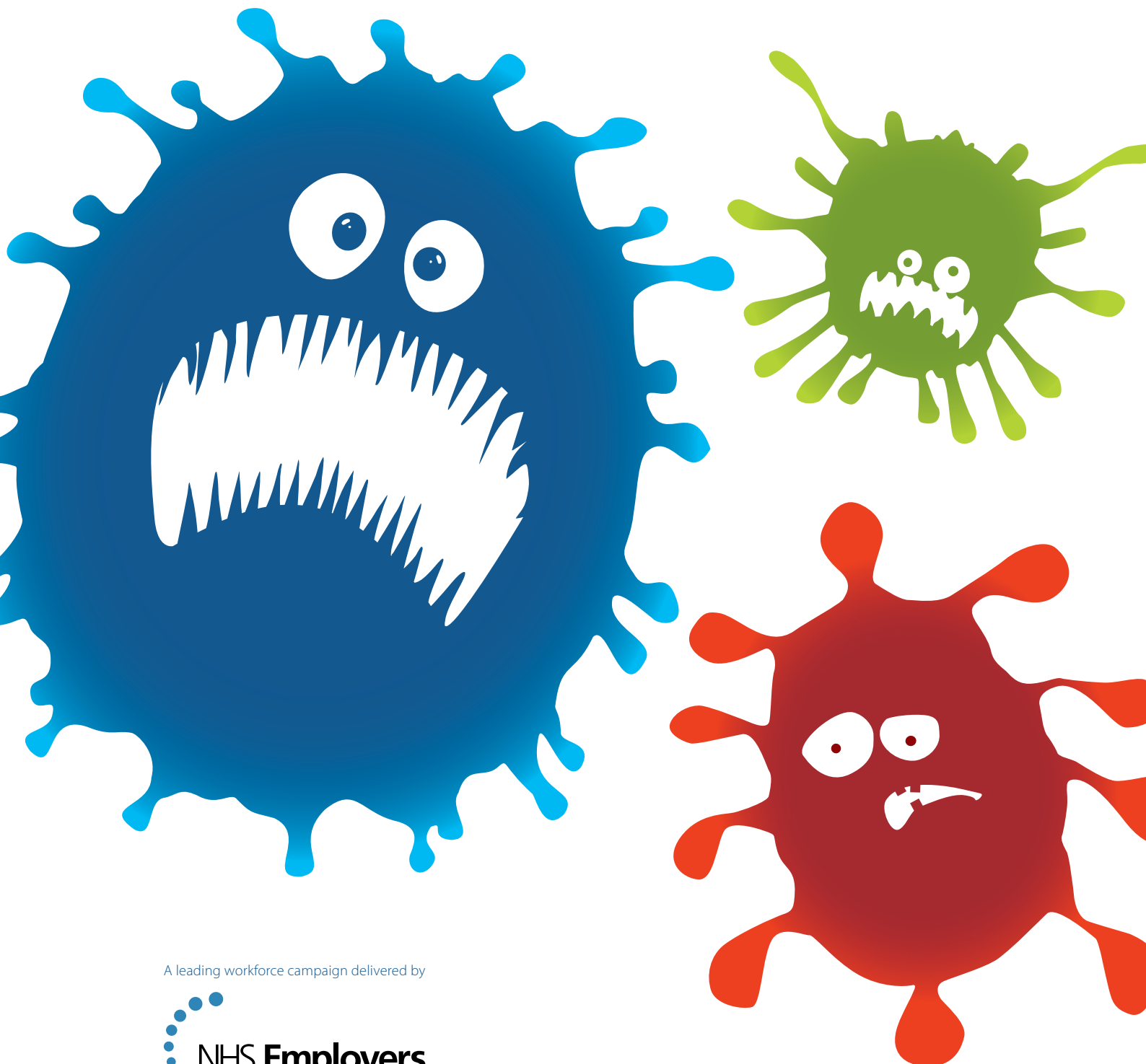


Communications toolkit

A flu fighter guide



A leading workforce campaign delivered by

Communications toolkit

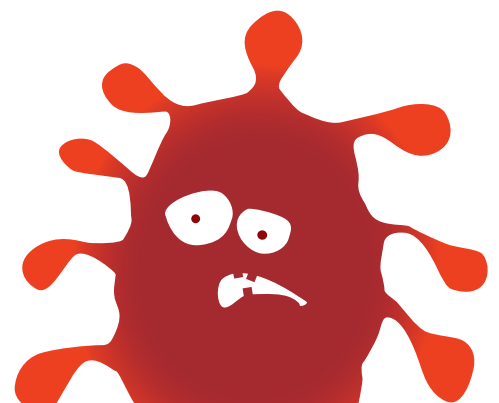
We know that teams commit valuable time and resource to their flu fighter campaigns, promoting the reasons to have the vaccine and making sure that it is made available to as many staff as possible to increase uptake and protect patients.

This guide has been written to provide you with ideas, information and tools to help raise awareness of your local flu fighter campaign and the flu vaccination.

There are also other guides available, which can be used in conjunction with your communications plan. These are free and available to download from our website www.nhsemployers.org/flu

We have put together some tools and information to help you deliver your communications strategy. Just pick and mix what works best for you and your organisation. Here is a summary of what is in the rest of this toolkit:

- Planning your communications - a step-by-step guide to what you need to think about.
- Key messages and facts – to provide an understanding of how 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.



Planning your communications

Step one: Set out your objective and which groups to target

Whether this is your first year or third year of delivering a flu fighter campaign, it is always important to spend time outlining what you want to achieve. This could be anything from mythbusting with areas that have low uptake, to promoting peer vaccinators and clinic times. When planning your campaign, look at where communications can help to fulfil your objectives.

Step two: Identify and enlist support from other teams within your organisation

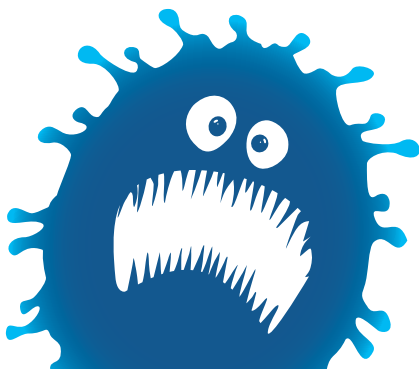
It's a good idea to consider who within your organisation could support your flu fighter team. Involving your communications team, for example, could help promote and deliver your local campaign. This will not only help to give a wider understanding of the key aims of the campaign, but can also provide support and experience from other departments.

Step three: Select channel(s) that are accessible and preferred by your audience

Look at what communication channels are available. These could include the use of the intranet, staff bulletins or newsletters, letters/emails from a senior member of staff or social media platforms such as twitter, Facebook, YouTube or Instagram. The key is to tailor your communications to the needs of your organisation to ensure that they gain maximum visibility.

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 get the chief executive or medical director to write to all staff?
- Does your workforce have access to the intranet on a regular basis? Could you build dedicated 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 LinkedIn to communicate with them?
- How will staff communicate with the flu fighter team – is there sufficient resource to run a dedicated flu fighter inbox or phone line to deal with questions or requests throughout the flu season?



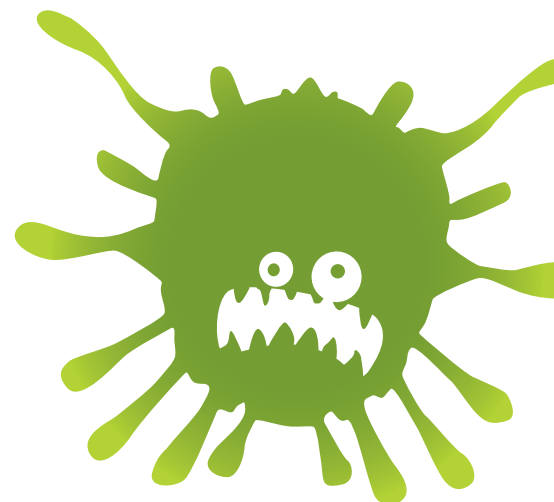
Step four: Decide when you want to send your communications out and how frequently

Example communications plan

Objective	Audience	Communication channel	When and frequency
Increase awareness of vaccination clinics	All staff	Computer pop-ups giving details of clinic times	Daily during flu season
Mythbusting information on flu and the vaccination	All staff	Internal email bulletin Canteen drop-in sessions	Weekly during the flu season Every fortnight during season

Step five: Build evaluation into the plan

Don't forget to add in time for evaluating your communications plan. It is best to do this as you go along to see if it's helping to fulfil your objectives – and to adjust it if not. Once you are at the end of your campaign, look at how the communications planning went overall. Read our guide for further help on this: [reviewing your campaign](#).



Key messages

To help support your communications strategy, it is important to put together some key messages for your audience. These should be pieces of information that help you work towards achieving your objectives. Here are some messages that you may want to use or adapt for your organisation.

Messages to staff

More NHS frontline staff than ever before were protected against seasonal influenza in 2013/14. Flu fighter has helped staff vaccination rates climb from 45.6 per cent in 2012/13 to 54.8 per cent. This translates to a total of 534,090 frontline healthcare workers protected against flu in 2013/14. The aim of the campaign is to help this figure continue to rise.

All staff who are involved in direct patient care are eligible for a free flu vaccination from their employer. This includes students, trainees and volunteers working in NHS trusts. The Green Book guidance states:

“(Staff involved in direct patient care) includes staff who have regular clinical contact with patients and who are directly involved in patient care. This includes doctors, dentists, midwives and nurses, paramedics and ambulance drivers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and radiographers. Students and trainees in these disciplines and volunteers who are working with patients must also be included.”

Patient care

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.

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

Despite a mild flu season in 2013/14, our hospitals treated more than 904 patients in intensive care settings and, tragically, 10.8 per cent of them died.²

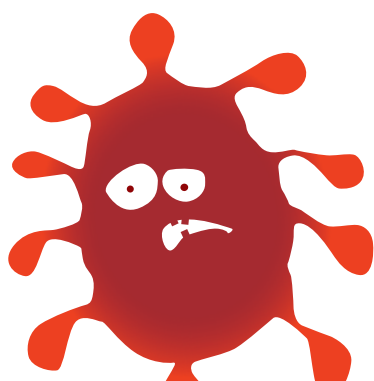
The number of flu-related admissions into intensive care or high dependency units in the UK increased in 2013/14 compared to the previous year.

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.³

Savings

Staff vaccinations can help the NHS achieve its goal to find £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 trusts⁴, before adding the cost of replacing them with bank or temporary agency staff.

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.⁵



Mythbusting

To help dispel some of the common myths around flu and the flu vaccination, 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. However, for some it can lead to chest infections, severe complications and even death. Globally, seasonal flu accounts for about three to five million causes of severe illness per year and between 250,000 and 500,000 deaths.⁶

Influenza 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 influenza outbreaks within hospitals and other care settings where transmission from healthcare workers to patients is likely to have caused spread of the disease.^{8 9 10}

In one outbreak, 118 staff and 49 patients were infected.¹¹ 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 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 their immune system responding to the vaccine.

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 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 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. 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

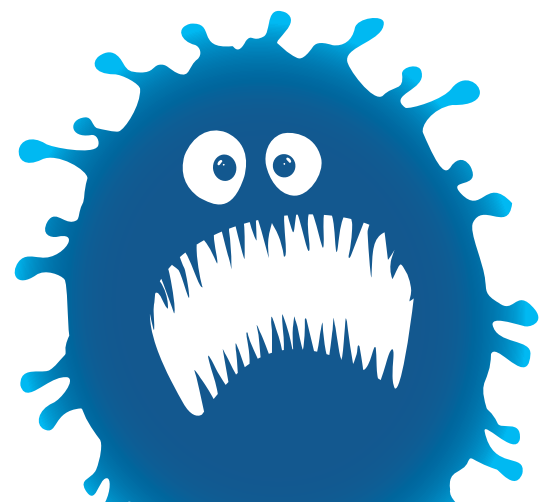
Your diet could well be helping to boost your immune system, but eating well will not protect you from flu. The best way to protect yourself, your family and your patients against flu is by getting the flu jab.

Hand washing is very important, but it won't stop flu

It 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 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.

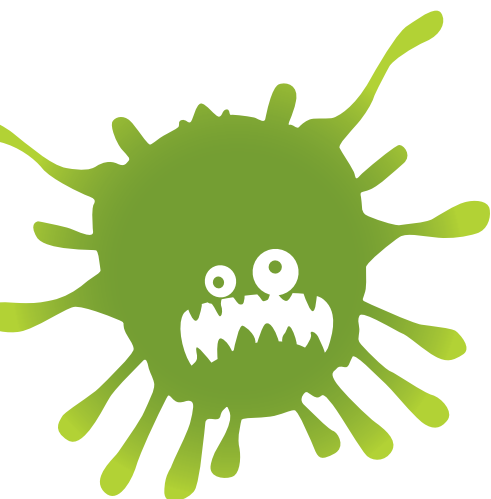


Useful information

When encouraging staff to get their flu vaccination, here are some useful sources of information for you to refer to:

- Public Health England information on frontline staff vaccine uptake in 2013/14, published 27 February 2014, including data for individual trusts and by staff groups:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-healthcare-workers-1-september-2013-to-31-january-2014
- Public Health England information on frontline staff vaccine uptake in 2012/13, published 14 June 2013, including data for individual trusts and by staff groups:
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207556/Seasonal_Influenza_Vaccine_Uptake_HCWs_2012_13_web.pdf
- 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:
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http://immunisation.dh.gov.uk/flu-vac-uptake-gp-patients-and-hcws-201112/>
- 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:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/seasonal-influenza-vaccine-uptake-amongst-frontline-healthcare-workers-in-england-2010-11
- 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
- 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
- Health Protection Agency information about the impact and fatalities resulting from flu, although this does not say which of these were NHS staff: 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.



Template press releases

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

For Immediate Release: XX 2014

Press Release

XXXORGANISATION NAMEXXX off to a flying start with flu vaccinations

XXXORGANISATION NAMEXXX is achieving some of England's highest rates of staff seasonal flu vaccinations this winter.

This is good news for patients, who can be sure that staff are going the extra mile to keep themselves protected and their patients' safe this winter.

National figures released today by Public Health XXX[England/Wales]XXX show that XXXORGANISATION NAMEXXX vaccinated XXXNUMBER AND PERCENTAGEXXX of frontline staff during the first month of the vaccination season (1 September and 31 October 2014) – placing it XXth in the national table of 350 NHS organisations.

The success is the result of a lively and creative campaign run by volunteering staff and managers at the trust. XXXLOCAL EXAMPLESXXX.

XXORGANISATION CHIEFXXX said:

"XXXX".

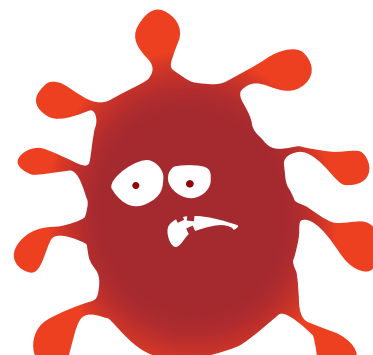
The trust's latest figures show that the figures have grown since those announced today by Public Health England were collected and currently stand at XXX. The trust aims to exceed the XX achieved by the end of last winter and is on-track to do so, as it is above its rate of XXX at this time last year.

These staff flu vaccinations are not compulsory anywhere in the NHS. However a national campaign called NHS flu fighter (run by the NHS Employers organisation) vigorously supports trusts to give vaccinations because they are safe and very effective. By the end of last winter a total of 534,090 (54.8 per cent) frontline staff across England had been vaccinated against seasonal flu - a significant increase on 459,293 (45.6 per cent) in 2012/13, 44.6 per cent in 2011/12 and 359,080 (34.7 per cent) in 2010/11, the winter before flu fighter began.

XXXXXXX, chief executive of the NHS Employers organisation, said:

"XXXORGANISATIONXXX is among those leading the charge on something that's really important - making seasonal flu vaccinations commonplace in the NHS. Last year over half of frontline NHS staff had flu vaccinations for the first time ever, so we know this annual campaign is working.

"When you want to change habits in the workplace it's important that staff get behind it, and it's even better when staff are bursting with ideas like we're seeing here."



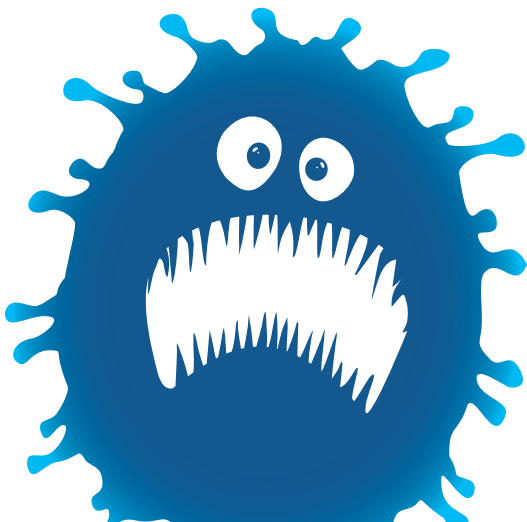
The full Public Health England figures are available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/XXXX.

Extensive information on the national NHS flu fighter campaign and why vaccinations are important is available on NHS Employers' flu fighter web pages: www.nhsemployers.org/flu

ENDS

Notes for editors:

The national NHS flu fighter campaign is run by the NHS Employers organisation, which is the recognised body for employers in the NHS in England, supporting them to put patients first. NHS flu fighter gives local organisations guidance and resources as well as social media channels – see #flufighter on twitter. It also runs the annual flu fighter awards and has expanded the campaign to include Wales.



Sample/template articles for internal and external websites

Small sample article for modification and use on your internal staff-facing intranet

Get your flu vaccination – it's more convenient than ever!

This is the best year yet to arrange your seasonal flu vaccination, which is a really important step in protecting yourself, your patients and your family. We've listened to your feedback and have made having a flu jab more convenient than ever before.

We have more [locations/times] around our buildings where you can have a jab and there are some new ways to contact colleagues to arrange it [XXXADD DETAILS OF CLINIC TIMES OR SUCH LIKEXXX](#). There's a free biscuit and a cup of tea!

We know these jabs are a great thing to have – they're safe and effective – but in case you're still unsure, we have the best information that's impartial and **supported by science**. You can see more information at [XXXTRUST PAGEXXX](#) or www.nhsemployers.com/flu. Why not have a conversation on twitter at [@nhsflufighter](#) or [#flufighter](#)

The 2013/14 flu season saw over half of all frontline NHS staff in England receive the flu vaccination – that's more than 500,000 staff. It's time to keep the momentum going and to make it truly commonplace, just like washing your hands. Please do join in and help make that happen. It's appreciated and these vaccinations really can save lives.

If you do have reservations, please find time to read the mythbusters on our website. For example, neither being pregnant nor having been vaccinated a year ago should stop you from having a vaccination now.

Request your vaccination today at [XXXCONTACT DETAILSXXX](#)

Sample article for modification and use on your external public-facing website

Health staff line up for their flu jab

[XXXTRUSTXXX](#) has been getting more frontline staff vaccinated against seasonal flu every year and we are now working hard to increase the uptake this winter.

Last year was a mild flu season but a bigger outbreak is always possible. We want our staff to be protected so that they can't carry the virus or pass it to each other or to vulnerable patients. Vaccinations really can save the lives of patients, staff and their families.

The good news is that [XXX](#) of our staff chose to be vaccinated last year, even though these vaccinations are entirely voluntary. That's [XXXCOMPARE WITH NATIONAL TABLESXXX](#).

We are committed to providing vaccinations for any of our staff who request them. And there's a lot happening to encourage them to have it, to make it convenient, and to answer any questions they have. [XXXLIVELY LOCAL EXAMPLESXXX](#)

These vaccinations are very effective and we are getting great expert advice and resources from the

national flu fighter campaign, which is run by the NHS Employers organisation and supported by Public Health England.

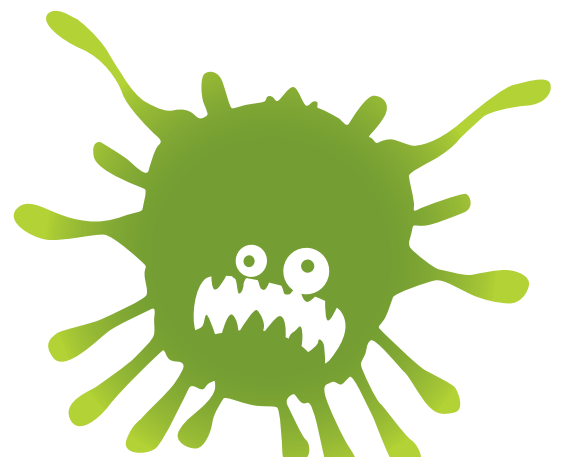
Around 175,000 more NHS staff in England are now choosing to be vaccinated compared to when the national campaign began in 2011. Last winter over half of all NHS frontline staff had it done, for the first time ever, which adds up to more than 500,000 doctors, nurses, GPs, healthcare assistants and other staff. We hope **XXXORGANSATIONXXX** will be among the first in the NHS to make its staff flu vaccinations truly commonplace.

XXXINSERT QUOTE FROM RELEVANT STAFFXXX

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
- 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 using #flufighter.



Flu fighter awards

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

There are some amazing stories behind the success of local flu vaccination programmes. The awards not only shine a light on these achievements but also celebrate the innovative approaches that have been developed in local campaigns.

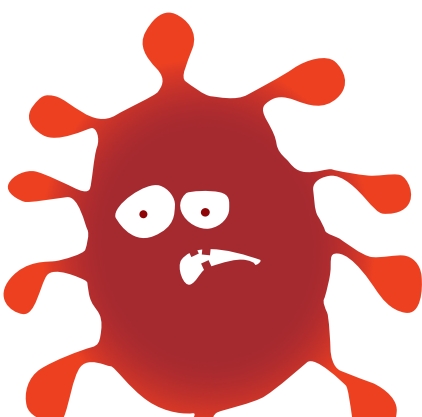
The awards are an excellent motivator throughout the vaccination season, providing an opportunity for flu teams to raise their profiles and share their strategies to help flu vaccinations become an integral part of health and wellbeing.

They can also be an excellent way of securing local press coverage and an opportunity to share and find out what other trusts have been doing to make their flu fighter campaigns a success.

Previous categories have included:

- Flu fighter champion
- Innovative flu fighter campaign
- Most improved flu fighter campaign
- #flufighter award
- Best flu fighter team

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



Social media

Digital channels, such as twitter, are a great resource that allow you to engage with staff in a more immediate and direct way over 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 really comprehensive **toolkit** that's completely free. **@nhsflufighter** has a tremendous amount of engagement from all staff, so please join the conversation.

What you can use

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

The most popular channels are twitter, Facebook, Instagram or YouTube. Have a look at what you think would be the best options 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 get 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:

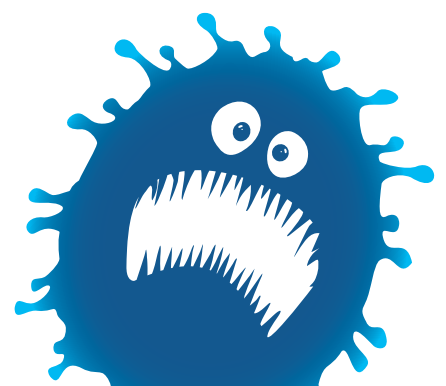
- tweet regularly to keep your readers interested
- try to keep your tweets shorter than 100 characters
- include links, pictures and videos where appropriate
- know your audience
- follow accounts that are interesting to you or your organisation
- test and learn to optimise the timing of your tweets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

Videos

If the resource is available, creating a video can be a great way of engaging with your audience and conveying your message through your chosen communications channels. Before you start to film your video look at what you are trying to achieve and identify the message(s) you want to get across, and enlist help from your communications team or staff with prior experience.

To give you inspiration, we have 15 **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.

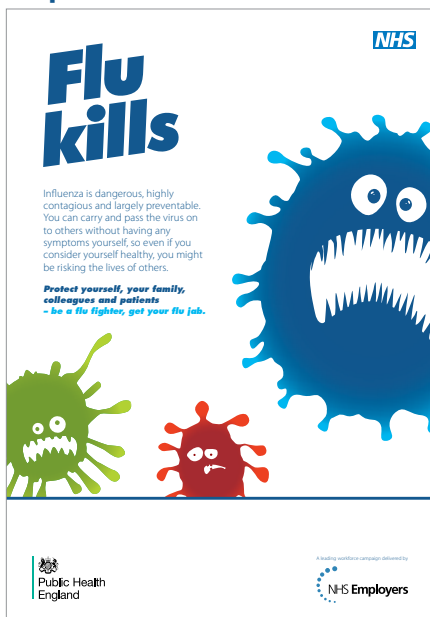


Graphics and photography

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 include images of a range of frontline staff and resources with the flu fighter logo.

Copies of these materials, including web banners, can be downloaded from our website www.nhsemployers.org/flu, along with details of where you can order branded pens, mugs and t-shirts at a subsidised price.

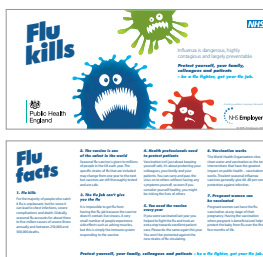
A3 poster



A4 posters



DL leaflet



Lapel badges



Web Banners



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11. Pachucki CT et al. Op cit.
12. Cunney RJ et al. Op cit.

Contact

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

