



Clinical Bulletin 2 – Chronic Neurological Disease (including Learning Disabilities) and Flu Vaccination 23/10/2018

For the attention of GPs, all practice staff, pharmacists and directors of public health in North Cumbria and the North East (NC&NE)

People with chronic neurological diseases (including learning disabilities) and flu

People with learning disabilities are at higher risk of developing respiratory illness compared to the general population. Almost one third of all deaths reviewed by the [Learning Disability Mortality Review Programme \(LeDeR\)](#) had an underlying cause of respiratory illness. The [.Gov website](#) has lots of useful guidance for supporting those with learning disabilities to have flu vaccination.

Key Policies and Resources

The Screening and Immunisation Team's seasonal flu [Knowledge Hub](#).

National guidance, Q&A's and information slide sets can be found in the [Annual Flu Programme Content](#).

The [Influenza Chapter \(chapter 19\)](#) in 'Immunisation against infectious diseases' (The Green Book).

'[Help Us Help You](#)' promotional material can be downloaded from the [PHE Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Healthcare practitioners training material: [Flu immunisation e-Learning for healthcare workers](#).

Eligibility

As in previous years, individuals with chronic neurological diseases are eligible for free immunisation under the 2018/19 national flu vaccination programme. Clinicians should offer immunisation, based on individual assessment, to clinically vulnerable individuals including those with cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, multiple sclerosis and related or similar conditions; or hereditary and degenerative disease of the nervous system or muscles; or severe neurological disability.

In addition to those above, healthcare and social care workers in direct contact with patients/clients are also eligible for free immunisation under the 2018/19 national flu vaccination programme.

Reasonable adjustments

There is a legal obligation to put reasonable adjustments in place to ensure equal access to healthcare services for people with disabilities. This means that services should be making changes that help people with learning disabilities to have a flu vaccination. These changes may be at a service level (e.g. sending out an easy-read leaflet about why it is important to have a flu vaccination) or could be at an individual level (e.g. offering a home visit to someone who finds attending the GP surgery difficult).

The standard aims to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are provided with information that they can easily read or understand with support so they can communicate effectively with health and social care services. Many people with learning disabilities are anxious about needles but there are a lot of resources and approaches that can help them to tolerate injections.

Other reasonable adjustments to consider include:

- Time and length of appointment
- Familiar person administering the vaccination
- A suitable environment (e.g. at home, day service etc.)
- Distraction or support from someone who knows them well
- Use of Community Nursing Learning Disability Team to provide additional support
- Nasal spray for adults (The nasal spray flu vaccine is not licensed in adults because there is some evidence of poorer efficacy when compared with the inactivated vaccine. However, medical practitioners may choose to use this vaccine 'off-label' for patients with learning disabilities who become seriously distressed with needles.)

Where to access the vaccine

People have the choice to get their flu vaccinations in a range of settings:

- **GP practices** have the responsibility to call and re-call all patients in clinical risk groups and offer a range of appointment times so the eligible practice population can access immunisation at the practice, if they wish to do so.
- **Pharmacies** offer flu vaccination to those aged 18 years and over and must notify practices of vaccinations administered to their patients within 2 working days.
- **School-based providers** offer vaccination to all children in reception to year 13 in special schools across North Cumbria and the North East. Note that GP practices should ensure they still contact children in clinical risk groups for vaccination as this group remains eligible for vaccination at GPs.
- **Employers** of health and social care staff (including hospice workers) should provide flu vaccination to these staff as an occupational health responsibility. These staff may also access vaccination at general practices or pharmacies which have signed up to deliver this service.

Where can you get support?

The Department of Health has developed a range of accessible information resources to support people with learning disabilities to understand the importance of having their flu vaccination and how they can access it. The information includes easy-read versions of:

- [Information for people with learning disabilities, their family carers and paid supporters;](#)
- [A letter explaining about the flu vaccination and inviting someone to come to their GP surgery to have one;](#)
- [A leaflet about having the flu vaccination;](#)
- [A leaflet telling people what flu is and how to get a flu vaccination;](#)
- [A leaflet for children about flu is and about having the nasal spray;](#)
- [Information about who is eligible for a free flu vaccination. Designed to use in pharmacies.](#)

These materials can all be downloaded and/or ordered from the learning disability [resource centre](#).

Every GP Practice across the North East and Cumbria can access a learning disability primary care facilitator or community learning disability team to provide advice and support with patients with a learning disability. If you need any support or advice please make contact with them.

North Cumbria Community Learning Disability Teams: 01900 705825 (Allerdale & Copeland office) / 01228 603189 (Carlisle & Eden office)

Northumberland Community Learning Disability Team: 01670 536 400

North Tyneside Community Learning Disability Team: 0191 643 2487

Newcastle Community Learning Disability Team: 0191 210 6868

Gateshead Community Learning Disability Team: 0191 478 0650

South Tyneside Community Learning Disability Team: 0191 2832583

Sunderland Community Learning Disability Team: 0303 123 1145

Durham & Darlington Learning Disability Health Facilitation Team: 03000 269967

Hartlepool & Stockton Teesside North Community Learning Disability Team: 01642 368555

Middlesbrough & Redcar Teesside South Community Learning Disability Team: 01642 283700



Advice Line and Incident Reporting

The NHS England Screening and Immunisation Team (SIT) can be contacted to report incidents and for support in interpretation of national policy and guidelines.

You will receive a response within 2 working days. This service is provided for Healthcare Professionals only. Contact the team by email at england.cane.screeningimms@nhs.net or telephone (Monday- Friday 1-5pm) 0113 825 3017.