

Seasonal flu vaccinations for staff

Purpose

1. This report outlines the intention to extend the offer of seasonal flu vaccinations to all staff who undertake critical service delivery roles.

Background

2. In previous years, and in line with the council's vaccination policy and Department of Health advice, the council have offered staff who provide hands on personal care to service users a free flu vaccination. This covered approximately 350 council staff.
3. Staff have been advised of their eligibility, arranged their own vaccinations and claimed the cost back from the council. Any claims have been funded from service budgets but take up has been very low.

Main considerations for the council

4. Following the integration of public health a working group comprising public health, occupational health, emergency planning, communications and HR met to review this process.
5. The advice of the emergency planning and public health teams is that, to mitigate the risk to the council in the event of a major flu outbreak, the scheme should be widened to include all staff who are considered to be critical to business continuity.
6. Initial estimates of the numbers of council staff who would be eligible is 950 staff. Final lists of eligible staff will be confirmed by service directors and heads of service.
7. Where staff are contracted out to other providers the responsibility for business continuity lies with these providers. Therefore these staff will not be included in this programme. Schools and academies will also be responsible for their own continuity plans.
8. The process has also been reviewed to try and encourage wider take-up of this offer and make it as easy as possible for staff to take up the offer of the free flu vaccine.
9. The preferred approach is to purchase vouchers which are given to eligible employees. These give access to vaccinations at a number of high street providers (e.g. Boots, Tesco, Sainsbury's). The council can purchase these vouchers at a discounted rate - around £6.75 per employee.
10. Eligible staff would be required to request vouchers in advance and the vouchers could be allocated in several different ways depending on the staff involved:
 - a) For mobile staff the voucher can be sent directly to their home address.

- b) Vouchers can be provided to line managers for distribution where multiple staff from particular teams have requested them.
- c) Other eligible staff can arrange to pick up a voucher from one of the main hubs.

Financial implications

- 11. A budget of up to £10,000 has already been ringfenced by public health for the administration, promotion and costs of the seasonal flu vaccination programme in 2013/14.

Legal implications

- 12. The council is legally required to carry out key statutory duties and our business continuity plan reflects this requirement.

Safeguarding considerations

- 13. None

Public health implications

- 14. There is a public health risk if the council fails to provide basic service delivery (e.g. refuse collection). Offering vaccinations to front line staff will mitigate this risk.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

- 15. None identified.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

- 16. None identified.

Risk Assessment

- 17. A flu pandemic is on the national risk register and the likelihood of an outbreak increases each year.
- 18. There is a reputational risk if the council does not mitigate its own risk in relation to a flu pandemic as well as a service delivery risk.

Other options considered

- 19. Consideration was given to holding vaccination clinics at key hubs on particular dates where staff could access free flu vaccinations. However the majority of eligible staff are mobile, working across the county and therefore it was not believed that these clinics would be well attended. The costs to the council would be considerable as we would need to pay for a GP to attend at each site, regardless of the number of vaccinations that were actually given at each clinic.
- 20. The current scheme, whereby staff are informed of their eligibility, book their own vaccination and then reclaim the cost was also reviewed. This scheme is the most flexible in terms of where staff can access their vaccination. However it requires staff to pay up front (between £8 and £13 depending on where they attend for the

vaccination) and then reclaim the costs which may discourage staff from participating. It also requires payroll admin resource to process claims – particularly as many of the eligible employees are front line staff who would submit paper based claims as they do not have access to the SAP portal for submitting their expenses.

Conclusions

21. Whilst potentially cheapest for the council the current scheme of asking staff to make their own arrangement for vaccinations, pay and reclaim has not yielded good take up rates in the past.
22. The current eye care voucher scheme – where eligible staff request a voucher to take to an optician of their choice has good take up rates and receives good feedback from staff.
23. It is recognised that there will be a need for clear and accessible guidance for staff and managers to be produced and for a planned communication campaign through all available channels to ensure eligible staff are aware of the scheme.
24. JCC were briefed about the intended extension of the scheme and roll out to staff on 21 August 2013. They supported the view that the proposed scheme would encourage the highest staff take-up and also felt this was the fairest scheme as it did not require staff to pay up front costs but still allowed them to attend a convenient location.

Proposals

25. It is proposed that Staffing Policy Committee note the new approach to seasonal flu vaccinations for council staff.

Reason for Proposals

26. As outlined under “Main considerations” in points 4 - 10 above.

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Background papers	None
Appendices	None