

Public Health Link

From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales

Distribution:	As Appendix 1
From:	Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer
Date:	25 October 2019
Reference:	CEM/CMO/2019/4
Category:	Immediate (Cascade within 24 hours)
Title:	Flu Vaccination Programme in Schools
What is this about:	The flu vaccination programme in schools is being re-programmed with effect from 4 November 2019 until sufficient supplies of vaccine become available.
Why has it been sent:	For action.

Dear Colleague,

Due to factors beyond of our control, there is a requirement to re-programme the flu immunisation sessions planned for children aged 4-10 years in schools. Sessions planned for the weeks commencing 4th and 11th November should be re-programmed. Further advice on sessions beyond these two weeks will be issued as soon as possible taking into account the latest information on vaccine availability.

Public Health England, which is responsible for procuring the children's nasal spray flu vaccine (LAIV) for the UK, has informed us that five batches of LAIV (Fluenz Tetra®) expected to be received during November will be delayed. It is anticipated that this delay will be between 2 and 4 weeks and affects all parts of the UK.

To ensure that the delay in vaccine supply does not impact on those who are most vulnerable, we are prioritising LAIV vaccination in primary care of children:

- aged 2 and 3 years
- aged 2 to 17 years in a clinical risk group who would normally receive LAIV (including those who would normally receive a vaccine in school).

Ordering of LAIV for primary care commenced on 18th October and there is sufficient stock and planned deliveries to see this element of the programme through to completion. To maximise protection for all children in clinical risk groups, we have requested general practice colleagues vaccinate these priority groups as early as possible.

To date, I understand that over 80,000 doses of LAIV have already been received by health boards for the school programme by the half term break. This is sufficient for around 46% of the total number of children vaccinated last year in schools.

It is anticipated that the full allocation of LAIV for Wales will be received over the course of the season, and that the school programme will recommence as soon as sufficient supplies are available. I would expect any missed sessions to be re-scheduled for a later date. In the meantime, it will be important for health boards to communicate with parents and schools as early as possible about changes to scheduled vaccination sessions.

Where a session is delayed, it is important:

- parents of a child with a long term health condition are informed in a timely way to make an appointment with their general practice to have the vaccine.
- the school health service promptly informs general practice of any children who have already been vaccinated in the school setting, this is especially important in children with a long term health condition.
- general practices notify health board child health offices promptly of flu vaccinations given to children, especially those given to children who are age four to eleven and have a long term condition.

If health boards have LAIV stocks already available in pharmacies, these can be used to continue an ongoing school programme for as long as this is possible or to support general practices.

Parents will have questions and health boards will wish to plan how best to meet these information needs locally. They may be addressed by establishing local helplines or other activities, possibly staffed by school nursing teams.

Public Health Wales is developing materials to support health boards and practices during this period including template letters and Frequently Asked Questions. These will be shared as soon as they are available.

I appreciate that this situation is very challenging but our priority is to protect as many children as possible from the effects of flu and help reduce its spread in the community to other vulnerable individuals.

I am very grateful for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



Dr Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales

Appendix 1

Health Boards and NHS Trusts

To: Chief Executives
Medical Directors
Nurse Directors
Directors of Primary Care
Directors of Public Health
Chief Pharmacists

Onward distribution to:

Immunisation Leads
School Nursing Leads

Public Health Wales

To: Chief Executive
Director of Public Health Services
Head of Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme

To: **GPC Wales**