



## **Extension of Influenza (flu) vaccination programme to include social care staff**

The Scottish government is extending health board free flu vaccine programmes to include social care staff of all ages who have a direct hands-on care role working in the following settings:

- Residential care and secure care for children
- Community care for persons at home (including housing support and care at home services)
- Care homes for adults

This is targeted at those delivering direct personal care in these settings no matter of whether they are employed by Local Authorities, private or third sector employers.

**Scottish Care, the Care Inspectorate, the Coalition of Care and support Providers in Scotland, and the Scottish Social Service Council support this approach.**

Influenza is a highly infectious disease that occurs every year, usually in the winter. Symptoms can come on very quickly and include fever, chills, headache, aches and pains in the joints and muscles, and extreme tiredness.

Healthy individuals usually recover within two to seven days, but some people are more vulnerable and for them it can increase the risk of developing more serious illnesses, such as bronchitis and

pneumonia. In the worst cases, flu can result in a stay in hospital, or even death. Even for healthy people, flu can be serious, making them feel extremely unwell and unable to carry on with everyday activities

Infected health and social care workers can spread flu to people receiving care and colleagues even if they have very mild symptoms or have no symptoms at all.

The flu vaccine provides the best protection available against the virus.

- The vaccines are given in the autumn ideally before flu starts circulating.
- The vaccine contains no live viruses, so it can't give you flu.
- You have to be immunised every year because the virus changes constantly and your immunity reduces over time.
- Influenza is a different virus from Covid-19.

The best way for social care staff to avoid flu is to get a flu jab as part of this programme.

In the coming weeks each health board will organise delivery of the vaccination programme for their area. Further communication will be issued letting you know how you can get vaccinated this year.

We encourage staff to take up this opportunity. It's quick, safe and free.