

Understanding barriers to uptake of the seasonal flu vaccination amongst care home workers in Surrey

April 2025

Background

Every Autumn the NHS delivers an annual influenza (flu) vaccination programme as it is the best protection against flu and its complications. Flu can make some people seriously ill, especially people who are vulnerable, such as the elderly and immunocompromised. This project aimed to explore the reasons why care home workers may or may not have the seasonal flu vaccine and better understand any barriers to accessing vaccines in general.

Methodology

We conducted a short background overview of the seasonal flu immunisation programme in England and a literature review of published research. The findings are detailed in the main report but generally revealed a decline in flu vaccine uptake. During our engagement with care home workers between January and March 2025, we took every opportunity to raise awareness of the availability of the flu vaccination and encourage take up. For our engagement we used a mixed methods approach; an anonymous survey distributed to 120 care homes across Surrey supported with a poster promoting the survey; and telephone interviews (participants gave consent through the survey and through communications with care home managers and providers).

Findings

The insight was collated into the key themes and illustrated with first person quotes and case studies. Our findings showed that although awareness of eligibility for a free flu vaccine is high for care home workers, only half of the care home workers we spoke to had had a flu vaccination this year. Of these workers, about two thirds had had the vaccine for their own health or personal reasons. Whilst there was a good understanding of why it was important to get a flu vaccination if you are a care home worker, this did not necessarily motivate people to get one. The main barriers were the fear of side effects meaning unpaid time off work. Others did not feel it is relevant to them as they feel young and healthy, and a few were unaware of the eligibility for care home workers.

Testimonial: "This report has got some really valuable insights. Thanks for your team's hard work on this – the literature review piece was very useful. We will be working with the ICB to support the vaccination programme this winter." Immunisation lead, Public Health.

