



Protecting and improving the nation's health

### **Vaccinating frontline health and social care workers against flu factsheet**

- It is recommended that all frontline health and social care workers (HSCWs) are vaccinated against flu to help protect themselves and those they care for.
- The impact of flu on frail and vulnerable patients can be fatal and outbreaks of the virus can cause severe disruption in communities, care homes and hospitals.
- Frontline health and social care workers are more likely to be exposed to the influenza virus than the general population. HSCWs can be infected with the flu virus, have no symptoms but can still pass the virus to others including patients and residents.
- Flu can affect all age groups and even in healthy people can be an unpleasant illness lasting for a couple of weeks. In different years flu affects some age groups more than others.
- Flu viruses can change over time. The vaccines are made in advance of the flu season and protect against the strains of the virus that are most likely to circulate that year. Flu viruses usually circulate from around late December to late March. HSCWs should receive the vaccine as soon as possible once it is available.
- The flu vaccine has an excellent safety record. It doesn't contain live viruses so cannot give you flu. Vaccine effectiveness varies each year and flu vaccination remains the best protection we have against the influenza virus.
- The flu vaccine is less effective with advancing age, so vaccination of staff is an important strategy in providing indirect protection for elderly residents and those receiving homecare.
- Research undertaken by Public Health England shows that if a member of staff is vaccinated it has a positive impact on whether a person in an eligible group accepts vaccination. Making sure HSCWs understand the importance of getting themselves and others vaccinated will help reduce flu related illness and deaths.
- Flu vaccination of frontline HSCWs is an important part of winter resilience planning, reducing GP visits, hospital admissions and staff absence due to sickness.
- The clinical evidence on healthcare worker vaccination can be found on the flu fighters website at: [www.nhsemployers.org/case-studies-and-resources/2016/09/flu-fighter-clinical-evidence](http://www.nhsemployers.org/case-studies-and-resources/2016/09/flu-fighter-clinical-evidence)