

Press release – 8th November, 2017

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS staff step up for flu vaccine to protect their patients



In an effort to protect their patients this winter, frontline NHS health staff in South Tyneside and Sunderland are leading the fight against flu by having the vaccination.

Since South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts launched their annual staff vaccination programmes last month (*October*) well over half of the workforce of more than 10,000 have been vaccinated, including Chief Executive Ken Bremner and other members of the Trusts' joint executive management team. The current uptake in South Tyneside is 60.5% and in Sunderland it is 61.4%.

Mr Bremner said: “Our annual staff flu immunisation campaign is an important part of our preparation for winter, which traditionally puts health services, particularly urgent and emergency care, under great pressure. The vaccination uptake figures so far are very impressive and I’d like to say a big thank you to all those staff who have had it. We’ll be continuing the vaccinations in the coming weeks so that as many as possible are given the opportunity to receive it.

“Staff are protecting their vulnerable patients, their colleagues and their own families from the virus by having the jab and, by protecting themselves, they stay healthy so they can continue to play their part in delivering services, ensuring that our patients receive the best possible care throughout the coming months.”

Flu is highly infectious and spreads easily from person to person. It can be particularly dangerous for patients who are already in hospital and other care settings and who are much more vulnerable to infection and its severe effects. With the NHS braced for an extremely busy winter, medical and nursing leaders are calling for all those eligible for the free vaccine – staff, patients and all those in at-risk groups - to get protected as soon as possible.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust’s Medical Director Dr Shaz Wahid added: “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. It is extremely important in the interests of patient care that our frontline healthcare workers such as doctors, midwives and nurses, who are more likely to be exposed to the influenza virus through their caring role, have the vaccination.”

The occupational health teams in the South Tyneside and Sunderland Trusts are vaccinating staff in hospitals in both areas, and in community health venues in South Tyneside, Sunderland and Gateshead.

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Notes to editors

- Public Health England has estimated that an average of 8,000 people die from flu in England each year. Some years that figure reaches 14,000.
- Whilst flu can be unpleasant, if you are otherwise healthy it will usually clear up on its own within a week. However, it can be more severe in certain at risk groups such as anyone aged 65 and over, pregnant women, children and adults with an underlying health condition (particularly long-term heart or respiratory disease) and children and adults with weakened immune systems. A flu vaccine is available for free on the NHS for:
 - anyone over the age of 65
 - pregnant women
 - children and adults with an underlying health condition (particularly long-term heart or lung disease)
 - children and adults with weakened immune systems
- South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust have been working together as part of a strategic alliance known as the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group since March 2016. A joint executive management team has been in place since November 2016 and is working towards a shared vision to develop high quality healthcare services that will benefit local communities for many years to come. Detailed work is currently taking place through the 'Path to Excellence' programme (www.pathtoexcellence.org.uk) to discuss how both Trusts can work better together to improve quality of care and address the challenges and pressures facing the whole NHS.

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