

**PRESS RELEASE – 10 OCTOBER 2018**

**South Tyneside and Sunderland Trusts launch staff flu vaccination campaign to protect patients**



Frontline NHS health staff in South Tyneside and Sunderland are leading the fight against flu this winter by having the vaccination in order to protect their patients.

South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts have launched their annual staff vaccination programmes, with members of the Trusts' joint executive management team leading the way by having the vaccine.

Last year, the uptake among South Tyneside frontline staff was 72.3% and in Sunderland it was 79.2%. The aim is to beat those impressive results in 2018/19 and get as close as possible to 100%.

The Trusts' Chief Executive Ken Bremner said: "Health workers have a duty to protect patients and service users from infection and our annual staff flu immunisation campaign is always an important part of our preparation for winter when health services - particularly urgent and emergency care - traditionally come under great pressure.

"Last winter was the worst flu season in a decade and this, along with extreme weather conditions and high levels of norovirus, resulted in health services locally and across the whole of England coming under significant additional pressure. Despite the circumstances, our staff did a fantastic job providing consistently excellent care for patients but it demonstrates the crucial role flu vaccination plays in helping the NHS to deal with winter pressures.

"Unvaccinated staff can spread the flu virus among patients without necessarily falling ill themselves. By having the vaccination, key staff such as doctors, nurses and midwives protect their vulnerable patients, their colleagues and their own families from the virus. By protecting themselves, they are also able to stay healthy so they can continue to play their part in delivering services, ensuring that our patients continue to receive the best possible care throughout the coming months."

For most healthy people, flu is an unpleasant but usually self-limiting disease, with recovery generally within a week or two. However, it can cause severe illness and even death among vulnerable groups including older people, pregnant women and people with an underlying health condition. It is highly infectious and it can be particularly dangerous for patients already in hospital and other care settings who are much more vulnerable to infection and its severe effects. Vaccination offers the best protection and is available free on the NHS for adults and children who are considered 'at risk', as well as children aged two to nine on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

The injected flu vaccine is offered free of charge on the NHS to people who are at risk. This is to help protect them against catching flu and developing serious complications.

You should have the flu vaccine if you:

- are 65 years of age or over
- are pregnant
- have certain medical conditions
- are living in a long-stay residential care home or other long-stay care facility
- receive a carer's allowance, or you are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if you fall ill

Photo caption: *Ken Bremner, Chief Executive of South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts, is given his flu vaccination by Occupational Health & Wellbeing Manager Anna Porter*

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