policy effectively.
- 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.
XXXXXXX NHS Trust participates in NHS flu fighter campaign – protecting patients and staff against flu this winter

XXXXX healthcare will get a shot in the arm this year, quite literally, because XXTrustXX is joining flu fighter – the national NHS staff flu vaccination campaign.

The campaign aims to increase of the flu vaccine among NHS staff across England.

Vaccinations are vital to protect staff, their families and their patients, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to flu. Vaccinations also reduce sickness absence of our staff, so during the busy winter period we are able to provide the best level of care to our patients.

In England, there are almost 15 million NHS hospital admissions every year. The close proximity between staff and vulnerable patients can mean that the flu virus is easily passed on, so it is important that our healthcare workers get vaccinated to avoid carrying the virus and infecting patients.

In 2010/11, 602 people tragically died because of flu in England. The virus is highly preventable and staff at XXTRUSTXX will be making the effort to join the national campaign getting vaccinated against flu and become a flu fighter!

XXINSERT QUOTE FROM SENIOR LEVEL LEADERXX

Last year, NHS flu fighter helped a further 100,000 staff protect patients and themselves against flu by supporting XXTRUSTXX to deliver our flu campaign locally. The campaign encouraged XXTRUSTXX to use campaign materials, case studies and web resources provided by the not-for-profit NHS Employers organisation in partnership with the Social Partnership Forum.

NHS flu fighter helped XXTRUSTXX achieve XXVACCINATION RATE UPTAKE%XX (check your local figures: www.immunisation.dh.gov.uk/flu-vac-uptake-gp-patients-and-hcws-201112) and a national improvement of NHS staff uptake of the flu vaccine from 35 to 45 per cent of the total frontline NHS workforce – this year we aim to improve our vaccination uptake figures to protect our staff and our patients!

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.

You can pledge to join the fight against flu on Facebook and share your stories. More information is available on the flu fighter campaign website www.nhsemployers.org/flu and you can join in the conversation on twitter @NHSFlufighter.
Inject even more into patient care – arrange your flu vaccination now!

Flu fighter is back! This year XXTRUST NAMEXX is participating in the second national NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign. You may have seen some flu fighter posters encouraging you to protect yourself and our patients by getting your flu jab; with your support we hope to become one of the most vaccinated trusts in England.

Our flu fighter vaccination team will do their very best in making the flu vaccine accessible to all staff. The vaccination team will try to make it as swift as possible, so it does not take up much of your time.

XXDETAILS OF ANY CLINIC TIMES OR INFOXX

Please take the time to read the flu fighter information about staff vaccinations, especially information 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 – flu kills and you should get protected against flu every year.

**Did you know?**

Seventy per cent of fatal influenza cases occurred among people aged between 15 and 64 in 2010/11, whereas you might have expected more of these tragic deaths to be among older people. Influenza was also the cause of 602 deaths in England in the same year.

Forty-five per cent of frontline NHS staff were vaccinated against flu last year and we strongly believe this should increase. Join the fight against flu to protect yourself, your family and your patients – be a flu fighter and get your flu jab!

Request your vaccination today at XXCONTACT DETAILSXX

**More information**

Staff can find out more about the campaign on the flu fighter website: www.nhsemployers.org/flu

You can pledge to join the fight against flu on Facebook and share your vaccination stories on the flu fighter page.

Join the conversation on twitter #flufighter, follow @NHSFlufighter.
Following the success of the flu fighter awards last year, we are planning to run them again in 2012/13 – hosting them in January 2013 – as a way to recognise the hard work which individuals, teams and trusts put into the campaign.

The awards can be used as an excellent motivator throughout the vaccination season and last year the awards achieved a lot of local press coverage. We urge you to keep in regular contact with everyone involved so that you can collate examples of best practice as the season progresses. That way, when nominations for the flu fighter awards are requested in December, you’ll already have a good base.

Further details will follow so keep an eye out for email updates. If you don’t receive these, please email flufighter@nhsemployers.org with your full details.
@NHSFlufighter is a core part of the communication of this national campaign – we encourage you as a communications team to join in conversation on twitter. A number of trusts actively engage with the campaign on this open network adding #flufighter to tweet about flu.

If you and your communications team are active on twitter and not already following @NHSFlufighter, please do so. We encourage you to join the community that surrounds #flufighter – add insight to the NHS network conversation with news around flu, local uptake figures and any events or vaccination clinics.

We, of course, welcome any retweets of our campaign messages and facts surrounding flu – remember look out for the hashtag #flufighter on twitter.

We have a community of staff and patients on Facebook where staff are encouraged to pledge to have their jab using our flu fighter app https://apps.facebook.com/nhsflufighter. They can then share this pledge with their friends and network. If your trust has a presence on Facebook please encourage pledges to the app, like our page and our updates.

Encourage your staff to get creative; think outside the box to get the flu fighter message and the importance of flu vaccination across to staff. Below you will find examples of videos hosted on YouTube which other trusts have produced for last year’s national flu fighter campaign.

Examples from last year:

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust flu show
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoNyxceDMLg&feature=related

Staff flu vaccination promotional video 2011 for Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEdpDTrncLg&feature=youtu.be

Killer bug music video - Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals
www.youtube.com/watch?v=lesIRWZn6uk
The campaign materials you will see within your organisation utilise various images of different members of staff and include the flu fighter logo.

Copies of these materials, including web banners, can be downloaded via our website www.nhsemployers.org/flu and we have provided details of external companies who can provide branded pens, mugs and t-shirts at a low negotiated price that can also be found on the flu fighter website.

**Graphics and photography**

- **Lapel badges**
- **A4 poster**
- **DL leaflet**
- **Getting started guide**
- **PowerPoint**
- **Web Banners**
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 any questions.

If you have any questions about this toolkit or the campaign, please email flufighter@nhsemployers.org

National NHS staff seasonal flu vaccination campaign website: www.nhsemployers.org/flu

Find us on Facebook: NHS flu fighter

Follow us on twitter: @NHSFlufighter

Tell us how you are getting on
We are keen to hear about how your campaign is getting on. Let us know about your successes. Drop us an email at: flufighter@nhsemployers.org or call the flu fighter hotline on 0844 334 5252.