



Dear Colleagues

WINTER PROGRAMME 2024 – SEASONAL FLU AND COVID-19 VACCINATION

We are writing to provide you with further information about the winter seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme 2024.

We would like to begin by thanking you for your hard work in delivering the spring COVID-19 vaccination programme as well as successfully introducing the new [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) programmes](#) for pregnant women and older adults, during what is a particularly busy time of year for our Health Boards.

Key Objectives for the Winter 2024 programme

1. To protect those in society who continue to be more at-risk of severe COVID-19 and flu, to prevent severe illness, hospitalisation and death.
2. To continue to focus on a co-administration model, offering flu and COVID-19 vaccinations at the same appointment where possible.
3. To minimise further pressure on the NHS and social care services during the winter period.

Eligibility

4. For winter 2024, **both COVID-19 and flu vaccination** will be offered to the following groups in Scotland:
 - Residents in care homes for older adults
 - All adults aged 65 years and over
 - Individuals aged 6 months and over who are in a clinical at risk group (as defined in tables 3 and 4 in the [COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book](#)), including pregnant women
 - Frontline Health & Social Care Workers
 - Staff in care homes for older adults

**From Chief Medical Officer
Interim Chief Nursing
Officer
Chief Pharmaceutical
Officer**

Professor Sir Gregor Smith
Anne Armstrong
Professor Alison Strath

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Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
Medical Directors, NHS Boards
Primary Care Leads, NHS Boards
Directors of Nursing & Midwifery, NHS Boards
Chief Officers of Integration Authorities
Directors of Pharmacy
Directors of Public Health
General practitioners

Immunisation Co-ordinators
CPHMs
Scottish Ambulance Service

For information

Chairs, NHS Boards
Practice Nurses
Chief Executives, Local Authorities

Infectious Disease Consultants
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Further Enquiries

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5. As per the [2024 Adult & Child Flu CMO letter](#), people in the following groups will be offered **flu vaccination only**:

- Those aged 18-64 years with an eligible flu-only clinical risk condition
- Unpaid carers, including young carers under the age of 16 years
- Household contacts of those with immunosuppression
- School age pupils (primary and secondary)
- Children aged 2-5 (not at school)
- Children aged 6 months to 2 years at-risk
- Poultry workers
- Non-frontline NHS workers
- Asylum seekers living in Home Office hotel or B&B accommodation
- Those experiencing homelessness
- Those experiencing substance misuse
- All prisoners within the Scottish prison estate

We would like to reiterate that the Scottish Government has decided to end the offer to other extended groups which were added as part of the pandemic response, notably those aged 50-64, teachers, and prison staff.

Frontline health & social care workers & staff in care homes for older adults

6. Frontline health & social care workers (HSCWs) & staff in care homes for older adults will be offered both COVID-19 and flu vaccination this winter.
7. The JCVI advises flu vaccination for frontline HSCWs and staff in care homes for older adults, but for winter 2024 it **does not** advise COVID-19 vaccination for these groups, principally as the indirect benefits of vaccination (vaccinating an individual in order to reduce the risk of severe disease in other people) are less evident now compared with previous years. However, its [statement](#) notes that:

“Health and social care service providers may wish to consider whether vaccination provided as an occupational health programme is appropriate. Ahead of such considerations, health departments may choose to continue to extend an offer of vaccination to frontline health and social care workers and staff working in care homes for older adults in autumn 2024.”

8. Therefore this winter Scottish Government has agreed to offer COVID-19 vaccination to frontline HSCWs and staff in care homes for older adults. The JCVI statement notes that their inclusion, at the discretion of the four nation health departments, is an interim position whilst further assessment of the possible need for a future occupational health offer is undertaken. The JCVI statement also goes on to describe the limited clinical benefits to this group.
9. COVID-19 vaccination for frontline HSCWs will therefore be available for those who wish to receive it in winter 2024, but we have also asked Health Boards to prioritise delivery of the flu programme to this group. The result of this ask is that greater resources will be deployed to make flu vaccination easier and more accessible, such as through peer-to-peer vaccination in the workplace.

10. The importance of flu vaccination for this group is detailed in the [Seasonal influenza \(flu\) immunisation programme 2024-25: confirmation of adult and child cohorts \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/immunisation-programme-2024-25-confirmation-of-adult-and-child-cohorts)

Unpaid carers and household contacts of the immunosuppressed

11. In winter 2022 and winter 2023, unpaid carers and household contacts of immunosuppressed people were eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine under JCVI advice. It is important to note that from winter 2024, as per JCVI advice, they are no longer eligible for COVID-19 vaccination although, as indicated above, they remain eligible for flu vaccination.

Pregnant women

12. Most Health Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) will be delivering flu vaccines to pregnant women through their local maternity services again this season. In maternity services where flu and / or COVID-19 vaccination isn't offered at maternity appointments, midwives will encourage women to attend their local vaccination clinic and give details on how to book an appointment.

Programme age limits

13. The age cut off for the winter 2024 programme is 31 March 2025. If an individual meets the age-related eligibility criteria before 1 April 2025 they will be eligible for vaccination. The only exception is for the infant programme, where the baby must have turned 6 months before the programme start on 1 September 2024. This also applies to those pre-school children eligible for flu aged 2. If a child is diagnosed with a new risk condition during the programme, their clinician, parent or carer can refer them for vaccination via the clinical referral route detailed in **Annex C**.
14. There will be a data refresh of the at risk COVID-19 groups before 1 November 2024, to identify those who have become newly eligible since the start of the programme.

Programme timings

15. Below are the dates for the winter FVCV programme. Also of note is that the older adult [RSV programme](#) will run from August to the end of September:
- **Early September:** Start of child flu programme (*LAIV vaccine supply dependent*)
 - **Mid-September:** Adult FVCV programme begins with flu only groups
 - **23/09/24:** Start of co-administration of COVID-19 and flu
 - **08/12/24:** 85% of the entire eligible adult population will have been offered an appointment (be it a dated & timed appointment, or a prompt to book), on a date prior to, or on 8 December
 - **31/01/25:** COVID-19 vaccination ends
 - **31/03/25:** Flu vaccination ends

Further information can be found in the annexes:

- **Annex A:** Vaccine information
- **Annex B:** Programme resources & communication materials
- **Annex B:** Workforce education materials
- **Annex C:** Information on clinical referral routes

We would like to recognise and express our sincere gratitude for your professionalism and continuing support in planning and delivering this important vaccination programme. Thank you, and we wish you all the best for the winter 2024 programme.

Yours sincerely,

Gregor Smith

Professor Sir Gregor Smith
Chief Medical Officer

Anne Armstrong

Anne Armstrong
**Interim Chief Nursing
Officer**

Alison Strath

Professor Alison Strath
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Annex A: Vaccine products for Scotland's winter programme 2024

COVID-19

For the winter 2024 COVID-19 programme, the following COVID-19 vaccines are advised (please refer to the [COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book](#) for more details on the most up to date variant vaccines available for deployment this winter):

For all individuals aged 18 years and over:

- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) vaccine. Dose: 50 micrograms
- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) vaccine. Dose: 30 micrograms

For young people aged 12 to 17 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) vaccine. Dose: 30 micrograms

For children aged 5 to 11 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) vaccine. Dose: 10 micrograms

For children aged 6 months to 4 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) vaccine. Dose: 3 micrograms

Novavax Matrix-M adjuvanted COVID-19 vaccine (Nuvaxovid) may be used as a booster dose for persons aged 12 years and above when alternative products are considered not clinically suitable.

Covid-19 vaccine dosage interval

The COVID-19 vaccine should usually be offered no earlier than around 6 months after the last vaccine dose, although operational flexibility around the timing of vaccination in relation to the last vaccine dose is considered appropriate (with a minimum interval of 3 months between doses). More information on operational flexibility will be provided in the [COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book](#).

Seasonal flu

Further information on flu vaccine types can be found in the [Adult & Child Flu CMO letter 2024](#).

Public Health Scotland (PHS) will provide Boards with template Patient Group Directions and National Vaccine Protocols for both flu and COVID-19 prior to programme start.

We have procured sufficient flu and COVID-19 vaccines to support the programme, however, ongoing and effective management at a local level is essential to the success of the programme. Health Boards should fully consider the needs of their eligible cohorts and plan appropriately and timeously in order to successfully deliver the programme.



Annex B: Programme resources and communication materials

Communication materials

PHS will provide a range of communications materials, messaging and assets to Health Boards and key stakeholders to help promote the vaccination offer to the general public, with a focus on groups when uptake is historically low. PHS will also develop toolkits to encourage the promotion of the winter vaccinations that will support NHS and social care colleagues.

The public should be signposted to NHS Inform for up to date information on the vaccination programme [Winter vaccines | NHS inform](#).

Workforce education

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and PHS have developed a range of vaccine specific workforce education resources/opportunities for both COVID-19 and seasonal flu. These are, or will be, available on the NES TURAS Learn website:

Flu: [Seasonal flu programme | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](#)

COVID-19: [COVID-19 vaccination programme | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](#)

In addition a variety of generic supporting resources e.g. vaccinating children and young people are also available on the NES TURASLearn site at [Immunisation | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](#)

Annex C: Clinical referral routes

- A clinical referral route has been well established over the last two and a half years of the combined flu and COVID-19 programme and remains the same for winter 2024.
- If an individual knows that they are eligible for vaccination this winter as part of a clinical at-risk group, or by virtue of being aged 65 years or older (up to and including 31 March 2025), but they have not been sent an appointment or prompt, they can book via the [portal](#) or by calling the helpline on 0800 030 8013.
- If an individual thinks they may be eligible as part of a clinical at-risk group, but is unsure, they can call the helpline which will refer them to their local Health Board to ascertain eligibility and bring them forward for vaccination, if required.
- An individual can also consult their GP practice or secondary care clinician who can then assess the individual and complete a referral form to refer their case through local referral pathways for vaccination. If GP practices or clinicians are unsure of their local referral pathway, they should contact their local immunisation team or co-ordinator for more information.