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Flu vaccination to protect health staff and patients

Hospital and community health staff at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust are preparing for winter pressures on local NHS services by getting immunised against flu.

The Trust, which launches its annual staff flu vaccination drive on Monday (October 5th), has trained 'flu champions' in individual departments to help its occupational health department to deliver the campaign at South Tyneside District Hospital and at community health venues in Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Dr Bob Brown, Executive Director, Nursing and Patient Safety, said: "The flu vaccine is the best protection we have against an unpredictable virus which can cause severe illness and deaths among at-risk groups, including older people, pregnant women and those with a health condition - even one that is well-managed

"Our staff flu immunisation campaign is an important part of our preparation for winter, which traditionally brings pressures on health services. Last winter, those pressures were particularly severe, not only for us but for the NHS as a whole, so it is vital that our staff stay healthy. By having the flu jab, as well as protecting their vulnerable patients, they protect themselves, their colleagues and their own families from the virus."

The immunisation is offered to frontline healthcare workers, such as doctors, midwives and nurses, and to other staff to help reduce sickness absence so that everyone can continue to play their part in the delivery of services, ensuring that patients receive the best possible care. The injected flu vaccine is also free of charge on the NHS to people in 'at risk' groups to ensure they are protected against catching flu and developing serious complications.

Among those eligible to receive a free flu jab are:

- people 65 years of age or over
- pregnant women
- people with certain medical conditions
- people living in a long-stay residential care home or other long-stay care facility
- anyone in receipt of a carer's allowance or who is the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if they fall ill

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Pictured above: Dr Bob Brown, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Executive Director, Nursing and Patient Safety, left, with, left to right, staff nurse Laura Brain, ward manager Joanne Falconer, ward manager Jess Johnson and healthcare assistant James Johnson

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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