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All MSPs and Scottish MPs

*By email*

5 October 2020

*Dear Colleague*

Every year the seasonal flu vaccine programme is important. But this year it is even more so as we work to suppress Covid-19. The programme helps protect those most vulnerable from serious illness as a result of flu and, even in normal times, is a significant public health measure.

The programme already covers those over 65, those under 65 with certain underlying health conditions, NHS staff, pregnant women, unpaid and young carers and children both aged 2-5 and those in primary school.

The seasonal flu programme is a critical part of our public health effort. That is why, in light of the Covid-19 virus, we have significantly expanded free eligibility to include:

- Social Care Workers who provide direct care;
- Household members of those who were advised to shield; and
- Those aged 55 and over not otherwise covered.

If vaccine supply allows, we will also include those aged 50-54. This expansion means that we are aiming to vaccinate 2.4 million people, an increase of just under 50% over last year.

The programme will be delivered in 2 phases, with all those eligible apart from the 55 to 64 group, invited for vaccine in the first phase which is now underway and those aged 55 to 64 invited from November onwards. This approach, based on clinical advice, ensures those at greatest need receive the vaccination as soon as possible. We have also frontloaded the delivery schedule so that the highest number of weekly vaccinations can take place between 5<sup>th</sup> October to 16<sup>th</sup> November. This helps to make sure that the majority of vaccinations take place before the end of the calendar year, when flu normally becomes most prevalent.

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To deliver the programme on this scale has required a system wide effort and together with the additional infection prevention and control measures necessary to protect patients and staff means that there are changes in how the vaccine is given to patients. This is particularly the case for eligible adults who have previously predominately received their vaccine through their GP practice.

Our NHS Boards are leading this delivery and have stood up a range of different settings and locations to deliver the vaccine – including walk-in and drive through centres, using GP practices as before, outreach through community nursing teams and community pharmacies.

The primary school programme will be largely unaffected, but we appreciate for many who have previously been vaccinated at their local GP practice, these changes may be a little confusing. So I thought it helpful to write to you to explain what we are doing and to provide you with the particular arrangements in the Health Board[s] in your relevant constituency or region.

I hope this letter and the information attached is helpful to you and helps you address any queries or concerns that may be raised by your constituents.

In the meantime, I am of course happy to address any specific concerns you may have.

*Kind regards*  
*Jeane*  
**JEANE FREEMAN**

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## Details of NHS Seasonal Flu Delivery

This year's vaccination programme delivery slides are attached.

## Information

The best source of information on this for the public is NHS Inform which can be found here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/flu> or by calling NHS24 on freephone 0800 22 44 88.

## Monitoring

This year's vaccination programme formally started on 1 October, with delivery already underway in many Boards. Individual Health Boards will address how they will follow up with people who still wish to take up this offer.

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