

## **NHSGGC Statement on Flu Vaccination 23/10/20**

Flu vaccine is given annually to protect people from contracting flu and also preventing the development of any flu related complications. Flu virus usually circulates in the community anytime from December to January each year. Therefore flu vaccination is normally given to eligible groups of people during the months of October, November and early December before the flu season begins.

Flu vaccines are routinely offered to a number of eligible groups involving pre-school and school aged children as well as adults. For adults, all people aged 65 years and over and also those people under the age of 65 years but who have a chronic medical condition are offered the vaccine. In previous years these adults were vaccinated by their own GPs in their GP practices during the months of October to December.

This year there has been a number of changes to the annual flu programme including the number of people eligible for flu vaccine increasing by nearly 50%. This combined with social distancing and infection control precautionary measures, which are in place because of COVID-19, means that additional measures have been required. To ensure we can meet these requirements, community vaccination hubs had to be established to enable those eligible to receive their vaccination safely.

As the largest Health Board in Scotland, we will be vaccinating in excess of 400,000 people and we are committed to ensuring that all those who are eligible will receive their vaccination between October and December as they have done in previous years. So far, the uptake of vaccinations has been significant and around 90,000 of those within the 'at risk' and 65+ year old groups have now been vaccinated.

NHS Board/HSCP clinics and GP practice clinics are working together to complete the programme before the flu season begins in December to provide them with protection against this year's seasonal flu.

We are working hard with national agencies to give people appointments as early as possible. Although our plans meant everyone would be immunised in time for the flu virus starting to circulate we are very aware of concerns amongst particularly older members of our communities if they have not yet had an appointment date. We have taken swift action to speed up the distribution of letters, so that all those remaining will now to be sent by National Services Scotland before the end of October. Our team continues to do everything they can to support people who need to change their appointment should they be unable to attend the one they have been assigned.

We also understand that some members of the public have raised concerns about public transport and the ability to travel to their community vaccination centre. We are working with community pharmacies to provide local alternatives in areas where transport may be an issue.

In addition, we have increased capacity at several of our vaccination centres in the region so that those eligible, and in particular, those in the 75+ age group can have the opportunity to be vaccinated sooner.

For more information about flu and to find out whether you are eligible, please go to NHS Inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/vaccines/flu-vaccine>. If you have clinical concerns about flu, other than your appointment time, please speak with your GP in the first instance. If you are aged over 65 and have queries about your appointment, please call the flu line on **0800 707 6699**.

