

Peer Vaccinators: Your Guide To A Successful Local Campaign

People Like Us Protect: Protect yourself. Protect your patients. Protect your team.

This toolkit is designed to help peer vaccinators, ward managers and local flu champions across UHB support colleagues to make an informed choice about flu vaccination and make it as easy as possible for them to get vaccinated.

Peer vaccinators are at the heart of this year's People Like Us Protect campaign. Your role is not simply to administer vaccines. You are a trusted colleague who can start positive conversations, listen to questions and concerns, share clear information and help remove practical barriers to vaccination.

Our approach is simple: vaccination should feel normal, supported, inclusive and easy to access, wherever you work, whatever your role and whatever shift you work.

- **At the peak, more than 270 patients with flu were being cared for across UHB last year, that's equivalent to around eight wards.**
- **For seven consecutive weeks, more than 200 beds each day were occupied by patients with flu.**
- **More than 46,000 working days were also lost as colleagues became unwell.**

Vaccinations are available to UHB colleagues from Thursday 1 October. From that point, our focus is simple: make vaccination visible, make it easy and make sure colleagues know where they can get vaccinated today.

Why flu vaccination matters

Flu is not just a bad cold. For some people it can cause serious illness, hospitalisation and complications.

Vaccination is one of the most effective actions we can take to reduce our risk from flu and help protect the people around us.

Protect yourself: Vaccination reduces your risk from flu and lowers your chances of serious illness. It also helps you stay well through winter.

Protect your patients: Many of the people we care for are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of flu because of their age, underlying conditions, treatment or weakened immune systems. Vaccinating ourselves adds another layer of protection.

Protect your team: Winter is challenging enough without yourself or colleagues becoming unwell. Vaccination helps us protect one another and supports teams to continue providing safe, high-quality care.

That is what People Like Us Protect means. It is about creating a culture of protection, rather than using pressure or guilt.



What we know about the flu vaccine

Effectiveness and impact

The flu vaccine does not prevent every case of flu, but it significantly reduces the likelihood of serious illness.

During the 2024/25 season in England:

- Flu vaccination is estimated to have prevented 96,000 to 120,200 hospitalisations
- Vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation ranged from 38% in adults aged 65 and over to 75% in children aged 2 to 17
- There were 7,757 excess deaths during a season of high flu activity in England.
- Research specifically involving UK healthcare workers also found influenza vaccination reduced the risk of laboratory-confirmed influenza infection by around 40% during winter 2023/24.

Remember, protection is not all or nothing. Even when vaccination does not prevent infection completely, it is an important way of reducing our risk of serious flu.

Who should be vaccinated?

UHB encourages eligible colleagues to take up the flu vaccination, including colleagues across clinical and non-clinical roles.

Every role matters.

Please remember the campaign is not only about nursing teams. Make sure colleagues including doctors, allied health professionals, students, volunteers and eligible non-clinical colleagues know about the vaccination offer and make time and space to offer vaccination to any colleague, student or volunteer.

Our campaign is designed around the principle that every role, every shift, every site and every community should be able to access vaccination.

Why do we need a flu vaccination every year?

There are three important reasons:

- Protection reduces over time
- Flu viruses change constantly
- Having had flu previously does not guarantee protection against the strains circulating this winter.

Annual vaccination gives you protection against the flu viruses expected to be circulating during the coming season.

Is the flu vaccine safe?



The injectable flu vaccine cannot give you flu.

The vaccine uses inactivated virus components that cannot replicate in your body. Some people may experience mild side effects such as:

- soreness or redness where the vaccination was given
- muscle aches
- feeling mildly feverish.

These are generally short-lived. Serious reactions such as anaphylaxis are extremely rare.

The flu vaccination is also safe during all trimesters of pregnancy.

Why your role matters

Nationally, flu vaccination uptake among frontline healthcare workers has been falling. In NHS trusts, 37.5% of frontline healthcare workers received the vaccine in 2024/25, down from 42.8% the season before. At UHB we bucked the trend and increased how many people got protected.

There is no single reason why someone chooses not to get vaccinated. They may:

- Have questions about effectiveness
- Worry about side effects
- Believe they do not need vaccination because they are healthy
- Have had a previous experience that concerns them
- Struggle to find the time or an accessible vaccination opportunity
- Simply not have got around to it yet.

Our job is not to judge or pressure people. Our job is to listen, answer questions honestly and make vaccination easy.

Tips for a successful local campaign

Lead by example

Get vaccinated yourself and, if you are comfortable doing so, tell colleagues why you chose to have it.

A simple “I've had mine” from somebody known and trusted can be more powerful than another poster (but do use the posters if you have them available too).

Make vaccination visible

If colleagues see people like them getting vaccinated, vaccination becomes a normal thing that the team does together.

Use:



- Campaign stickers
- Campaign posters
- Staff photographs, with consent – shared to the staff Facebook pages
- Champion stories and share flu experiences (with consent)
- Update your team frequently
- Hold local competitions with buddy wards or between professional groups.

Make it easy

Don't just tell someone to get vaccinated. Help them do it.

Make sure colleagues know where vaccination is available and bring vaccination as close as possible to the places people actually work – use the 'empty belly' poster to promote this in your wards and departments. It also means thinking about:

- Night shifts
- Your peripatetic or community teams
- Off-site colleagues.

Becoming a peer vaccinator

Please read the relevant Patient Group Direction (PGD) and complete the required flu immunisation competency training. Make sure all required local competency, management sign-off and mandatory training requirements are completed before vaccinating. The PGD for the administration of the relevant influenza vaccine is here (will open only if using a networked Trust computer): **http://uhbpolicies/assets/PGDInfluenzaVaccine.pdf**

Watch the Peer Vaccinator Masterclass by clicking here

Other campaign tips:

Celebrate success

Thank your people for taking part.

Celebrate teams making progress and share positive stories. Recognition helps reinforce the message that vaccination is something colleagues across UHB are doing together. Positive reinforcement, not pressure.



Questions welcome

Create an environment where colleagues can ask questions without feeling judged.

A hesitant colleague is not a difficult colleague. Curiosity and respectful conversations build trust.

If you don't know the answer, don't guess. Help your colleague find reliable information or use the mythbusters or conversation starters below. Or the frequently asked questions section of the flu website.

Don't assume someone is not eligible or isn't interested because of their role, background, faith, working pattern or location. Think about accessibility, privacy, dignity, language, cultural or privacy needs.

The campaign specifically aims to identify and remove barriers rather than blame individuals for lower uptake.

Mythbusters

"I'm healthy, so I don't need the vaccine."

Being healthy doesn't mean you cannot catch flu or become seriously unwell. Vaccination reduces your risk and can also help protect the vulnerable people you care for.

"The vaccine gave me flu last time."

The injectable flu vaccine cannot give you flu because it does not contain live flu virus capable of causing infection.

Feeling achy, developing a sore arm or having a mild temperature can happen after vaccination and is usually short-lived.

"I had COVID vaccines, so I'm protected."

Flu and COVID-19 are caused by different viruses. A COVID vaccination does not replace your annual flu vaccination.

"I've already had flu."

Flu viruses change, and previous infection does not guarantee protection against the strains circulating this winter.

"The vaccine doesn't work."

No vaccine provides 100% protection, but vaccination makes a real difference.



In England, flu vaccination was estimated to have prevented 96,000 to 120,200 hospitalisations during 2024/25.

"I'm pregnant, so I can't have the flu vaccination."

The flu vaccination is safe during pregnancy, including in all three trimesters.

Conversation starters

You don't need a script. Start with a normal conversation. The aim is conversation, not confrontation.

Curious: "What are your thoughts about having your flu vaccination this year?"

Personal: "I've had mine because I want to protect myself and the people I look after."

Practical: "Have you had yours yet? I can do it now if you'd like."

Supportive: "Is there anything you're unsure about or would like to ask before deciding?"

Team-focused: "We're trying to make it really easy for everyone in the team. Would you like yours while I'm here?"

Patient-focused: "For me, it's another thing I can do to help protect the patients we care for."

Barrier-focused: "Is there anything that's made it difficult for you to get vaccinated so far?"

Make time for every colleague

Throughout the campaign, actively create opportunities to speak to colleagues rather than waiting for them to approach you.

Think beyond your immediate team and ask yourself:

- Who haven't we reached yet?
- Who works a different shift?
- Who works away from the main hospital building?
- Where are people finding it difficult to access vaccination?
- Who has questions but hasn't had an opportunity to ask them?

Motivation and support



As a peer vaccinator, you are one of the most important parts of this campaign.

The 2026/27 campaign deliberately positions peer vaccinators as local champions who influence, reassure, answer questions and administer vaccines, rather than simply people who give injections.

You can help make vaccination:

- Visible
- Normal
- Easy
- Inclusive
- Supported.

You don't have to persuade every person you speak to. Have the conversation. Listen. Answer what you can. Remove the barriers you can remove. Offer vaccination when someone is ready.

Protect yourself. Protect your patients. Protect your team: People Like Us Protect.

Share what you're doing

Help create the sense that teams across UHB are protecting each other.

With colleagues' consent, share photographs, stories and examples from your ward or department through the staff Facebook groups and other appropriate staff channels.

Think particularly about sharing:

- why you chose to be vaccinated
- why someone became a peer vaccinator
- team vaccination activity
- colleagues from different professions
- night and weekend vaccination
- community and off-site teams
- examples of teams making vaccination easier
- positive milestones and local successes.

Staff Facebook groups

- Good Hope Hospital: https://www.facebook.com/groups/616961272503523/
- Heartlands Hospital: https://www.facebook.com/groups/246392049789476/
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1136101010091373/



- Solihull Hospital and community services: https://www.facebook.com/groups/250267936046144/

You can also send your photographs and stories to: communications@uhb.nhs.uk

Thank you for working to protect your patients, your team and your community this winter.