Communications toolkit
A flu fighter guide
Communications toolkit

This guide contains ideas, information and tools to help raise awareness of your local flu fighter campaign and the flu vaccination.

Just pick and mix what works best for you and your organisation.

- Planning your communications – a step-by-step guide to what you need to think about.
- Key messages and facts – to provide an understanding that flu affects not only staff but also patients, colleagues and families.
- Mythbusting – to dispel common myths around flu and flu vaccination.
- Useful information – sources of information for you to refer to when comparing your sickness absence rates.
- Template press releases – to raise the profile of your campaign via local media coverage.
- Sample/template articles for internal and external websites – to help spread the message.
- Flu fighter awards – to celebrate the hard work that has gone into your campaigns.
- Social media – ideas on how to connect and engage with staff in a more immediate and direct way.
- Graphics and photography – a range of materials to help you raise the profile of your local flu fighter campaign.
- References – to back up your evidence and statistics and for further reading.
- Contact details for the flu fighter team – we’re here to support you, so please contact us if you need any help.
- An example communications plan – you can tailor this to your organisation and hard to reach areas.

Look out for our good practice bugs throughout the toolkit for ideas and inspiration.

Visit our website:
www.nhsemployers.org/flu

Join the conversation and follow us on Twitter:
@NHSFlufighter

Contact us via:
flufighter@nhsemployers.org

Or call the flu fighter hotline on 0844 334 52 52

Our flu fighter guides to planning and reviewing your campaign can also be used in conjunction with your communications plan. They are free and available to download from our website:
www.nhsemployers.org/flu
Planning your communications

1. Set out objectives and groups to target
   Look at ways that communications can help fulfil your objectives. For example, mythbusting with areas that have low uptake, or promoting peer vaccinators and clinic times.

2. Identify who can help
   Consider which teams and departments could offer assistance. This will promote a wider understanding of the campaign and provide extra support and experience.

3. Select channel(s) that are accessible and used by your audience
   Look at communications channels such as the intranet and staff newsletters. Also, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or Instagram. Tailor your communications to the needs of your organisation.

4. Decide how frequently to send out communications
   See our example communications plan (appendix 1) for more ideas.

5. Build evaluation into the plan
   Add in time to evaluate your communications campaign. Do this regularly to see that you’re on track with your objectives – and adjust if not.
Here are some things to think about when picking your communication channels:

- Does your workforce regularly check emails?
- Would sending a letter be a better way of communicating? Could you ask the chief executive or medical director to write to all staff?
- Does your workforce access the intranet? Could you create intranet pages with mythbusters or information about flu and the vaccination?
- Are your staff based in one or many sites? Would posters and payslip leaflets be a good way of making the campaign more visible?
- Does your organisation have a staff newsletter or bulletin? Does this have wide coverage across the workforce?
- What is your organisation’s policy on the use of social media? Could you use Twitter, Pinterest or Facebook to communicate with them?
- How will staff communicate with your organisation’s flu fighter team? Is there sufficient resource to run a flu fighter inbox or phone line to deal with questions or requests throughout the flu season?

GOOD PRACTICE
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust put up flu posters in the ICU ward with an image of an ICU patient. This helped staff to relate the campaign to the patients in their care.

GOOD PRACTICE
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust created a screensaver that showed hot spots of where flu would hit. This was based on vaccine uptake and at-risk groups.
Key messages

It’s important to put together some key messages for your audience that help you work towards achieving your objectives. Here are some messages that you may want to use or alter for your organisation.

Messages to staff

THE THREE WAYS TO FIGHT FLU THIS WINTER

1. GET YOUR VACCINE
Having your flu jab protects yourself, your family, colleagues and patients. It’s a serious illness that can result in death. The vaccine is typically up to 70 per cent effective, depending on the strains of flu that are circulating each year.

So be a flu champion and have the jab.

2. WASH YOUR HANDS
As well as getting your jab, you can help reduce the spread of flu by regularly washing your hands, particularly after sneezing or coughing. You can pass flu on without having any symptoms, so wash your hands regularly.

3. STAY AWAY
If you have flu, please stay away from work until you are better. The virus is highly infectious and outbreaks can happen quickly. So do everyone a favour and don’t add to the spread of flu.

Statistics from the 2014/15 season for use in your local campaign
These stats show the bigger picture and can inspire healthcare workers to surpass the uptake numbers achieved in the previous flu year.

- A total of 541,000 frontline healthcare workers were vaccinated between 1 September 2014 and 28 February 2015 – that’s 54.9 per cent and 7,000 more staff than last year.
- 142 trusts vaccinated over half of their staff.
- 35 trusts vaccinated 75 per cent or more of their staff.
- 113 trusts exceeded the 2013/14 final average of 54.8 per cent.
- 123 trusts improved their uptake compared to the same period of 2013/14.
- All staff who are involved in direct patient care are eligible for a free flu vaccination from their employer. The Green Book guidance states:

  “Immunisation should be provided to healthcare and social care workers in direct contact with patients/clients to protect them and to reduce the transmission of influenza within health and social care premises, to contribute to the protection of individuals who may have a suboptimal response to their own immunisations, and to avoid disruption to services that provide their care.”

GOOD PRACTICE

Birmingham Children’s Hospital NHS Foundation Trust used a flu pager. This enabled peer vaccinators to respond quickly and ensured that the vaccine was accessible at all times.
Patient care
The NHS faces significant challenges around maintaining its workforce during times of increased sickness, so it’s vital to reduce the impact of flu to protect patient care.

The elderly, the very young, and people with underlying medical conditions are at a greater risk of suffering severe illness – and even healthy people can still develop severe complications from influenza.¹

Scientific evidence has shown that healthcare workers are more likely to be exposed to the influenza virus than the general population. It has been estimated that up to one in four healthcare workers may become infected with influenza, even in a mild flu season.²

Looking back at last year, the number of flu-related admissions into intensive care or high dependency units in the UK increased compared to the previous year.

And despite a mild flu season in 2013/14, our hospitals treated over 1,187 patients in intensive care settings. Tragically, 8.4 per cent of them died.³

The efficacy of the vaccine
During the 2014/15 season, five out of 24 samples tested by Public Health England had drifted from the strain used in the national vaccine. This made the vaccine less effective.

Public Health England states:

“Flu is unpredictable. It is not possible to fully predict the strains that will circulate each year, and there is always a risk of change in the virus as was seen in the recent season. However, this does not happen very often.

“During the last ten years, the vaccine has generally been a good match for the circulating strains. The vaccine still provides the best protection we have against an unpredictable virus that can cause severe illness.”

While strains of the virus naturally mutate, flu fighter continues to urge frontline staff to have the routine flu jab. It remains the most effective way of staff protecting themselves and their patients against flu.

For more information, see our clinical evidence. If you have any further queries, do not hesitate to contact us.

¹ Health Protection Agency (2011). Epidemiological report of the 2009 pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in the UK.
The facts about flu

To ensure that people understand the virus and its implications, we have put together some key facts for you to use.

**Flu kills**
For the majority of people who catch it, flu is unpleasant but not life-threatening. Yet for others, it can lead to chest infections, severe complications and even death. Globally, seasonal flu accounts for around 3 to 5 million causes of severe illness annually and between 250,000 and 500,000 deaths.6

Flu is a highly transmissible infection. The patient population found in hospital is much more vulnerable to the severe effects of influenza.7

Healthcare workers may transmit the illness to patients even if they are mildly or sub-clinically infected. There are reports of flu outbreaks within hospitals and other care settings where transmission from healthcare workers to patients is likely to have facilitated spread of the disease.8 9 10

In one outbreak, 118 staff and 49 patients were infected. A second resulted in six infections among neonates and one death.12

**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 actually catching flu. 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’s impossible to get flu from 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 their immune system responding to the vaccine.

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6  WHO Factsheet 211 (March 2014)
11  Pachucki et al op cit.
12  Cunney et al op cit.
The side effects of the vaccination are manageable
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 debilitating than having flu.

Health professionals need to protect patients
Vaccination isn’t just about keeping yourself safe, it’s about protecting your family, your colleagues 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 may 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 as you won’t be protected against the new strains of circulating flu.

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 in the first few months of life.

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

Hand washing is very important, but it won’t stop flu
It’s vital to follow universal infection prevention procedures and wash your hands regularly. Although, 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 staff give 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.

GOOD PRACTICE
East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust utilised its radio units to capture the attention of mobile staff to remind them to have their vaccine and where the nearest clinic was.
When encouraging staff to get their flu vaccination, here are some useful sources of information for you to refer to:


- Department of Health information on frontline staff vaccine uptake in 2009/10, including data for individual trusts and by staff groups: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/pandemic-h1n1-flu](www.gov.uk/government/publications/pandemic-h1n1-flu)

- NHS Health & Social Care 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.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?topics=0%2fWorkforce&sort=Relevance&size=10&page=1#top](www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?topics=0%2fWorkforce&sort=Relevance&size=10&page=1#top)

- Health Protection Agency information about the impact and fatalities resulting from flu, although this is not specifically NHS: [www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza](www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/SeasonalInfluenza)

**GOOD PRACTICE**

The team at Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust prepared all their daily updates in advance so they could roll them out throughout the flu season via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
Promotional templates

Use our templates to help you raise the profile of your flu campaign through your local media, staff-facing intranet and public-facing website. Just fill in the gaps with your own organisation’s information and statistics, or adapt the wording to suit your needs.

Template for local media

For Immediate Release: XX 2015

(ORGANISATION NAME) ups staff wellbeing with winter flu vaccinations

With flu season upon us once again, (ORGANISATION NAME) is determined to make 2015/16 the year that they achieve England’s highest rate of staff seasonal flu vaccinations.

The vaccinations, which are available free of charge to all front line employees of the NHS, enable staff to not only protect themselves from this year’s strain of the flu virus, but also their families, colleagues and patients.

XXX, chief executive at (ORGANISATION NAME), commented:

“We’re really motivated to get behind the flu fighter campaign once again. The team here at (ORGANISATION NAME) have been really involved and proactive with the campaign, and are determined to increase the amount of people taking up the vaccination in 2015/16.

We encourage all of our frontline NHS staff to have their flu vaccination. Not only is this a quick and simple procedure, with little or no side effects, but it can also save lives. The vaccination will protect our employees this winter, and also their families, colleagues and patients.”

Daniel Mortimer, chief executive of the NHS Employers organisation, said:

“(ORGANISATION NAME) is among those organisations in the UK that are leading the way for a change of perception around NHS employee flu vaccinations. Ideally, we want to see seasonal flu vaccinations become commonplace in the NHS. More than a million people use the NHS every 36 hours, many who are vulnerable to flu, so it’s great to see the majority of NHS staff can find the time in their busy days to seek out these voluntary vaccinations.”

For more information about the national NHS flu fighter campaign, including myth busters and frequently asked questions, visit: www.nhsemployers.com/flu

Alternatively, get involved with the flu fighter conversation on Twitter @NHSFlufighter or #flufighter.

GOOD PRACTICE

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust used an internal Twitter forum to advertise clinic times and also to generate discussions.
Sample / template articles for internal and external websites

Sample article for modification and use on your internal staff-facing intranet
Get your flu vaccination – it’s quick and easy!

Arranging your seasonal flu vaccination is a really important step in protecting yourself, your family and your patients. We’ve listened to your feedback and made it even easier for you to have the flu jab.

We have more vaccination locations (ENTER AREAS) around our buildings and there are a choice of times for you to choose from (ADD DETAILS OF CLINIC TIMES). There’s even a free biscuit and a cup of tea for you.

You can see more information at (TRUST’S WEB PAGE) or www.nhsemployers.com/flu. Why not have a conversation on Twitter @NHSFlufighter or #flufighter.

The 2014/15 flu season saw more than half of all frontline NHS staff in England receive the flu vaccination – that’s 541,000 staff. It’s time to keep the momentum going and to make it truly commonplace, just like washing our hands. Please help reduce the spread of flu. These vaccinations really can save lives.

If you have reservations about the vaccine, read the mythbusters on our website. You may think if you were vaccinated last year that you’re still covered, but you actually need an annual vaccination to be protected.

Request your vaccination today at (CONTACT DETAILS)

Sample article for modification and use on your public-facing website
Health staff line up for their flu jab

The flu team at (TRUST) have a successful record of encouraging frontline staff to have their flu jab, and we are now working hard to increase uptake this winter.

We want our staff to be protected so they don’t pass the virus to their families, colleagues or to vulnerable patients. Vaccinations really can save lives.

The good news is that (INSERT NUMBER) of our staff chose to be vaccinated last year, even though these vaccinations are entirely voluntary. That’s (COMPARE WITH NATIONAL TABLES).

We are committed to providing vaccinations for all of our staff. We provide detailed information to promote awareness and address any concerns. We also make having the flu jab accessible and convenient. (INSERT EXAMPLES)

Our local flu vaccination campaign is supported with advice and resources from the national flu fighter campaign, which is run by the NHS Employers organisation and supported by Public Health England.

GOOD PRACTICE

Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust used local media to advertise its campaign.
We hope (TRUST NAME) will be among the first in the NHS to make its staff flu vaccinations truly commonplace.

(INSERT QUOTE FROM RELEVANT STAFF)

Although this campaign is about staff vaccinations, the NHS offers vaccinations to patients who can have the flu jab free of charge. Eligible groups include:

- pregnant women
- anyone who is a full-time carer of another person
- anyone with a long-term condition including diabetes, asthma, kidney disease, 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.

You can pledge to join the fight against flu on (INSERT SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNEL) and share your stories. More information on the flu fighter campaign is available on the NHS Employers website: www.nhsemployers.org/flu and you can join in the conversation on Twitter @NHSFlufighter or search for #flufighter or @NHSFlufighter.

GOOD PRACTICE

Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust held drop-in clinics in high footfall areas.
Flu fighter awards

Every year, we host our NHS flu fighter awards which give individual members of staff, teams and NHS trusts, the chance to celebrate their hard work and gain recognition for their efforts in fighting flu.

The awards are an opportunity to share some of the amazing stories behind the success of flu vaccine campaigns. They not only shine a light on a range of achievements but also celebrate the innovative approaches that have been developed locally.

The flu fighter awards are an excellent motivator throughout the vaccination season. They provide an opportunity for flu teams to raise their profiles and share their strategies to help flu vaccinations become an integral part of health and wellbeing.

They can also be an excellent way of securing local press coverage.

Keep an eye on our website for more details and updates on the 2016 flu fighter awards.

**GOOD PRACTICE**

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust created and produced a video to explain how flu can be spread and bust any misconceptions.

**GOOD PRACTICE**

Burton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust ensured all senior managers were kept up to speed with flu facts and clinic times.
**Social media**

Digital platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, allow you to engage with staff in a more immediate and direct way than traditional communication channels such as letters or news bulletins. It’s an evolving conversation that is accessible to a wide range of people.

If you are completely new to social media, are an intermediate user or consider yourself a pro, NHS Employers has produced a comprehensive toolkit that’s completely free: *Social media and the NHS*.

@NHSFlufighter has a tremendous amount of engagement on Twitter, so please join the conversation and don’t forget to use #flufighter!

**What you can use**

There are various platforms out there, it just depends on what your audience uses and what your organisation can support.

The most popular channels are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or YouTube. Decide which would be the best tool to convey your messages and connect with staff.

**Things to consider**

When using social media platforms to help promote your local flu fighter campaign, it’s really important to think about what you’re posting. Sometimes it helps to have a fresh pair of eyes to look over a post or tweet before it goes out. That way you have a new perspective which may highlight something you had not previously noticed.

**Top Twitter tips:**

- tweet regularly to keep your readers interested
- try to keep your tweets shorter than 100 characters so that others can retweet it and add their own comment
- include links, pictures and videos where appropriate
- know your audience
- follow accounts that are interesting to you or your organisation
- test and learn to optimise the timing of your tweets
- engage other Twitter users in conversation using @replies and mentions.

**Videos**

Creating a video can be a great way of getting your key messages across to your audience. Before you start to film your video, look at what you are trying to achieve, identify the message(s), and enlist help from your communications team or staff with prior experience.

To give you inspiration, we have several flu fighter videos on our website featuring a range of people from different trusts and organisations.

These short films are free for you to use in your trust as part of your flu fighter campaign. Use the share icon to the bottom right of the screen to share via social media or to embed on your website or intranet.

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**GOOD PRACTICE**

University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust created a buzz with its #flujabselfie Twitter campaign. The team also used Instagram to publish 15-second videos explaining why they got the jab.
Graphics and photography

We have produced a range of materials for you to use within your organisation to raise the profile of your local flu fighter campaign. These resources include images of frontline staff and feature the flu fighter logo.

Copies of these materials, including web banners, can be downloaded from our website: www.nhsemployers.org/flu

A4 posters

A5 postcard

A3 poster

DL leaflet

Lapel badges

Web Banners
## Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Communication channel</th>
<th>When and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase awareness of flu and the need to have the vaccine</td>
<td>All staff with direct patient care</td>
<td>Computer pop-ups giving details of clinic times</td>
<td>Daily during flu season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide mythbusting information on flu and the vaccination</td>
<td>All staff with direct patient care</td>
<td>Internal email bulletin&lt;br&gt;Canteen drop-in sessions</td>
<td>Weekly during the flu season&lt;br&gt;Every fortnight during season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise awareness that the flu jab doesn’t give flu but protects against the virus</td>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>Mythbusting via intranet and Twitter&lt;br&gt;Flu facts leaflets in all clinical areas</td>
<td>Weekly&lt;br&gt;Throughout flu season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the vaccine to pregnant mothers</td>
<td>Midwives</td>
<td>Leaflets&lt;br&gt;Staff training sessions</td>
<td>Throughout flu season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote accessibility to drop-in or mobile clinics</td>
<td>Paramedics / ambulance staff</td>
<td>Call centre staff to contact ambulance staff via their radios</td>
<td>Whenever clinics are on in their area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join healthcare colleagues in the fight against flu</td>
<td>Support to clinical staff</td>
<td>Leaflets&lt;br&gt;Emails</td>
<td>Throughout flu season&lt;br&gt;Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer vaccinators are available at all hours to administer the jab</td>
<td>Night workers</td>
<td>Direct email&lt;br&gt;Intranet</td>
<td>Weekly in flu season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertise that they are entitled to a free flu jab</td>
<td>Carers</td>
<td>Via healthcare workers&lt;br&gt;Leaflets in clinical areas</td>
<td>Whenever carers come into the trust&lt;br&gt;Throughout the flu season</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOOD PRACTICE**

Liverpool Women’s NHS Foundation Trust trained a team of flu immunisers to promote the campaign’s key messages across the trust.
We're here to support you, so please contact us if you need any help or have any questions about the flu fighter campaign. You can:

**Visit our website:**
www.nhsemployers.org/flu

**Contact us via**
flufighter@nhsemployers.org or 0844 334 52 52

**Follow @NHSFlufighter on Twitter**
and join in the #flufighter conversation