

October 2016

PSNC Briefing 052/16: Flu vaccination: The benefits of a community pharmacy service

This is the second year that NHS England has commissioned a national community pharmacy Flu Vaccination Advanced Service, meaning all pharmacies in England can offer an NHS vaccine to eligible patients aged 18 or over, subject to meeting certain requirements. Before the launch of the nationally commissioned service, community pharmacies had been offering flu vaccinations to patients, both NHS funded and privately, for a number of years.

This briefing sets out the evidence we have for community pharmacy flu vaccination services, showing that they can effectively augment the vaccination service provided by GP practices. Pharmacies and LPCs may wish to use some of the information and statistics to help promote the national Flu Vaccination Service to patients and local stakeholders.

It may also be useful to LPCs who are experiencing negativity from local doctors or Local Medical Committees (LMCs) about the recommissioning of the Flu Vaccination Service.

The document can be used in addition to [PSNC Briefing 053/16 \(Flu vaccination: Responsive lines for LPCs\)](#).

The current situation: NHS Flu Vaccination statistics

Every year across England the NHS consistently fails to meet its targets for vaccinating people in at risk groups against influenza. In 2015/16 the NHS vaccinated just¹:

- 42.3% pregnant women; and
- 45.1% of under-65s in at-risk groups.

Vaccination rates vary regionally, but in general services are not meeting the minimum vaccination uptake rate, with some groups of patients, such as pregnant women, proving particularly hard to reach.

Community pharmacy qualifications

1. Consultation rooms

Most pharmacies now have a private consultation room – which is a requirement to be able to offer the community pharmacy Flu Vaccination Service – meaning community pharmacists have the facilities to offer vaccination services in a private setting.

2. Experience

Many pharmacies have been offering flu vaccinations, both privately and NHS funded, for a number of years so a significant number of pharmacists are fully trained as vaccinators.

3. Training

All pharmacists providing the service will have undertaken training which covers the national Core Curriculum for Immunisation Training. Face-to-face training on injection technique and basic life support is undertaken

¹ [The national flu immunisation programme 2016/17 letter](#)

every two years (which is likely to be much more frequently than the training GPs or practice nurses undertake).

4. Safety

Pharmacies will have an anaphylaxis kit available as per the recommendations in the Green Book and pharmacists will undertake face-to-face basic life support training every two years.

5. Vaccinations

Pharmacies will use the same vaccination as all other healthcare providers, sourcing from the list of approved vaccinations outlined in the Annual Flu Letter.¹

6. Pharmacy regulation

Community pharmacists are regulated by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) who also monitor and regulate community pharmacy premises. The GPhC regularly inspects community pharmacies to ensure compliance with their standards. Pharmacies have been inspected by their professional regulator on a regular basis for over a century; the other healthcare regulators are only just starting to adopt an inspection approach.

The benefits of a community pharmacy service: access, convenience and targeting hard-to-reach groups

7. Accessibility

- Community pharmacies are highly accessible, located in the heart of communities where people live, work and shop;
- 89.2% of the population live within a 20-minute walk of a pharmacy, making these the most accessible health locations across England;²
- An estimated 99.8% of people from the most deprived areas live within just a 20-minute walk of a community pharmacy;²
- The local pharmacy is often patients' and the public's first point of contact and, for some, their only contact with a healthcare professional;³
- 92.8% of users find pharmacy flu vaccination services more accessible than other services;⁴
- An estimated 95% of people visit a pharmacy at least once per year;⁵ and
- The typical prescribing cycle for medicines to treat long-term conditions means that patients in the at risk group will attend a pharmacy up to five times within the flu season for a prescription, presenting opportunities for vaccination.

8. Convenience

Many pharmacies are open for longer hours than GP practices, including at weekends, and patients can often walk in for a vaccination without an appointment.

- There are over 11,600 community pharmacies in England providing NHS services; and
- Many pharmacies are open for extended hours in the evenings and weekends and nearly 900 of them are open for 100 hours a week.⁶

² [BMJ Open - The positive pharmacy care law: an area-level analysis of the relationship between community pharmacy distribution, urbanity and social deprivation in England \(2014\)](#)

³ [Local Government Association - The community pharmacy offer for improving the public's health: a briefing for local government and health and wellbeing boards \(March 2016\)](#)

⁴ Seasonal Influenza Vaccination 2011/12 Isle of Wight Community Pharmacy Report: Pinnacle Health Partnership

⁵ [RSPH - Reducing premature mortality: the role of community pharmacists \(2015\)](#)

⁶ [NHS England - Community Pharmacy, helping provide better quality and resilient urgent care \(2014\)](#)

Patients can also have the vaccine administered at a location convenient to them, rather than being limited to attending a clinic at their local GP practice.

- During 2014/15 between a fifth and a quarter of eligible individuals receive the vaccine from a pharmacy in London in an administrative area that was different from where they are registered with their GP;⁷ and
- Most patients found it more convenient and easier to access a pharmacy for their vaccine when considering work, transport and other commitments.⁸

9. Hard-to-reach groups

- 1.6 million people visit a pharmacy every day, and these contacts help pharmacies to access traditionally hard-to-reach patient groups;⁹
- Pharmacy staff reflect the social and ethnic backgrounds of the communities they serve and they are accessible to deprived individuals who may not access conventional NHS services, which help to improve health inequalities;³
- Community pharmacies are accessed by people who may not access conventional NHS services, helping to reduce health inequalities. For example, people from deprived communities and ethnic background, asylum seekers, travellers, etc;³
- 37% of the 500,000 people vaccinated via a private flu vaccination service provided by community pharmacies would not have had the vaccination if it had not been offered by the pharmacy;¹⁰
- In 2014/15 in Cumbria and the North East 37.4% of vaccines administered in community pharmacies were to at-risk groups. Of these 44% were administered to patients with respiratory disease, 21% to patients with diabetes, 10% to patients with chronic heart disease, 8% to carers as well as other at-risk groups;¹¹ and
- In 2014/15 in West Yorkshire 28.1% of flu vaccines administered in community pharmacies were for patients with chronic respiratory disease and 14.4% for patients with diabetes. Overall 47% were administered to patients in at-risk groups.¹²
- In a large evaluation of data from 32 community pharmacy services commissioned in 2014/15 and involving over 114,000 vaccinations:
 - over half of consultations were for individuals under the age of 65;
 - 16% of vaccinations were to those who had not previously received an NHS 'flu vaccination; and
 - 15.4% of patients vaccinated would have potentially gone unvaccinated if not for pharmacy, where the GP was unable to provide the service or patient was unable to attend GP.¹³
- A study based on over 89,000 privately paying patients identified that 6% of these were eligible for NHS vaccine but had chosen to visit a pharmacy for reasons of accessibility, convenience and preference for pharmacy environment.¹⁴

Further evidence for community pharmacy services

Before the Flu Vaccination Service was nationally commissioned a number of areas had commissioned community pharmacy flu vaccination schemes; and both these and private services had succeeded in increasing vaccination rates, as well as proving popular with patients:

⁷ Delivery of the seasonal influenza immunization programme in London: A health economic evaluation (cost-effectiveness analysis) of the community pharmacy initiative

⁸ NHS England Cheshire & Merseyside Sub Regional Team NHS Seasonal Influenza Immunisation programme 2014/15

⁹ Community pharmacy use; market research report: www.dh.gov.uk

¹⁰ HC 1048-III Health Committee – PH123 Written Evidence from Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics

¹¹ LPCs of Cumbria and the North East NHS flu vaccination evaluation report 2014-15

¹² West Yorkshire Community Pharmacy Seasonal Flu Vaccination Service, Service Evaluation 2014/15

¹³ PharmOutcomes Seasonal influenza vaccination in community pharmacy – 2014/15 season – 32 services covering 114,298 patients

¹⁴ [Anderson, C. and Thornley, T. \(2014\) "It's easier in pharmacy": why some patients prefer to pay for flu jabs rather than use the National Health Service. BMC Health Services Research 2014 14 \(35\): \(24 January 2014\)](#)

Pharmacies were already offering the service

- Out of 25 Area Teams (ATs) (now local NHS England teams) 21 (84%) commissioned a flu vaccination service from community pharmacies in the 2014/15 flu season;¹⁵ and
- Pharmacists vaccinated 232,388 patients through locally commissioned services in 2014/15 – not including private schemes.¹⁶

People like pharmacy

- Royal Society of Public Health research demonstrates widespread public support for public health programmes and services delivered by pharmacy teams;⁵
- Carers rated the pharmacy as the most carer-friendly service they receive out of all community services across health, social care, work, transport and education;¹⁷
- Pharmacists came out as the most trusted profession in a recent survey of over 2,000 members of the public – 97% trusted pharmacists putting them above other key professions including opticians, dentists and GPs;¹⁸ and
- 71% of the public are comfortable receiving a wide range of services and advice from their local community pharmacy, including vaccinations such as flu and Hepatitis B.¹⁹

People like pharmacy flu services

- 99.6% of users rated an NHS funded pharmacy flu vaccination service as good or excellent and 98.4% said that they would use community pharmacy again;⁴
- 97.4% were very satisfied with the service;²⁰
- 99.6% of the patients stated they would be happy to use the service in the future;²⁰ and
- 97.7% of people stated that they would recommend the service to a friend.¹²

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact [Rosie Taylor, Head of Service Development](#).

¹⁵ [PSNC Briefing 007/15: Analysis of seasonal influenza vaccination services 2014/15 in England \(Feb 2015\)](#)

¹⁶ Data collected by PSNC from LPCs at the end of the 2014/15 flu season

¹⁷ [New research findings for Health & Social Care](#)

¹⁸ [Vet futures public trust in the veterinary profession](#)

¹⁹ RSPH - survey conducted by Populus. Populus interviewed a random sample of 2,109 GB adults aged 18+ online between 20th – 22nd February 2015. Surveys were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults.

²⁰ NHS England Birmingham, Solihull & Black Country Area Team Evaluation of the community pharmacy flu vaccination pilot 2014/15