

The County Durham and Darlington Flu Prevention Board is co-chaired by a Medical Director from County Durham CCG and a Consultant in Public Health from DCC.

The Board seeks assurance that the local health system is working to deliver a safe, effective and equitable flu vaccination programme.

It includes membership from commissioners and providers of the flu vaccination programme and primary and secondary care, including NHS England, CDDFT, TEWV, HDFT, and pharmacy.

The Board has met fortnightly during in 2020 to maintain energy and focus on delivering flu vaccinations in the context of COVID-19.

It has established a separate communications workstream to ensure a well-coordinated local campaign that aligns with the local plans of commissioners and providers.

The Board has overseen key activities to support the safe, effective and equitable delivery of flu vaccinations including:

- DCC corporate management agreeing flu vaccination for all staff.
- GP increasing their current adult flu vaccine order by an additional 10%, with any associated losses to be covered by the CCG.
- The CCG also agreed to underwrite 10% unused flu vaccine stock for pharmacies that had placed additional orders early.
- Total estimated vaccine capacity (within GP practices and pharmacy) in County Durham to vaccinate 87-88% of the eligible population aged 18 and above.
- Mapping of care homes to practices, to ensure full coverage of residents in care homes between practice and community nursing teams, and to minimise the number of people entering the homes.
- Commissioners to monitor uptake of flu vaccination amongst care home staff.
- Joint letter signed by the Director of Public Health and Chief Clinical Officer of County Durham CCG encouraging eligible patients in the local population to take up their vaccination (dependent on individual GP practices providing consent to share patient data).
- Comprehensive set of FAQs developed for use by partners in local communications.
- Development of a more streamlined referral pathway for housebound eligible patients into Community Nursing Teams.
- Development of a dedicated Learning Disability plan delivered in conjunction with TEWV.
- Collaboration to promote vaccination to and engage with vulnerable groups such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and people who are homeless.
- Midwives trained to provide the vaccine, with fridges to stock the vaccine, and administering vaccinations at CDDFT clinics as well as community clinics.
- Collective understanding shared on use of PPE in administration of flu vaccine.
- NHSE exploring the possibility of commissioning PharmOutcomes as the tool for informing GP practices of vaccine administration by pharmacies.
- Successful delivery of flu clinics in COVID-secure settings, not requiring support for large venues brokered through partner organisations.

At the time of writing, it is early in the delivery of flu vaccinations. Initial demand appears to be high, with community pharmacies in the North East already having vaccinated 40% of the eligible NHS patients that came forward for a pharmacy vaccination during the whole of last year's campaign. Some community pharmacy chains have announced that they are no longer taking further bookings for Flu vaccines, particularly for private flu vaccinations.

At the time of writing, no reports were available through PHE's ImmForm portal to show uptake amongst eligible groups.

There remain some matters to be resolved during the current season. Two key issues are the size and availability of NHS stock, and whether vaccines are going to be available for people aged 50 to 64, and if so how the programme would be delivered.

The intermittent availability of Pneumococcal vaccine remains an ongoing concern for both the prevention of respiratory disease, and on a practical level as many practices usually vaccinate at the same time.