

July 2015

## PSNC Briefing 034/15: Community Pharmacy Flu Vaccination Advanced Service

### Introduction and background to pharmacy flu vaccination services

Each year from September through to January the NHS runs a seasonal flu vaccination campaign aiming to vaccinate all patients who are at risk of developing more serious complications from the virus. These include people aged 65 years and over, pregnant women and those with certain health conditions.

Community pharmacies have offered flu vaccinations as a private service for many years, often to a mixture of patients who would not qualify for NHS vaccinations and some who would but were prepared to pay for it anyway. The accessibility of pharmacies, their extended opening hours and the option to walk in without an appointment have proved popular with patients seeking vaccinations.

In recent years many pharmacies have also been commissioned to provide NHS flu vaccination services. These services sit alongside the national GP vaccination service, giving patients another choice of venue for their vaccination and helping commissioners to meet their local NHS vaccination targets. Many schemes demonstrated high levels of patient satisfaction and evidence that pharmacy vaccination is accessible, often capturing “hard to reach” patients who would not otherwise take up the offer of vaccination.

PSNC has worked hard to persuade the NHS of this success and of the value that a national service could bring. NHS England has decided that in 2015/16 all community pharmacies should be allowed to vaccinate patients in at-risk groups and they have commissioned this as a new Advanced service.

#### **FAQ: How many pharmacies currently provide flu vaccinations?**

To assess the prevalence of these services PSNC conducted a survey of LPCs early in 2015 and found that:

- Almost 90% of Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs) had a local pharmacy flu vaccination service commissioned during the 2014/15 season;
- Pharmacy flu vaccination services were commissioned by 21 of the 25 NHS England Area Teams; and
- More than 5,000 pharmacy contractors signed up to the services, and in some areas 84% of those signed up were active vaccination providers.

#### **FAQ: Why couldn't we have more notice of the flu vaccination service?**

PSNC fully understands the need for contractors to have good notice of changes to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) and this is regularly communicated to the NHS in our negotiations. NHS England wishes to commission this service from community pharmacies in order to create additional NHS capacity and to improve vaccination rates during the winter period. As a consequence of this the timelines to implement the service are shorter than would be ideal, but as flu vaccinations are currently commissioned from a great many pharmacy contractors at a local level, this should ease implementation. As the service is an Advanced service contractors have the choice as to whether they provide it.

#### **Q. Can pharmacies in Wales provide the new Advanced service?**

The new Advanced service only applies to England; Community Pharmacy Wales undertakes separate negotiations on Advanced services which are provided in Wales.

## The new Advanced Service

Community pharmacies will be commissioned to provide seasonal flu vaccinations to eligible adult patients, starting from September 2015. This is an Advanced Service and it can be provided by any community pharmacy in England that has a consultation room, can procure the vaccination and meet the data recording requirements, and has appropriately trained staff. There is no limit on the number of vaccinations pharmacies can claim for as long as they are given to eligible patients.

Eligible adult patients are people aged 18 years and over, at the time of vaccination, defined in [the annual flu letter](#). They include:

- people aged 65 years and over (including those becoming age 65 years by 31 March 2016);
- pregnant women;
- carers;
- those in long-stay residential care homes;
- people aged from eighteen to less than 65 years of age with one or more of the following medical conditions:
  - chronic (long-term) respiratory disease, such as severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or bronchitis;
  - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure;
  - chronic kidney disease at stage three, four or five;
  - chronic liver disease;
  - chronic neurological disease, such as Parkinson's disease or motor neurone disease, or learning disability;
  - diabetes;
  - splenic dysfunction; or
  - a weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment).

Further work needs to be undertaken by PSNC, NHS Employers and NHS England in order to prepare for implementation of the service. Contractors will be updated on this as soon as more information is available. In the meantime contractors may like to download and read the annual flu letter (available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-plan-2015-to-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-plan-2015-to-2016)) remembering that some of the information (e.g. on vaccinations for children) will only be relevant for general practice.

### **FAQ: A seasonal flu vaccination service is already commissioned from community pharmacies in my area. What will happen to that service?**

Normally this service is commissioned by NHS England, and the national flu vaccination service will replace any service commissioned by local NHS England teams. NHS England has informed its local teams of the change and LPCs are likely to be in contact with them about it.

### **FAQ: My local GP practices are very resistant to pharmacy services; how will I recruit patients for flu vaccination?**

Collaborative working with local GP practices is an aim that all pharmacy teams will share, but it is possible that the national commissioning of flu vaccinations from community pharmacies may result in tensions with local GP practices. The majority of local NHS England teams commissioned a flu vaccination service from community pharmacy during the 2014/15 season and this prior local commissioning may already have exposed these issues.

Community pharmacies will be able to proactively offer flu vaccination to eligible patients alongside dispensing and other services such as MUR and NMS and whilst GP support for this would be helpful and should be encouraged, it is not necessary in order to successfully provide the service. PSNC will be working nationally to try to ease any tensions with GPs.

**FAQ: Will the flu vaccination service be commissioned on an ongoing basis?**

The expectation is that this service will be commissioned on an ongoing basis, however as with any service commissioned by the NHS, it will be necessary to demonstrate that the service is offering value for money and having a positive impact on patient care. The existing evidence on locally commissioned flu vaccination services is however very strong and PSNC anticipates that this will also be the case for the national flu vaccination service.

**FAQ: What will be the legal basis for the provision of flu vaccinations in the new Advanced service?**

A national Patient Group Direction (PGD) will form the legal basis for supplying the vaccine. The PGD will be issued by NHS England.

**Procurement and other service matters**

As is the case for any community pharmacy service, contractors will be required to offer it in accordance with a service specification. PSNC, NHS Employers and NHS England are currently finalising the service specification, and it is likely to include details such as:

- Payment and reimbursement details;
- Details of eligible patients;
- Accreditation requirements;
- Data recording requirements;
- Claiming for payments; and
- Post payment verification arrangements.

For procurement of flu vaccinations the NHS has set out a list of possible vaccinations in the annual flu letter and it will be up to contractors to source these from their suppliers. There will be no central procurement of vaccinations for pharmacies. Many pharmacies will already have experience of procuring vaccinations having provided private or NHS vaccinations in previous years.

**FAQ: My pharmacy doesn't have a consultation room; can I provide the flu vaccination service?**

No. Having a consultation room which meets the existing requirements for provision of MUR/NMS is a prerequisite for provision of the flu vaccination service.

**FAQ: How will I record and claim payment for vaccinations I have administered?**

It is not yet possible to say whether data collection and payment claims will be undertaken electronically or via paper, but these details will be shared with contractors as soon as they are available.

**FAQ: Will we need to report vaccinations to GPs or to a national reporting system or both?**

Details of pharmacy reporting requirements are still being finalised with NHS England, but reporting to the patient's GP practice will be a requirement, as is the case for locally commissioned vaccination services. PSNC is seeking to minimise burden on contractors within the data capture requirements; but it will be important to capture enough information to be able to properly evaluate the pharmacy service. Contractors will be updated as soon as details have been finalised and guidance and templates on data reporting will be available.

**FAQ: Is the pharmacy scheme being supported by any communications programmes?**

Public Health England is coordinating communications and resources around the 2015/16 flu vaccination programme and information leaflets and other marketing materials will be available later in the summer. Pharmacies will be able to access and use these resources to help promote their service. In addition local NHS England teams and LPCs may have specific campaigns and toolkits for community pharmacies to use and they may promote the service in the local press. PSNC will provide template communications materials for pharmacies and LPCs to consider in due course.

## Training and help

As has been the case for the existing Advanced Services, contractors will be required to demonstrate that anyone providing the vaccinations in their pharmacies has the skills needed to do so.

Flu vaccination services have been widely commissioned from community pharmacies over the last few years and as a consequence many pharmacists will already have received the training they need to offer vaccinations. Pharmacy contractors will need to ensure their staff have the necessary skills to undertake vaccination of eligible patients.

For those who do need training, there are now a range of organisations offering training and support for provision of flu vaccination services. With the national commissioning of the service it may be that additional organisations will enter the market to provide training to pharmacists and their teams. Contractors and pharmacists will be free to choose the training they wish to undertake in order to satisfy themselves that they have the skills needed to provide the service.

### **FAQ: Is there any other training I should consider?**

As well as training specifically on vaccination provision, contractors and pharmacists may wish to consider training for themselves or their team on topics such as consultation skills or first aid, or even marketing or time management, as these may better equip them to provide the service. The core vaccination training will cover matters such as management of allergic reactions and patient consultation.

## Fees

Community pharmacy contractors will receive remuneration of £7.64 per administered dose of vaccine plus reimbursement of the vaccine costs. Drug costs will be reimbursed at the basic price of the drug calculated in accordance with the Drug Tariff.

An additional fee of £1.50 will also be paid per vaccination. This is in recognition of costs incurred relating to the provision of the service including training, revalidation and disposal of clinical waste. Such costs are not reimbursed elsewhere in the CCPF.

Funding for the service will be in addition to and outside of total agreed community pharmacy funding for 2015/16, instead coming from NHS vaccination budgets. The total delivered will be dependent on uptake of the service, but no cap has been set for this.

### **FAQ: Will the NHS cover set up costs for the flu vaccination service?**

Set up costs that contractors incur will not be separately funded, but they have been considered in the setting of the fees for provision of the service.

### **FAQ: Where is the money for the flu vaccination service coming from?**

The service is being funded from NHS England's budget for the annual flu vaccination programme.

## Actions for contractors and their teams

Ahead of the introduction of the new Advanced Service contractors may wish to consider some of the following actions.

- If you already provide flu vaccinations either privately or on the NHS, consider with your team how you can get ready to switch to the national service later this year (more guidance on this will be available in due course);
- If you do not already provide flu vaccinations, consider what you might need to do to start when the national service launches, reviewing training options and other preparation (more guidance will be available on this in due course);

- Consider any training requirements for you and your team – how will you ensure that there is always someone available to provide the service, and how can you maximise opportunities to vaccinate patients;
- Consider your stock requirements and procure the vaccine from your suppliers – a list of possible vaccinations is included in [the annual flu letter](#);
- Consider your SOPs and whether these will need adjustment following the launch of the new service, for example will you allow patients to book appointments and if so how will this work;
- Review working practices to ensure that you and your teams can build the new service into your routine work as well as continuing to offer the New Medicine Service, MURs, and any local services;
- Consider whether you could speak to any local GP practices about the service to try to work together to ensure that patients are not confused and that vaccination targets are met; and
- Sign up to PSNC’s Newsletters at [psnc.org.uk/email](https://psnc.org.uk/email) to ensure you don’t miss out as more information on the service becomes available.

### Actions for LPCs

Where LPCs have a flu vaccination service commissioned already they will want to speak to their local NHS England team to ensure that everyone understands the new service and that there will be no need for a local adult flu vaccination services. LPCs may also want to consider:

- Supporting contractors for example through regular communications about service updates and by highlighting training options and other resources;
- Hosting a training event for any pharmacists who need it locally;
- Considering any patient communications to highlight the new service, e.g. LPCs may wish to organise an event with local press when the service launches;
- Considering what meetings with local stakeholders might be helpful to ensure that as many patients are possible receive NHS flu vaccinations; and
- Looking out for further information and resources on this on PSNC’s website and newsletters.

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact [Alastair Buxton, Director of NHS Services](#).