Dear colleague,

Many of you have will have already started planning for dealing with the additional pressure on services that this year’s winter season is likely to bring. We are writing to you today to emphasise the importance of including a strong focus on staff influenza vaccination in these plans.

We would like to personally thank you for your leadership last year. Uptake of the vaccination by frontline health workers remains disappointingly low. Last year only 50.6% of staff was vaccinated, compared with 54.9% in 2014.

Vaccination is the best and most effective way for staff to help protect themselves, their patients – in particular vulnerable patients, including children, the elderly and those with conditions that put them at risk – and their families from flu. It helps reduce transmission of this virus, especially in healthcare settings where people may be more vulnerable to infection.

The clinical evidence has been updated this summer by NHS Employers in partnership with Public Health England and the report is available here:

http://www.nhsemployers.org/~/media/Employers/Publications/Flu%20Fighter/flu%20fighter%20clinical%20evidence%20Aug%202016.pdf

Further, improving the protection of your staff from preventable illness this winter, and subsequent avoidable absence from work, is something NHS Improvement believes is one important component in maintaining operational performance.

Rates of flu vaccination among NHS staff vary widely between organisations. Last year, 18 trusts were below 30% which we consider unacceptable if repeated, while we are pleased that 18 trusts vaccinated more than 75% of their frontline staff.

We would ask that once again you make a clear commitment for maximising vaccination take up. We would also anticipate that your communications leads (CCd) are fully engaged with this.

We are sure you agree that all organisations have room for improvement in staff vaccination rates. All trusts and foundation trusts should be aiming to achieve a minimum 75% vaccine uptake rate – and those already achieving this level should look to build on their success.
You will be aware that providers will be rewarded via a CQUIN payment based on the proportion of staff vaccinated. Providers will receive half of the available CQUIN payment (for health and wellbeing) if they achieve vaccine uptake between 65.0% and 74.99%, and the full CQUIN payment if they achieve vaccine uptake of 75% or above. This scheme will apply to all NHS providers – including acute, mental health, community and ambulance trusts, and forms part of a health and wellbeing related improvement programme.


To support you in increasing rates of staff flu vaccination, NHS Employers is running its annual Flu Fighters campaign. Materials and resources are available to download at:

http://www.nhsemployers.org/campaigns/flu-fighter/nhs-flu-fighter

This provides a wide variety of free printed and downloadable digital resources as well as guidance and good practice examples to NHS trusts in England to support local campaigns to increase the uptake of the flu vaccination among healthcare workers. Printed materials which have been ordered from Flu Fighters should have started to arrive at trusts.

We would like to point you to some excellent case studies produced by NHS Employers which can give you some good practical guidance on how to boost take up of the vaccination this winter.


In addition, the Stay Well This Winter campaign will kick off in October and run through to January 2017. For the first time, its key messages and part of its campaign material will be more closely integrated with the NHS staff vaccination programme.

Should you require any specific support with plans on staff influenza vaccination or any other winter arrangements, please contact your NHS Improvement regional relationship manager to discuss challenges, discuss where to speak to peers who have had success in these areas and explore other approaches to making improvements.

Thank you again for your professional leadership to this work.

Yours sincerely

Dr Kathy McLean
Executive Medical Director

Ruth May
Executive Director of Nursing