

Flu clinics in 2020/21

Things to consider for organising flu clinics
and appointments during COVID-19

Integrated Public Health Commissioning Team

July 2020

Available guidance

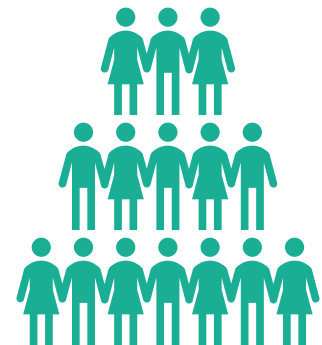
There are a number of resources you may find useful during the planning and running of the flu programme in 2020/21.

Be aware that things are moving at speed, so guidance referenced in this document may be updated and recommendations may change.

- National Flu programme letter 2020/21:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-flu-immunisation-programme-plan>
- Second flu letter **due in July 2020**
- IPC/PPE guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe> (see 'Table 4' in particular)
- Immunisation training guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunisation-training-guidance-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/guidance-on-immunisation-training-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- Recommended vaccines: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NHS-England-JCVI-advce-and-NHS-reimbursement-flu-vaccine-2020-21.pdf>
- PHE Annual Flu Programme page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme>

Running flu immunisations or clinics

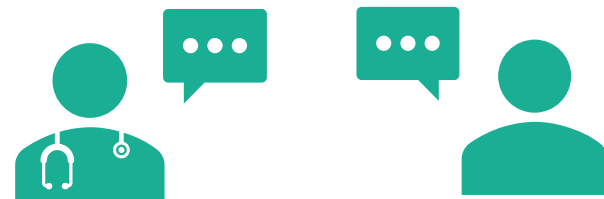
- Currently, there is no structured guidance for how these sessions should be run
- Different practices will have different facilities, spaces and staffing to run different methods of delivery
- It might be that you need to offer more than one process to be able to meet the needs of your registered population
- There is no one 'correct' delivery model



How will things be different this year?

What is likely to be different this year:

- You will need to follow the published guidelines around use of PPE and infection prevention and control measures
- You are likely to need to run more clinic sessions and offer more appointments
- You will likely need more time per patient to allow for PPE changes, cleaning and to ensure social distancing in the building
- You will likely need to give patients clear, timed appointments and ensure careful time-keeping so that the clinic runs to time
- You will need to identify to patients in advance about how things will be different and what they can expect at their appointment



What are other practices planning?

- Many are considering how they adapt their current clinics to allow for social distancing and IPC/PPE requirements
- In many cases, this means that the time taken per flu immunisation will increase from previous years
- Practices are also considering their physical space in the practice, for example using 'one-way' routes for patients on entry to the clinic and on exit, and socially-distanced spaces that allow for patients to wait after immunisation
- Some practices have previously operated 'sit and wait' style clinics, it's unlikely that this style clinic will be possible now, practices are likely to need to adopt timed appointments
- Other settings are considering using new approaches for clinics including consideration for 'drive-thru' or using other venues for the clinics, e.g. church halls, community venues etc. Many practices have been using other venues for immunisation successfully for years



Walk-through

- Some practices have found it beneficial to stage a run-through of how a clinic will run in practice
- This helps to work out any additions that need to be made to the set-up and will help the first few clinics run more smoothly
- Running-through the scenario will allow practices an approximation of the timing required for each immunisation, including the patient check-in process and any necessary cleaning and other IPC measures in between patients
- The practice can then consider how best to use the physical space they can access
- Appointment timing will need to include adequate time to gain informed consent for the immunisation
- You'll be able to work out how many patients you can invite at any one time



Practice example



Bear in mind the below is just one example and it won't be the same in all settings



One medium-sized practice had a run-through of how their large flu clinics would work. They found that they would need the following:

Before the appointment:

- Admin staff have a checklist when booking in patients to check if they have any additional needs or special circumstances (e.g. allergies, needle phobia, need a longer appointment etc)
- Remind patients to come alone where possible (or limit the number of people attending), bring as few items as possible and to use the toilet at home to reduce cleaning at the practice

Arriving at the practice:

- A Receptionist in PPE stands at the entrance directing patients into the building. They have a list of patients and anyone arriving early is asked to wait outside
- Patients are asked to stand on spots on the floor marking out social distancing
- Another admin member of staff undertakes 'crowd managing', asking patients to remove their coats and move forward in the line etc.

The immunisation:

- This practice used two teams of nurses – Team A to immunise the first set of patients, then whilst Team B immunises the next set, Team A cleans and prepares the next set of vaccines
- With the above, they had 3 x nurses per Team and booked 10 patients into a 10 minute slot (so each immuniser would immunise 3-4 patients in 10 minutes)
- Informed consent is sought and documentation is completed by the nurses as they work
- In between each patient, the immunisers follow appropriate IPC measures and change PPE as recommended

Other clinic examples

Some settings are considering alternative ways of running clinics. Some examples are discussed below with things to consider:

Drive-Thru

✓ Avoids patients needing to enter the practice building



? Could be more difficult to get correct arm position; consideration for monitoring after vaccine (e.g. anaphylactic reaction); not all sites will have adequate space; drive-thru won't be appropriate for many patients; requires staff to be outside even during inclement weather

Car Park

✓ Avoids patients needing to enter the practice building

? Requires patients and staff to be outside even during inclement weather



Off-site premises

Many practices have been using other sites to deliver their flu programme for years, often using community halls or other venues to hold larger numbers of patients:

✓ Large, indoor spaces where patients can be socially distanced; not affected by inclement weather

? Would need to find sites to use and consider distance for patients to travel to venue; consideration for using equipment (IT etc) off site; costs for venue hire

Working as a locality / PCN / neighbouring practices

✓ Able to share large spaces; can make more flexible offers on location/timing for patients; can share any associated costs and resources/staffing

? Consideration for the recording of immunisations and how payment is appropriate for practices; consider travel distances for patients



Vulnerable patients

- As a practice or PCN you will need to consider how you manage eligible shielded patients and provide a suitable offer for their immunisation
- Some patients might require additional reassurance that it is safe to attend the practice and may need further information explaining why it is important to be immunised
- You may want to offer these patients appointment times away from a general flu clinic
- Some shielded populations may require home visits for immunisation

Top tips to help your clinics run smoothly

- **Encourage practice staff to be immunised** – this will help protect patients as well as the individuals and their families at home
- **Make sure all staff are briefed** and feel confident to raise any issues to ensure the appointments run as smoothly as possible. Are all staff in the practice aware of the process for patients and how the clinics will work?
- **Send communications to patients** in advance of their appointment explaining how the clinic will operate differently this year and what they will need to do
- **Ensure there are notices and signage** around the practice to make the process as clear as possible
- **Encourage patients to come alone** or bring as few people as possible with them to the appointment
- **Encourage patients to bring as few belongings as possible** to the practice and encourage them to use the toilet at home before attending to reduce cleaning on site



Top tips to help your clinics run smoothly

- **Consider your flu programme promotion;** with fewer patients routinely attending the practice in person, there may be a need to consider other mechanisms to encourage uptake. Can you use your practice website or social media to promote flu immunisation alongside personalised communications (e.g. letters, phone calls) to encourage patients to attend?



- **You may need to use other tools to engage** with people with limited English or other languages, those with lower reading levels, or those with learning disabilities.

- **Plan flu clinics and appointment dates now** as you're likely to need a greater number of clinic days or times if each immunisation appointment will take longer than usual



- **Can you work within your PCN** to share locations and increase accessibility?

- **Make sure the immunisation is recorded** safely, correctly and in a timely way to prevent duplicates



Checklist

- Start your planning now
- Stage a walk-through of a clinic in your practice: note any changes you'll need to make with the physical space
- Time how long an appointment will take with the recommended PPE and social distancing
- Ensure appointment timings include gaining informed consent and time for eligibility checking and documentation completion
- Work out how many patients you will expect to immunise this season and how many clinics you'll need to put on
- Check your vaccine delivery dates
- Think about the information you'll need to give patients in advance of their appointment
- Make sure staff are up-to-date with immunisation training and updates
- Make sure all staff know how the clinics or appointments will run
- Keep checking for any changes to national guidance to remain up-to-date

Thank you

Thank you for your continued hard work and support
of the flu programme

South West Integrated Public Health Commissioning Team

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