

Dear Colleague

## Expected delay to some batches of flu vaccine (Fluenz Tetra®) used in the childhood flu vaccination programme

We have been informed by colleagues in Public Health England, who procure the childhood flu vaccine on our behalf, that a number of the batches of Live Attenuated Intranasal Vaccine (LAIV), Fluenz Tetra®, will be delayed. The position is fluid, however, it is currently anticipated that this delay will be between 2 and 4 weeks and affects all parts of the UK.

We understand that 5 of the 8 batches due for delivery to the UK in November and December, have failed their routine quality assurance testing procedure by the manufacturer Astrazeneca, which is not related to the safety or efficacy of the vaccines. Consequently, there will be reduced stock of the vaccine available during November and potentially early December.

Whilst this delay is very regrettable, we have discussed the situation with colleagues in Health Protection Scotland to consider how best to prioritise the stocks available to us in Scotland.

To ensure that the delay in vaccine supply does not impact on those who are most vulnerable, and at greatest risk from flu complications, we recommend prioritising vaccination of children:

- aged 2 to 5 years and
- aged 5 to 18 years in at risk groups.

There is sufficient stock and planned deliveries to see this element of the programme through to completion. To maximise protection for all children in clinical risk groups, we would request that these priority groups are vaccinated as early as possible.

Given the delays with deliveries we would request that general practice colleagues only order enough vaccine to meet their expected weekly needs, and only the quantity that they have sufficient refrigerated capacity to store. It is essential that spare capacity be retained centrally to ensure the vaccine can be deployed where it is needed most. Whilst it is expected that all vaccine programmes have some degree of vaccine wastage, it is important that all practices adhere to local protocols on vaccine handling and storage in primary care to keep wastage to a minimum.

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Chief Nursing Officer  
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer  
Dr Catherine Calderwood  
Professor Fiona McQueen  
Dr Rose Marie Parr

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### For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards  
Medical Directors, NHS  
Boards  
Nurse Directors, NHS Boards  
Primary Care Leads, NHS  
Boards  
Directors of Nursing &  
Midwifery, NHS Boards  
Chief Officers of Integration  
Authorities  
Directors of Pharmacy  
Directors of Public Health  
General Practitioners  
Practice Nurses  
Immunisation Co-ordinators  
CPHMs  
Scottish Prison Service  
Scottish Ambulance Service  
Occupational Health Leads  
Health and Social Care  
Partnerships Leads

### For information

Chairs, NHS Boards  
Infectious Disease  
Consultants  
Consultant Physicians  
Health Protection Scotland  
Chief Executive, NHS Health  
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### Further Enquiries

#### Policy Issues

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### Vaccination in primary schools

In order to prioritise the groups set out above, we recognise that the primary school programme may be impacted upon in the short term. However, it is anticipated that the full allocation of LAIV for Scotland will be received over the course of the season, and we would therefore expect any missed sessions in primary schools to be re-scheduled for a later date or alternative arrangements made. In the meantime, it will be important for health boards to communicate with parents and schools as early as possible about changes to scheduled vaccination sessions.

We fully recognise that this will present a logistical challenge to school health teams who will have to re-programme vaccination activity planned in primary schools, but it is important that we ensure the stocks available to us are targeted at those most in need. Health Protection Scotland will work with NHS Boards to ensure that any potential disruption to primary school children is kept to a minimum.

Parents may understandably have questions and health boards will wish to plan how best to meet these information needs locally. NHS Health Scotland are developing updated messaging for parents to support health boards and practices during this period. Members of the public should still be directed to NHS Inform 0800 22 44 88 and [www.nhsinform.scot/childflu](http://www.nhsinform.scot/childflu)

While this issue is not of our making and is impacting on all areas of the UK equally, you should be aware that we understand colleagues in England, Northern Ireland and Wales are taking a similar approach by prioritising those at greatest risk. We can confirm that the adult flu programme is not affected by this.

We appreciate that this situation is very challenging. Our priority is to protect as many children as possible from the effects of flu and help reduce its spread in the community to other vulnerable individuals. We are therefore extremely grateful for your understanding, cooperation and ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,

*Catherine Calderwood*

*Fiona McQueen*

*Rose Marie Parr*

**Chief Medical Officer**

**Chief Nursing Officer**

**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**