



Príomhoifigeach Cliniciúil
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BY EMAIL ONLY

To Each Regional Executive Officer
Each Regional Clinical Director

5th November 2024

Re: Uptake of Winter vaccines amongst Health and Care Workers

Dear Colleagues,

Both the flu and COVID-19 vaccination programmes are integral to protecting public health and high levels of healthcare worker vaccination over the winter period is critical to help protect and maintain our health services throughout the busy winter period.

You will be aware that the HSE has been engaged in local and site-specific campaigns and clinics to promote and provide influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations to health and care workers, however, this year we continue to see a significant concern with low levels of vaccine uptake. This low uptake was a pattern of low vaccine uptake was also observed during the 2023/2024 winter season.

Health and care workers have a high risk of exposure to influenza and COVID-19 and unvaccinated health and care workers have a higher risk of becoming unwell themselves. Health and care workers can also spread infection to vulnerable patients who may be at risk of severe illness. In addition to the direct risk to the health of health and care workers and patients, low vaccine uptake may result in staff illness and associated absence at a time when there is likely to be an increased seasonal demand on services. This presents an additional risk to the healthcare system and the patients that we care for.

Preliminary data that we have received from the Health Surveillance and Protection Centre (HPSC) indicates low levels of uptake by HSE health and care workers, including variable levels of vaccine uptake by service type and staff group (outlined in appendix 1 of this letter).

We all need to do all we can to ensure our staff understand the important part vaccination programmes plays in protecting our health services. We would again ask you to do all you can to ensure that staff are offered every possible opportunity to get their vaccines. We know that strong local leadership, particularly at clinical level championing the importance of vaccination plays a significant role in encouraging staff to get vaccinated.



In addition, we have asked all local providers to ensure that there is continued convenient access to influenza and COVID-19 vaccines to facilitate staff. For convenience we include the Health and Care Worker Vaccine Uptake Strategies document for the Winter Vaccination Programme 2024 which circulated in August 2024.

We would ask that you do all you can in your service to encourage your staff to get their vaccine.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colm Henry', written in a cursive style.

Dr Colm Henry
Chief Clinical Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Walsh', written in a cursive style.

Mr David Walsh
National Director, Access & Integration



Appendix 1

Percentage Vaccine Uptake by Staff Category in HSE Staff: **29 October 2024** (report by HPSC)

HSE Staff category	COVID-19 vaccine	Influenza vaccine
General Support	5.2	16.4
H&SC Professionals	9.8	21.1
Management & Admin	7.5	16.7
Medical & Dental	14.8	26.5
Nursing & Midwifery	4.7	16.5
Patient & Client Care	4.7	15.6
Total	6.8	17.9

Note:

- The analysis reported above was undertaken to estimate the uptake of both the seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccines among HSE only HCWs and was generated on 28/10/2024. It is based on a matching, merging and deduplication process of encrypted IIS vaccination and HSE HR SAP records. This report while only focusing on HSE employees estimates uptake in this HCW population, capturing those who have received vaccination from healthcare worker clinics, GPs and community pharmacies. Therefore, providing a good estimate of uptake in this population.
- The National Director for Public Health is currently reviewing data sources and devising a report to capture HCW uptake.