

Media information

Date 21/10/2020

Calling all unpaid carers: Protect yourself and the person you care for with the flu vaccine

NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group, local GPs and York Carers Centre are reaching out to all those with caring responsibilities and asking them to come forward for their free flu vaccine.

A carer is a person who provides regular help to someone due to frailty, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability. Carers may help with personal care (washing, bathing, dressing, feeding), medication, cooking, shopping, housework and giving emotional support.

Although for some people this is their full time job, for others, it is something they do unpaid, for a family member of friend and in-between other responsibilities.

This year the NHS flu vaccination programme has been expanded due to coronavirus, and continues to include unpaid carers to protect them against the effects of flu and reduce the risk of passing the virus on to the vulnerable person they care for.

Carers are eligible if they:

- receive Carer's Allowance, or are the main carer (paid or unpaid) for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if they, the carer, falls ill
- are a personal assistant (PA) to someone who receives a personal health budget
- live with someone who's at high risk of coronavirus (on the NHS shielded patient list) or they expect to be with them on most days over the winter

People who are registered as a carer with their GP will be sent an invite for a flu vaccination over the coming weeks. Practices are sending out their invites in a staged approach to ensure their most vulnerable patients are vaccinated first.

Paula Middlebrook, Deputy Chief Nurse, NHS Vale of York CCG said: Protection against the flu is even more crucial this year with the circulation of coronavirus, and so keeping carers and those they care for safe is a huge priority. Often carers work with our most vulnerable who have

a number of long-term health conditions which is why identifying and recognising the importance of people who have caring responsibilities is so important.”

Unpaid carers MUST have it registered on their medical record that they are someone with caring responsibilities in order to receive a letter inviting them for a flu vaccine.

Paula added: “If you are not already registered with your GP Practice as a carer please contact your practice and let them know. They may ask a few questions and want to know who you are caring for. Please be patient as our practices have double the number of people they need to vaccinate this year and in some cases may need to await for additional vaccine deliveries. There is an aim of vaccinating the vast majority of eligible people by December.”

Dr Abbie Brooks, GP Priory Medical Group said: “We ask that anyone identifying as a paid or unpaid carer contacts their GP practice to ensure that it is noted on their medical record. GP practices can then ensure that carers receive their letter inviting them to book an appointment for a free flu vaccine. It is also helpful so that GPs can continue to support those in a caring role and invite them for a flu vaccination every year.”

To receive their flu vaccine, carers can book an appointment via their GP practice once they have received their invitation. Alternatively, pharmacies are also delivering the free vaccine, however proof of eligibility such as a GP letter or text must be presented.

Carole Zagrovic, CEO at York Carers Centre said: “Many unpaid carers do not recognise themselves as carers. They are parents, partners, grandparents, children or friends doing what needs to be done to maintain the independence and quality of life for someone close to them because of illness, disability, addiction or frailty. It is vitally important that carers look after themselves and take advantage of the free flu vaccine, by letting their GP surgery know that they look after someone who would be at risk if they, the carer, became ill with flu. Ensuring that the GP knows about any caring responsibilities means carers can be offered support, and the flu vaccination invite each year.”

If you recognise yourself as having caring responsibilities for someone close to you, please contact your GP practice as soon as possible to ensure you are invited for a free flu vaccine this year.

Anyone experiencing issues with booking their flu vaccine at a GP practice is encouraged to email voycg.patientrelations@nhs.net

For more information on the Vale of York flu vaccination programme for 2020 please visit: <https://bit.ly/VOYfluplans2020>

ENDS

For NHS Vale of York CCG media enquiries, email: VOYCCG.communications@nhs.net or call 01904 555919

Notes to editors

Video to promote message to unpaid carers: <https://youtu.be/IIHE0F4cKxY>

About NHS Vale of York CCG

[NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group](#) serves a population of more than 350,000 people in York, Selby, Tadcaster, Easingwold and Pocklington and the surrounding towns, villages and rural areas in the Vale of York. It is led by Accountable Officer, Phil Mettam. The Clinical Chair is Dr Nigel Wells.

About York Carers Centre

[York Carers Centre](#) is an independent charity and a network member of the national Carers Trust. We work in partnership with carers, statutory and voluntary organisations to ensure unpaid carers throughout York have access to confidential information, advice and support. We work with carers to influence positive change in service delivery with local government, employers, schools and health providers.