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## **Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme (VPDP)**

### **Top Tips for Vaccination Champions**

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#### **What is a Vaccination Champion?**

A Vaccination Champion is an individual who supports health and/or social care colleagues to get their recommended vaccines. In the annual flu programme these individuals are often known as 'Flu Champions' and for several years have been considered a not-so-secret weapon in maximising healthcare worker flu vaccine uptake.

#### **Why are Vaccination Champions important?**

Vaccines are an important way to protect ourselves, and those around us. The burden of respiratory viruses such as flu and COVID-19 increases the winter pressures placed on hard-working health and social care staff, and the demands on the service.

With the risk of flu and COVID-19 both circulating, being up to date with recommended COVID-19 vaccines, and getting an annual flu vaccination each year is more important than ever for health and social care staff. None of us wants to catch or spread these respiratory viruses.

Vaccination Champions can tailor information to meet the vaccine information needs of their colleagues and give this information in an impactful way. They are often a trusted voice.

Vaccination Champions help make it easier for staff to get their vaccine(s).

## What does a Vaccination Champion do?

There are generally two categories of Vaccination Champion in Wales:

- **Advocates:** Individuals who raise awareness about the disease (such as flu or COVID-19) and the benefits of vaccination but are not vaccinators.
- **Peer vaccinators:** Individuals who raise awareness about the disease (such as flu) and the benefits of vaccination, but also vaccinate.

Vaccination Champions generally take on this role in addition to their 'day job'. They are often ideally placed to have informed conversations about vaccines, to share facts, dispel misconceptions, improve accessibility, and help support colleagues to get their vaccine(s) in a timely way.

To be most effective in improving vaccine uptake, Vaccination Champions should be:

- Approachable
- Accessible
- Non judgemental
- Armed with knowledge (vaccination facts)
- Willing to support and encourage colleagues to discuss their decisions about vaccination
- Well-supported

A short e-learning module has been developed by the Behavioural Science Unit and VPDP in Public Health Wales. This module is designed to help support Champions with their conversations about vaccination, helping them be more meaningful and impactful:

### **Motivational Interviewing: Having Better Vaccine Conversations**

This module is free, and does not take long. It is strongly recommended for all Vaccination Champions.

The module is available on ESR for NHS Wales staff, and for staff outside NHS Wales it is available on the Learning@Wales platform. The Public Health Wales immunisation e-learning page has guidance on how to access: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/immunisation-elearning/>

Health and social care workers have a responsibility to protect people and communities from infection. This includes vaccination against infectious diseases.

Vaccination Champions have an important role in spreading vaccine facts, and this is best done in an open, engaging way. There are some vaccine facts in the appendices you might find helpful.

Champions can be well placed to proactively identify and manage misunderstandings about vaccine preventable diseases and vaccinations amongst their colleagues. They can help best by listening and understanding colleagues'

concerns, responding by discussing any misconceptions, and offering facts and key information in a sensitive, appropriate, and timely way. Better understanding an individual colleagues concerns can help guide the conversation to best meet the information needs of that individual. These are all important factors to help positively influence decisions and help increase vaccine uptake in colleagues.

## How can Vaccination Champions help improve vaccine uptake?

### **Communication**

A key part of the Vaccination Champion's role is to raise awareness of the benefits of vaccines and help keep colleagues updated on opportunities to receive their vaccine(s). You are ideally placed to help guide informed conversations, and to positively contribute with factual information about vaccination to your colleagues. By better understanding the reasons why a colleague is uncertain about getting a vaccine can help a Champion tailor this to be most impactful.

By actively inviting all eligible staff to have a vaccine you can have a positive effect on vaccine uptake. If the invitation is personal, positive, and tailored to an individual, it is likely to be more effective.

Try to explore the reasons behind a colleague's decision if they decline a vaccine. This will help you understand address their personal concerns or misconceptions. Evidence shows that healthcare workers do not like to feel pressured into having a vaccine but want to make their own minds up. To be most effective, conversations need to be well informed and sensitive to the individual's wants/needs.

Increase the opportunity for colleagues to receive their vaccine(s) by attending team meetings, visiting different departments, and attending staff events.

Top tips to help Champions communicate effectively:

- Let people know you are a Vaccination Champion.
- Ensure that you are up to date with key facts.
- Raise awareness of the benefits of vaccines and signpost people for more information.
- Make Every Contact Count
- Use every opportunity for colleagues to get their vaccine.
- Approach colleagues/staff members one-to-one, to start a positive conversation about vaccination.
- Share with your colleagues when and why you got your vaccine(s).
- Consider hosting a 'vaccine information session' to share key information and to give staff the opportunity to ask you questions.
- Remember to respect the confidentiality of your colleagues.
- Respect people's decisions, but if someone opts out of having a vaccine, try to sensitively explore why. If you know the reasons for someone deciding against having a flu vaccine you will be better placed to able to help them change their mind.
- Let people know when and where they can get their vaccines

## Access

As a Vaccination Champion you can really make a difference as you are ideally placed to make it easier for your colleagues to get their vaccine(s).

Some top tips to help you do this are:

- Vary the days and times you are available to vaccinate. This gives staff who are part time, or work nights and weekends more opportunity to get their vaccine(s).
- Be flexible. If staff are too busy to receive their vaccination, make a note and return at a time that will be more convenient for them.
- If you are the Champion for more than one area, you may be able to set up drop-in 'clinics' in areas with high footfall of staff, such as at handover, staff events, team meetings, induction events and training days.

Also consider:

- Contacting teams and departments in advance to find out when they would like the vaccine to be available for them and arrange to visit at a suitable time.
- Finding out about any meetings and offer to vaccinate at them.
- Visit each ward, team, department, or site you cover multiple times to ensure you reach a larger number of staff.
- Publicising when and where you will be holding vaccination and/or information sessions via the intranet and posters.

## Support

You should have a team of colleagues to support you. This is likely to include your immunisation coordinator (or trust vaccination lead), occupational health team, and other Vaccination Champions. Seek support from your colleagues to help you, and don't be afraid to ask for help. You're not in this alone.

The more Vaccination Champions in your organisation, the easier it will be to spread key messages and vaccine facts in a timely way, and to vaccinate more staff. When you're out in different areas of your organisation, talk to any interested colleagues about why you're a Vaccination Champion, what you get out of it and how they can get involved.

It is important to build strong links with the immunisation coordinator in your health board (or your vaccination lead if you work in a Trust). They are valuable allies and can provide lots of support to Vaccination Champions throughout the year.

## Vaccine uptake

Uptake of influenza immunisation including Health Board and NHS Trust frontline staff is available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/immunisation-surveillance/>

Uptake of COVID-19 vaccines is available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/immunisation-surveillance/>

Uptake of other vaccines can be found here:

[https://nhswales365.sharepoint.com/sites/PHW\\_VPDPComms/SitePages/Surveillance.aspx](https://nhswales365.sharepoint.com/sites/PHW_VPDPComms/SitePages/Surveillance.aspx)

## Resources and support for Vaccination Champions

Awareness raising resources aimed at healthcare staff to help support your local campaign, includes posters, flyers, leaflets, and stickers which may all be ordered free of charge may be downloaded and/or ordered at:

<https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/health-information-resources/>.

There are many training resources and opportunities, including e-learning modules available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/immunisation-elearning/>

The following pages may contain useful information:

[Immunisation and Vaccines - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

Also take a look in the appendices of this document.

Guidance you may also find helpful includes:

- [Flu vaccination: increasing uptake \(NICE guidance\)](#)
- [Summary of NICE guidelines NG103: Flu Vaccination: increasing uptake](#)

Attaching an email footer to your email signature may help raise awareness of the various vaccination programmes:



**Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau**  
**Vaccination saves lives**

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### **Vaccination facts**

If you are a Vaccination Champion, these key vaccination facts might help you in your discussions about vaccination:

##### **Vaccines work**

Vaccination is the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and our children against ill health. They prevent up to 3 million deaths worldwide every year.

Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases. It's much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them. But no vaccine is 100% effective

##### **Vaccines are very safe.**

Vaccines are very safe. All vaccines undergo rigorous safety testing before being introduced, and they are also constantly monitored for side effects after being introduced.

Millions of doses of vaccines are given each year around the world.

##### **Side effects to vaccines are usually mild**

Sometimes a vaccine can cause mild side effects, such as feeling a bit unwell or having a sore arm for 2 or 3 days, they usually don't last for long.

There is a routine schedule of vaccines recommended for everyone in the UK, this is to protect individuals from many serious and potentially deadly diseases. If people stop having vaccines, it's possible for infectious diseases to quickly spread again

## Appendix 2

**Flu facts**

You might hear misconceptions circulating about flu vaccines. If you are a Flu Vaccination Champion, these flu facts can help arm you against these:

**Flu vaccines can't give you the flu.**

Adult flu vaccines don't contain live viruses, they cannot give you flu.

Sometimes people experience side effects such as tiredness, headache, aching muscles, etc. after a vaccine, but this is usually the immune system responding to the vaccine.

**Around Seven out of ten people that have flu show no symptoms.**

If you feel well, you could still unknowingly spread flu to people around you, including patients who may be very vulnerable to flu and its complications.

**Flu vaccines are very safe.**

Flu vaccines are quick and very safe and could prevent weeks of serious illness.

Millions of doses of flu vaccine are given each year around the world.

**Flu vaccination is one of the best ways to protect against catching flu.**

Having an annual flu vaccine is one of the best ways to protect against catching flu.

**Annual flu vaccination is one of the best ways to protect against spreading flu.**

Flu can be serious for some people and as a healthcare worker you can help protect those in your care by having your flu vaccine each year.

Having an annual flu vaccine is one of the best ways to prevent spreading flu and will help reduce the risk of spreading it to colleagues, and others.

**Side effects of flu vaccines are usually mild**

Flu vaccine side-effects are generally mild or often non-existent. The most common side effect is soreness around the site of the injection and occasionally slight temperature, feeling tired, aching muscles or headache. These symptoms are a lot less serious than having flu.

Other side effects are uncommon or very rare.

## Appendix 3

**COVID-19 facts**

You might hear misconceptions about COVID-19 vaccines. If you are a COVID-19 Vaccination Champion, you may find these facts helpful.

**COVID-19 vaccines work**

A large number of people worldwide have died from COVID-19 infection.

Having COVID-19 vaccine reduces the chance of you suffering from severe illness or dying from COVID-19. Millions of COVID-19 vaccines have been given worldwide.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is 100% effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe. Like some other vaccines, levels of protection may begin to wane over time. If you are eligible for a COVID-19 spring booster it is important you get it.

**Side effects of COVID-19 vaccines are usually mild**

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and don't last long, and not everyone gets them. The most common side effects should only last a day or two.

COVID-19 vaccine side-effects are generally mild or often non-existent. The most common side effect is soreness around the site of the injection and occasionally slight temperature, feeling tired, aching muscles or headache. Other side effects are uncommon or very rare.

**COVID-19 vaccines are very safe**

All of the COVID-19 vaccines being used in the UK have been carefully assessed for safety and effectiveness by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) before being authorised for use.

The safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines continues to be monitored.