

**From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride**



HSS(MD) 68/2020

For Action:

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health and Social Care Board/HSC Trusts/NIAS, RQIA
GP Medical Advisers, Health and Social Care Board
All General Practitioners and GP Locums (for onward distribution to practice staff)
OOHs Medical Managers (for onward distribution to staff)

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Our Ref: **HSS(MD) 68/2020**

Date: 23 September 2020

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST

Dear Colleagues,

LETTER TO ALL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKERS ENCOURAGING EVERYONE TO OBTAIN THE 'FLU VACCINATION

Firstly we would like to express our sincere gratitude to every health and social care worker across Northern Ireland for the dedication and commitment you have demonstrated while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am sure that you will all agree that it is more important than ever this year that we all get the 'flu vaccine to protect those at risk of Influenza, prevent ill-health and minimise further impact on our Health and Social Care (HSC) system. This year more robust arrangements are being put in place to ensure that Independent Care Home staff have access to 'Flu vaccination.

We are continuing to see the impact of COVID-19 on the HSC system. Therefore it is crucially important that we take all necessary measures to help reduce the risk of concomitant circulation of Influenza and COVID-19 during the forthcoming winter. Early evidence suggests that co-infection with Influenza and COVID19 is associated with increased mortality of over two fold compared to infection with COVID-19 alone.

The best way to improve both our prevention and management of Influenza is to increase the uptake of 'Flu vaccination, especially among health and social care workers (HCWs) who are in direct patient contact. The seasonal 'flu vaccination uptake rate amongst frontline HCWs in Northern Ireland last year was as follows Health Care Workers 41.2%, Social Care Workers 22.8% and Nurses and

Midwives 36%, which I am sure you will agree is much too low, leaving us with significant room for improvement.

As health and social care workers we all have a shared professional responsibility to take appropriate steps to protect our patients and the health of the public. By being vaccinated yourself, and endorsing 'Flu vaccination among your colleagues, you will help increase uptake rates. Getting vaccinated is one of the simplest ways of protecting yourself, your family and your patients from Influenza. We are actively seeking your support and help this year to promote our 'Flu Vaccine campaign. You can obtain your 'Flu vaccine at a Trust Occupational Health Vaccination Clinic or a Community Pharmacy. Details of participating pharmacies are now available from www.pha.site/CPFV

To all of you stay safe, stay well and please get vaccinated against 'Flu.

Yours sincerely,



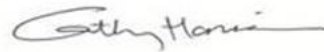
DR MICHAEL McBRIDE
Chief Medical Officer



PROFESSOR CHARLOTTE McARDLE
Chief Nursing Officer



SEÁN HOLLAND
Chief Social Work Officer



CATHY HARRISON
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer



JENNIFER KEANE
Chief Allied Health Professional Officer



MICHAEL DONALDSON
Acting Chief Dental Officer

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Raymond Curran, Head of Ophthalmic Services, HSCB (*for distribution to Community Optometrists*)
Trade Union Side
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This letter is available on the Department of Health website at
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>