



---

## Bexley Flu Vaccine Uptake 2018-9 Winter season

### December 2018

---

#### **Acknowledgements**

- Healthwatch Bexley would like to thank the London Borough of Bexley, Central Library Bexleyheath, Northumberland Heath Children's Centre, Danson Youth Centre, Erith Library, Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup Library, Age UK, Albany Park Over 65s Group, Bexley Pensioner's Forum, The Polio Society, Kent Association for the Blind, Welling Library, Bexley Parkinson's Group, Carer's Wellbeing Group, the Learning Disability Partnership Board and the Bexley Voluntary Service Council for allowing us to engage with their service users and members.

#### **1. Executive Summary**

Public Health England suggest the symptoms of flu may manifest themselves in healthy people without causing any sustainable harm. However there are groups who are at greater risk of developing long term complications, for example: older people; the very young; pregnant women; those suffering with underlying long term conditions such as cardiac or respiratory disease and the immunosuppressed (Public Health England, 2018). As a result the National Health Service (NHS) plan a national immunisation programme every year to protect those considered most at risk (NHS England, 2018).

The uptake of the flu vaccine for the 2017-18 winter season in Bexley was below the national average therefore Healthwatch Bexley decided to undertake a study to look at the reasons for this and try to understand some of the barriers to being vaccinated (Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England, 2018).

Healthwatch Bexley visited pensioner's groups, children's' centres, support groups, libraries and Queen Mary's Hospital to engage with our sample of 408 people, collecting quantitative and qualitative information. We also considered how the Accessible Information Standard was embedded by GP surgeries in their communications with vulnerable patients, in regards to the flu vaccination.

Since conducting our survey, NHS England have published the 2018/19 Seasonal Flu Vaccine (GP) uptake rates for Bexley. These figures reflect immunisation uptake as reported by GP Surgeries and therefore do not include vaccinations provided by pharmacies.

<b>NHS England 2018/2019 Seasonal Flu Vaccination Data</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
<b>65 and Over</b>	<b>64.5%</b>	<b>64.0%</b>
<b>Under 65's (at risk only)</b>	<b>40.9%</b>	<b>35.3%</b>
<b>Pregnant Women</b>	<b>35.9%</b>	<b>35.8%</b>
<b>2 Year Olds (Not at risk)</b>	<b>32.2%</b>	<b>30.0%</b>
<b>2 Year Olds (at risk)</b>	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>43.5%</b>
<b>3 Year Olds (Not at risk)</b>	<b>36.8%</b>	<b>32.2%</b>
<b>3 Year Olds (at risk)</b>	<b>40.5%</b>	<b>52.7%</b>

*NHS England (2019)*

During the 2018/2019 flu season a phased delivery system for the vaccine was introduced and there was a national shortage of the flu vaccination for over 65's, due both delivery and supply issues (GPonline, 2019).

These figures show that even though there was a delay in receiving the vaccination for the over 65's, the figures for this year are in line with 2017/18. Remaining lower than the 75% coverage rate for over 65s as recommended by Public Health England (Public Health England, 2018) The impact of the vaccine shortage may or may not have had on vaccine uptake, cannot be measured.

The only significant drop in uptake of the Flu vaccine has been in the 2 year olds in a clinical risk group and a slight drop in the 3 Year olds not in a clinical risk group. As a result more needs to be done to put parents minds at ease about the safety of the vaccine.

## **2. Summary of Key Findings**

- 65% of over 65s that were sampled had already been vaccinated when we spoke to them. With 68% of the remainder of the survey sample stating that they intended to have a flu jab. However, we acknowledge that results cannot be generalised or verified as we were not able to follow up those intending to be vaccinated and have no way of knowing how many of our sample actually went on to receive the vaccination.
- 55% of eligible adults under 65 in our sample (see appendix 1 for eligibility criteria) had already been vaccinated and 36% planned to be vaccinated when we met them. Of those who had not already been vaccinated 9% were non-committal, and 55% stated that they did not want to be vaccinated.
- 34% of parents in our sample stated that their children had been vaccinated and a further 42% had made plans for this to take place. However, we acknowledge that results cannot be generalised or verified as we were not able to follow up those in our sample intending to be vaccinated and have no way of knowing how many actually went on to receive the vaccine.

- GPs use a variety of methods to raise awareness of the flu jab such as posters and leaflets in the surgery and many also make direct contact by text, letter and telephone.
- The main barriers for not having the flu vaccination were:-

Belief that the flu jab had made either themselves or a close family member ill in the past.

Some felt that they were not vulnerable to flu.

Some felt they should not have it for health reasons.

### **3. Introduction**

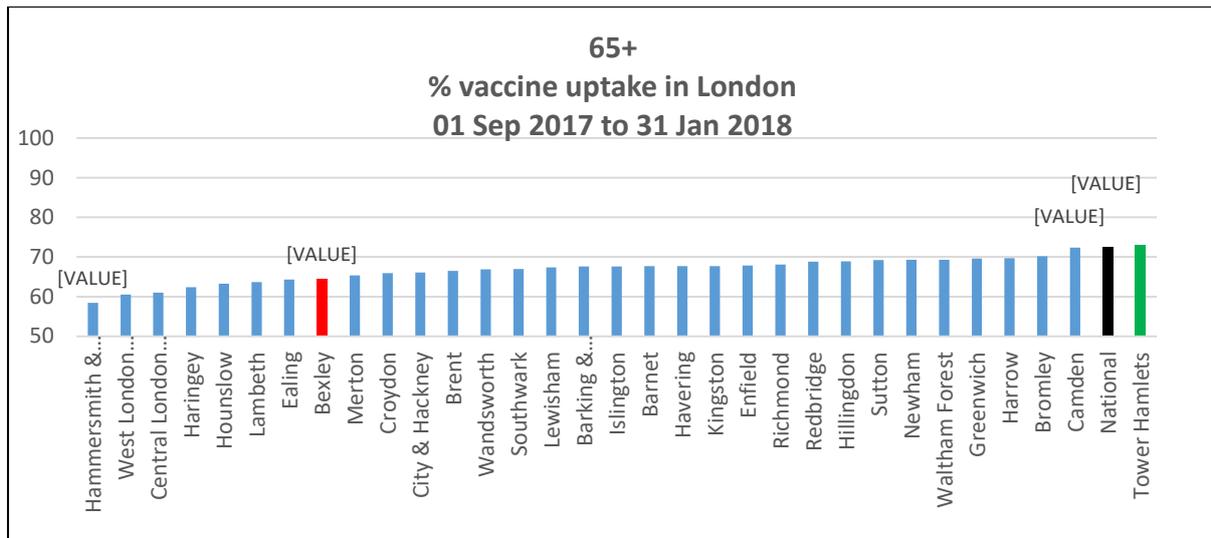
Each year, to reduce the impact of flu on the population and informed by the research undertaken by the World Health Organisation, the National Health Service (NHS) plan a programme of immunisation against the strains of influenza most likely to be in circulation, although it is acknowledged that this is based on best judgement and the accuracy of the prediction cannot be guaranteed (Public Health Matters, 2018). For the 2018-19 season the NHS provides free adjuvanted trivalent vaccines for the over 65s and quadrivalent vaccines for other groups meeting the age or long term health condition criteria, and pregnant women (NHS England, 2018). The vaccine is administered to the under 18s via nasal spray and children in reception classes to Year 5 can receive this via the school programme, with all other age groups having the choice to be vaccinated at their GP surgery or pharmacy (NHS England, 2018). Health and Social care workers should also be immunised with an age appropriate vaccine (NHS England, 2018).

Individuals who do not meet the criteria for a free vaccination can visit a pharmacy or a supermarket should they wish to be vaccinated. A small charge is payable for this service.

#### **Adults**

##### **Over 65's**

According to statistics published by Public Health England (2018), with the exception of one borough, in percentage terms fewer London residents aged over 65 received the influenza vaccine when compared against the overall national figure during the 2017-18 winter season. 64.5 % of Bexley residents aged over 65 received the vaccine during this period, which was the eighth lowest rate in London. The World Health Organisation/Public Health England target for this group is 75% (Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England, 2018)



**Under 65's at risk**

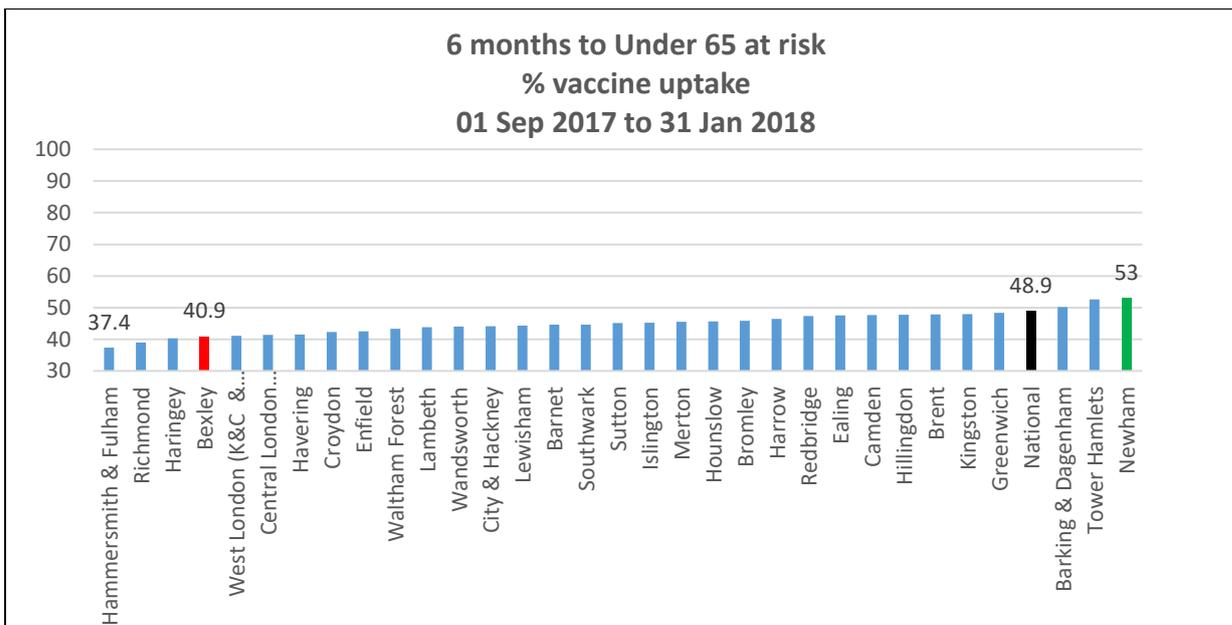
Adults suffering from certain medical conditions are offered a flu vaccine free of charge by the NHS with an ultimate aim of 75% coverage (Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England, 2018).

These conditions include:

- Asthma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- Chronic heart disease, such as heart failure; chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- Chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, Motor Neurone Disease or Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Diabetes
- Sickle Cell disease or if the spleen has been removed
- A weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medication such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- Being seriously overweight (BMI of 40 or above).

During the 2017/18 Winter season, the uptake of a vaccine amongst those diagnosed with these conditions was 40.9%, the fourth lowest in London. Three London boroughs exceeded the national uptake (Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England, 2018).

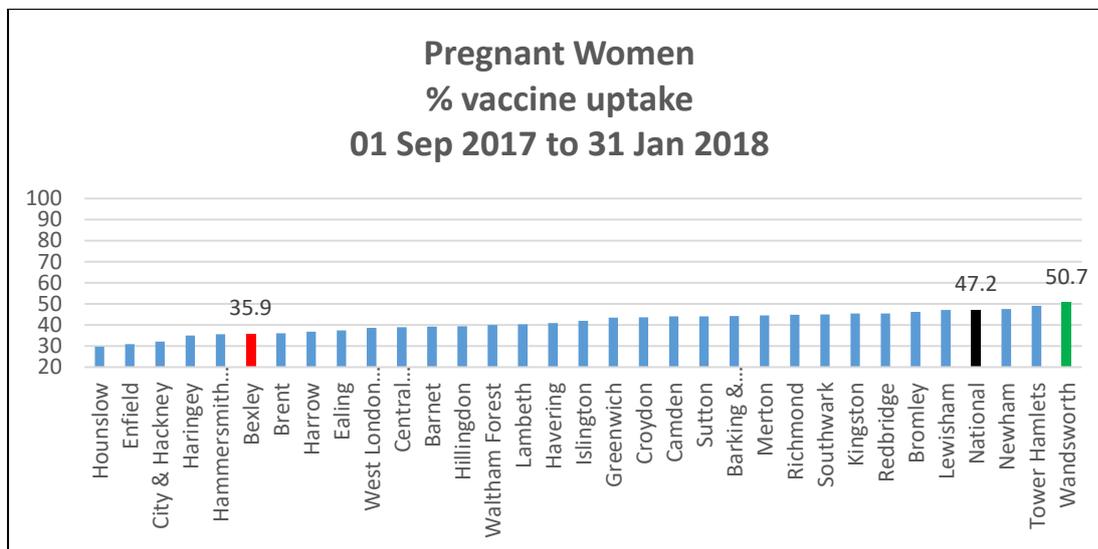
It is also recommended that hospital staff, and carers, both informal and paid receive the flu jab and this is available free of charge on the NHS (Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England, 2018).



**Pregnant women**

Vaccination is recommended to pregnant women due to the risk to themselves and their unborn babies. Flu can cause preterm labour and low birth weight. One in eleven maternal deaths between 2009 and 2012 can be attributed to influenza. As well as reducing these risks, the vaccine can provide immunity for babies for up to 6 months following delivery (Public Health England, 2015)

Uptake of the vaccine nationally was 47%. In London three boroughs exceeded this, but Bexley at 35.9% uptake was the sixth lowest in London.



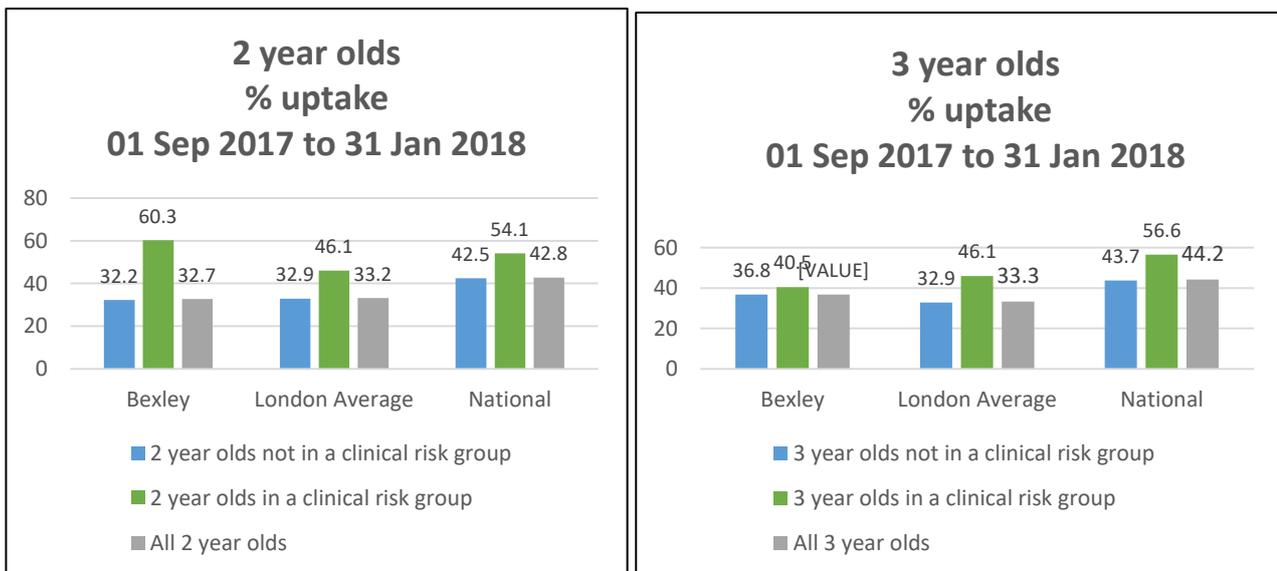
## Children

Two and three year olds both with and without medical conditions are offered a flu vaccine, which is administered as a nasal spray. Children in Reception classes through to Year 5 (aged 4 to 10) can receive their flu jab as part of a national school programme. In addition all children with at clinical risk aged from 2 to 17 are offered the vaccine, as well as those who are home educated providing they meet the age criteria (National Health Service, 2018).

The following figures are available for the 2017-8 winter season:

For two year olds in a clinical risk group, Bexley exceeded the London average and national figure by a considerable margin, by vaccinating over 60% of this group. The figure for those not in a clinical risk group however, was close to the London average and trailed behind the national figure by about 10%.

For three year olds in a clinical risk group at 40.5% coverage, Bexley was lower than both the London average and national figure. In terms of children not in a clinical risk group, Bexley exceeded the London average but was around 7% lower than the national figure.



Overall the target for all 2018-19 preschool children is 48% (NHS England, 2019). Whilst Bexley exceeded this figure in 2017-18 for 2 year olds in a clinical group this was not met for 2 year olds not in a clinical group, or at all for 3 year olds.

The 2018-19 target for school aged children is 65% (NHS England, 2019). In 2017-18 68.5% of 4-5 year olds, 67% of 5-6 year olds and 65.7% of 6-7 year olds were vaccinated, however only 62% of 7-8 year olds and 58.7% of 8-9 year olds received the vaccine.

#### 4. Methods

This survey is based on quantitative and qualitative data which was captured through a small structured questionnaire drafted by Healthwatch Bexley.

Between 18 October and 30 November 2018, the Healthwatch Bexley team visited community events, children's centres, hospitals, libraries and social groups, engaging with 408 members of the public that met the flu eligibility criteria. We asked local residents questions regarding their uptake of the flu vaccine in the previous year, this year, and whether those who had not received the vaccine yet, planned to do so.

By visiting these venues and events, we were able to target the following groups:

- the parents of 2-3 year olds
- carers
- people with Learning Disabilities
- the over 65s
- under 65s

During our engagements, we also met with under 65s who met the criteria to be vaccinated due to a health condition and parents of older children, who were eligible via the school vaccination programme.

We collected data with regards to the prompts that people received to have the flu vaccination and also took the opportunity to collect some qualitative data to ascertain the barriers experienced, and subjective reasons why people chose not to be vaccinated. We asked whether the flu vaccine was administered at a GP surgery, a Pharmacy, a school or elsewhere.

Where individuals were sceptical about the flu jab we handed them a myth buster sheet which had been compiled collaboratively by Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group and London Borough Bexley (Appendix 2).

A limitation of the study is that Bexley GP practices had an issue with access to the vaccine for over 65's at the beginning of the immunisation period. The vaccine was due to be delivered in phases from the manufacturer but due to a national shortage of the vaccine, supply and delivery issues, many GP practices were left without vaccines during the start of the flu vaccination season (GPonline, 2019). Additionally, where individuals indicated that they planned to be vaccinated it cannot be certain whether this did in fact occur.

With regard to the Accessible Information Standard (AIS), where possible we asked GP surgeries by telephone, or where appropriate by email how they informed and contacted those with additional communication needs, ie easy read for those with Learning Disabilities about the flu vaccination.

**5. Results of the Survey**

The Healthwatch Bexley study took place in October and November 2018, during which it is anticipated that the bulk of the vaccinations take place in advance of the winter season. There is potential for further activity during December 2018 and January 2019 which has not been captured in this study. Results will be reported in three categories:

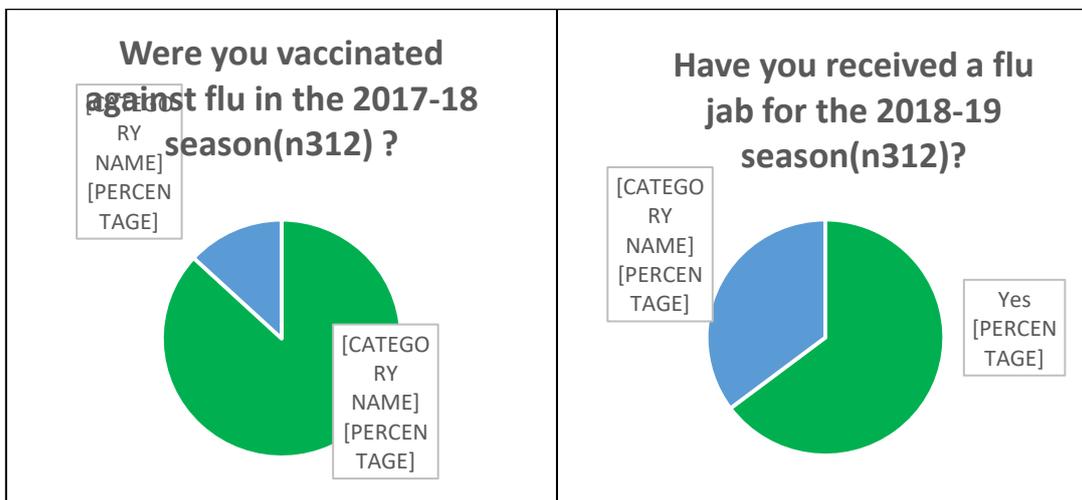
- Over 65s
- Under 65s with Long term health conditions
- Children

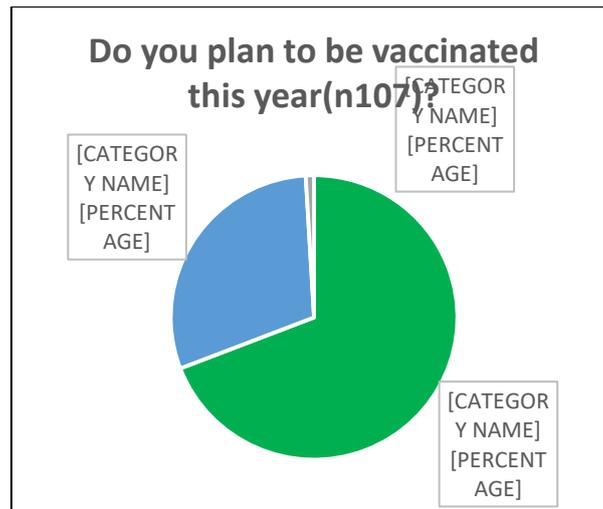
**Over 65s (n-312)**

We encountered the over 65 age group at 17 of our engagements. Whilst we expected to find this group at pensioners’ events, meetings and hospitals, we also met them at toddler groups where they were accompanying their grandchildren. 312 individuals in this age group were questioned.

Although 65% of our sample had already been vaccinated when we spoke to them, some had experienced supply issues with the adjuvanted vaccine recommended for their age group. Of those who had not yet been immunised, 69% did intend to be vaccinated and several of those spoken to had already booked immunisation appointments. Other reasons stated for delayed immunisation included a change of GP; suffering from the after effects of a recent virus and a lack of transport.

Those who were unsure if they should have the vaccine due to a diagnosed condition preferred to ask their doctor whether the jab would be advisable and there was also uncertainty due to feeling ill after receiving the vaccination last year.





### Over 65s barriers (n-312)

Reasons for deciding not to receive the flu jab this year can be grouped into common themes. The most common being the belief that the jab had made either themselves or a close family member ill in the past. To increase the vaccination uptake rate more needs to be done by health professionals to overcome the barriers particularly in relation to the vaccine making people ill, or vaccination rates will not meet the 75% coverage rate as recommended by the Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England, 2018.

*“Had it once (the jab) and I was ill for 2 weeks, I am now 87”*

*“The doctor told my daughter that it was a mild dose of flu they gave you.”*

Others had been advised by members of the medical profession:

*“Can’t have on doctor’s advice as had a reaction in the past.”*

Some felt that they were not vulnerable to flu:

*“Not got time, I’m active. I try to keep away from people who are ill. I eat well”*

*“Had the flu many years ago”*

*“Never had the flu since I was 14 years old”*

*“No reason (for not having the jab) just never had flu...My husband and family have the jab but not me”*

There were a number of individuals who felt they should not have the flu jab for health reasons:

*“Allergic to it.”*

*“I have a low blood count.”*

*“Too many other things wrong with me”*

There was adverse influence from the press:

*“Article in the paper states it’s not worth having if you are over 60” (Daily Mail).*

With regards to this comment a search was undertaken of Daily Mail articles and no such reference could be found, albeit there was an article published on 12 September 2018 informing that the trivalent vaccine administered to the over 65s did not protect against Japanese flu (Daily Mail, 2018).

Others had intrinsic beliefs about immunisation:

*“Don’t like anything in my body that I don’t have to have”*

*“Don’t think it’s effective but important for some to have it”*

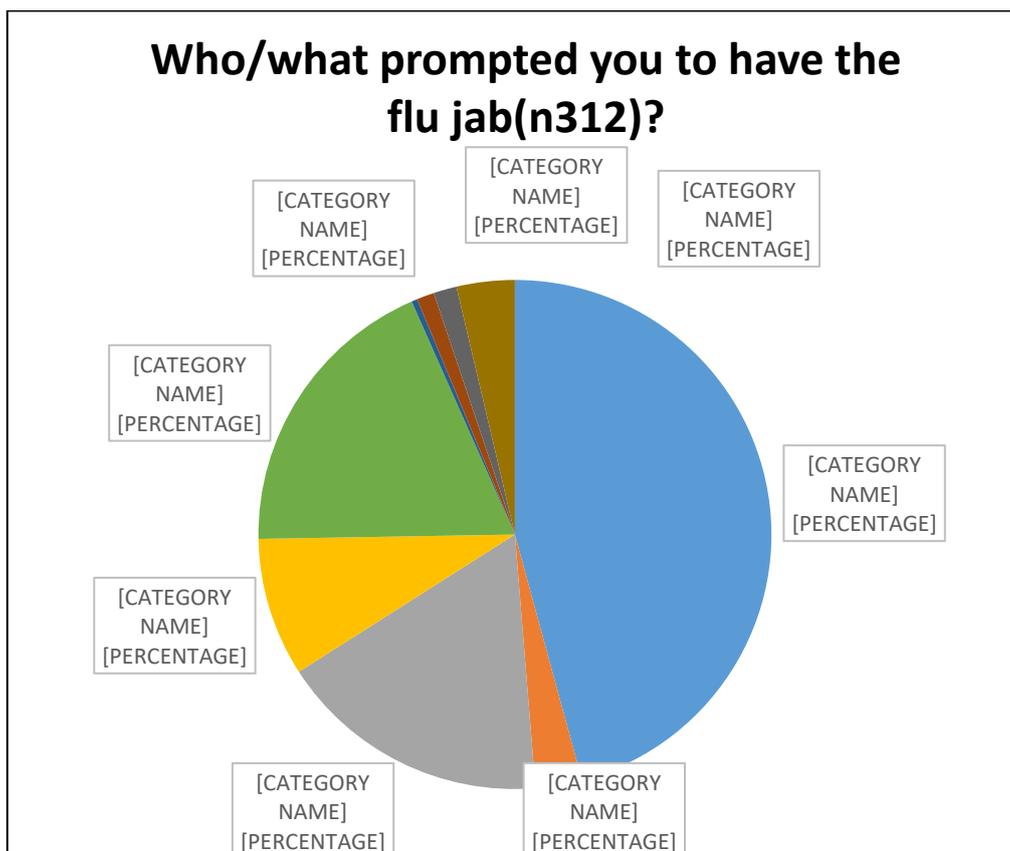
For others the barriers are around accessibility:

*“Waiting list is too long”*

*“The nurse from the GP Practice will not visit my housebound husband to administer his flu jab as he is not on their housebound list.”*

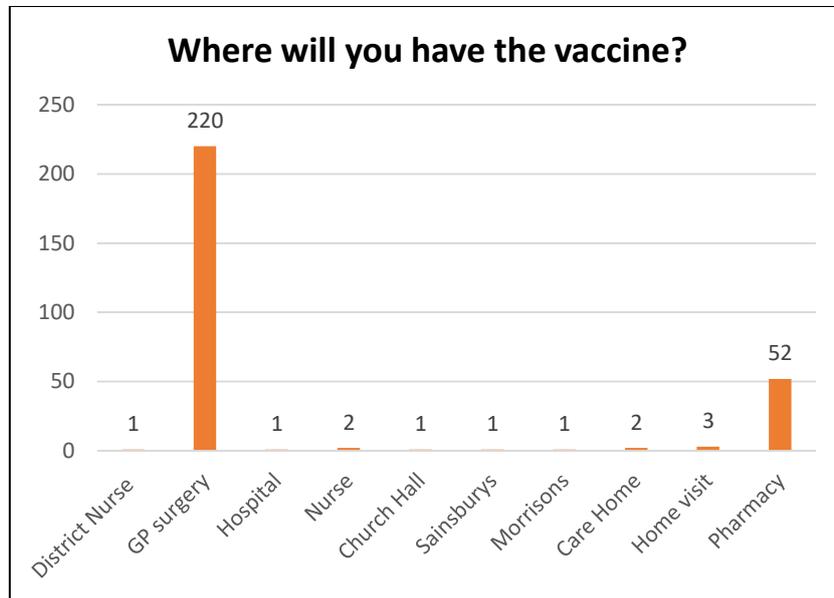
### Vaccination prompts

The GP surgery was the most common source of reminder, accounting for 67% of the total, whether through the doctor, reception, nurse or promotional material displayed. 28% of respondents stated that they did not receive a reminder or that they were self-motivated. A small number were reminded by the pharmacist or prompted by their care home.



**Where will you have the vaccination?**

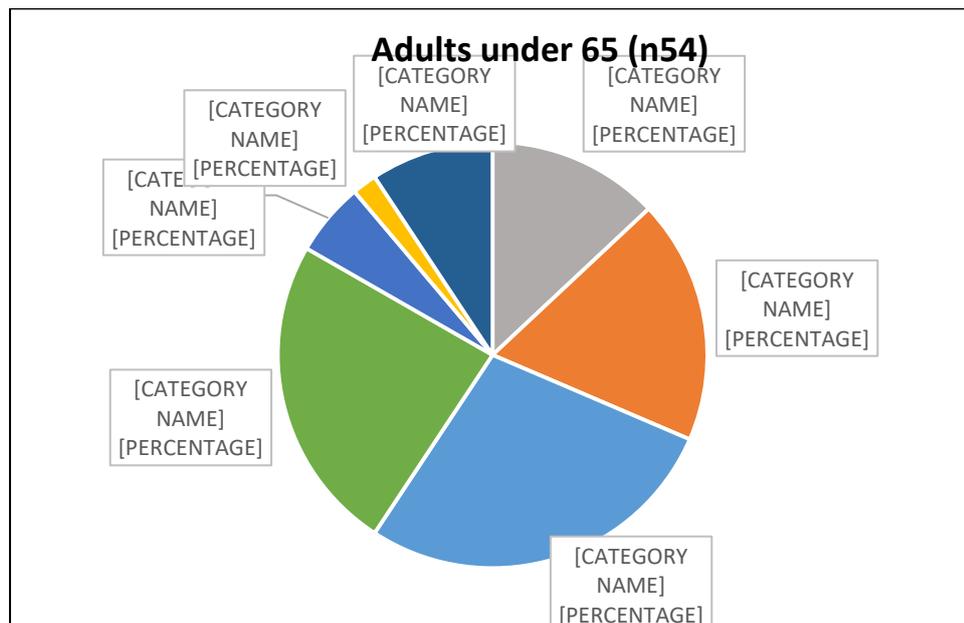
The majority of respondents stated that they receive their vaccine at the GP surgery, with the next most popular option being the pharmacy. Small numbers stated that they were vaccinated by the district nurse or home visit, at the hospital, care home or supermarket.



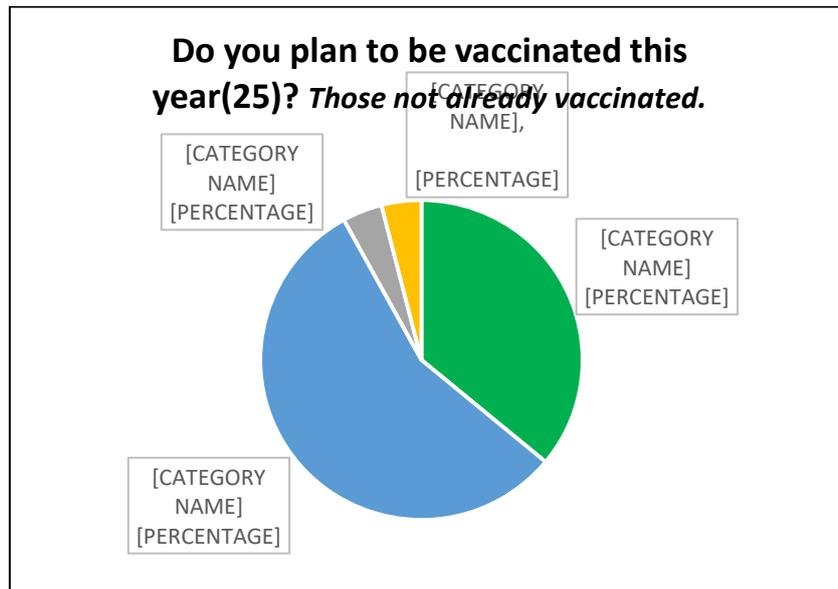
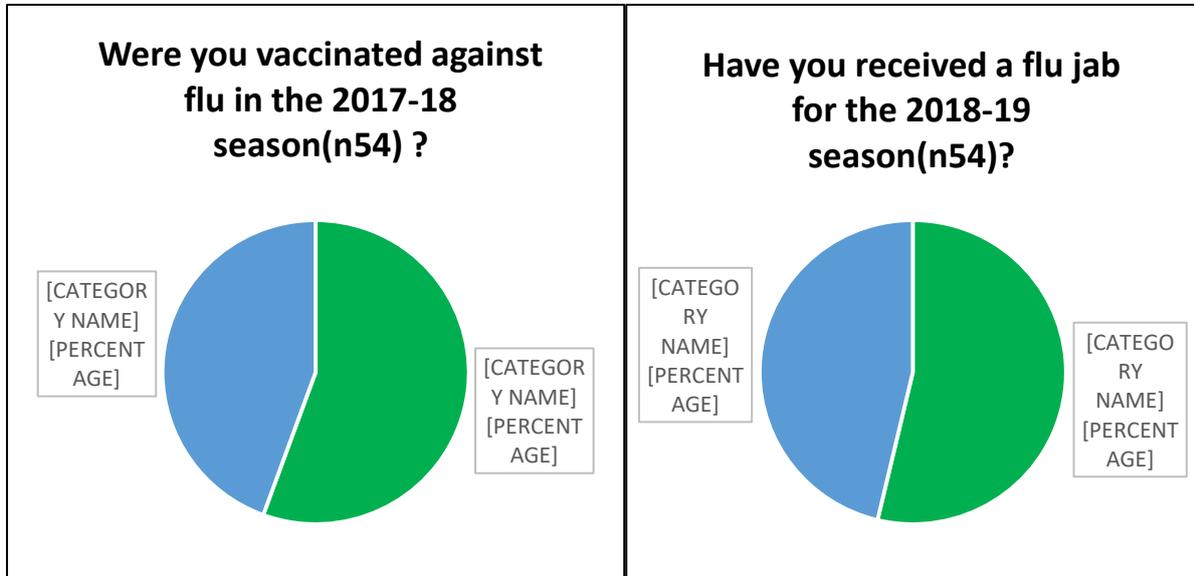
**Adults under 65 (n54)**

We engaged with 54 adults of which 49 met the criteria to be vaccinated in this category. When we approached individuals it was not always evident which age bracket they belonged to or whether they were suffering from a long term condition. Quantitative results do not include responses from those who were not eligible, albeit we have reported qualitative data with regard to their attitudes.

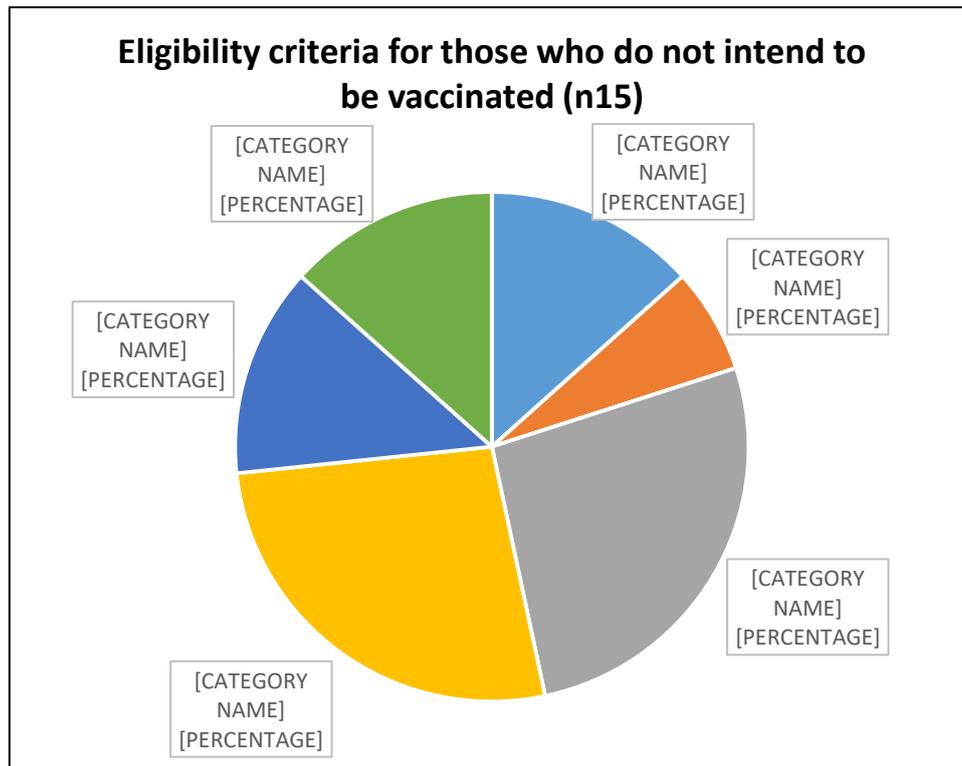
27% of the sample had a Learning Disability, 31% had a long term medical condition, 20% were carers or worked in the NHS, 2% were school employees and 6% were pregnant. 14% did not complete the eligibility criteria information.



56% of those in our sample had been vaccinated in the 2017-18 season, and 54% in our sample had already been vaccinated for 2018-19 when questioned. Of those who had not yet received the flu vaccination, a total of 40% of our sample, stated that they would definitely or probably arrange to be vaccinated.



The 15 individuals who stated that they would not have the flu jab, or were not sure can be broken down into the following eligibility criteria.



#### Barriers for adults under 65 meeting eligibility criteria

Where the long term medical condition criteria was met:

*"My son should have the vaccine but he's not looking after himself...he needs other health checks as well"*

*"Never had flu. Mixed feedback from friends about the jab"*

*"Previously got flu about a week later - I take vitamins now instead"*

*"I am a Diabetic, but don't feel frail enough. I don't have any chest conditions so decide not to have the flu jab, but would reconsider if my health deteriorated"*

Those with a Learning Disability made the following comments:

*"Doesn't stop you getting a cold - we are a very clean country. Will think about it"*

*"I had it once and then got ill. Don't want it now"*

*"Never had one. Doctor doesn't ask me"*

The carer and NHS workers stated:

*"I don't like what they put in it"*

*"I don't like needles (NHS worker)"*

*"I know three people who have always been ill afterwards"*

Where criteria was not met, comments included:

*"Not old enough for a free jab, but wary of it (side effects)"*

However others who did not meet the criteria did intend to pay for their vaccines:

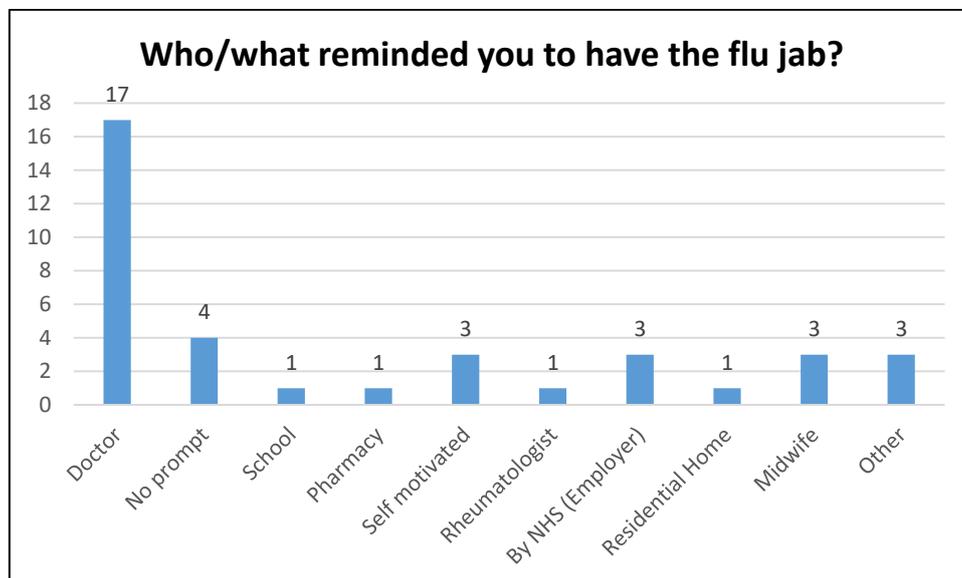
*"Do not yet fit the criteria, but I will pay"*

*"My husband has a Long Term Health Condition. I was previously employed at Darenth Valley as a chiropodist so I have paid for a Flu jab myself this year for the first time"*

*"Always like to have the vaccine as this was provided free by my previous employer"*

### Vaccination prompts

The majority were prompted by their doctor. The three pregnant women we spoke to had all been promoted by their midwife. .



Comments from NHS staff included:

*"Reminded by my doctor, also reminded at work"*

*"The NHS strongly encourage their employees to be vaccinated"*

Individuals with long term health conditions advised the following:

*"The Pharmacist suggested it when I went to collect my prescription. It was done on the spot"*

*"Mum sorts everything out for me" (Blind Adult)*

Several people meeting the long term health condition criteria had not been prompted by a health professional. Two of these had Diabetes, one had Multiple Sclerosis and one did not specify their condition.

There was mixed feedback from people with Learning Disabilities regarding reminders and their format:

*"Easy read letter (reminder)"*

*"Letter (reminder) not easy read"*

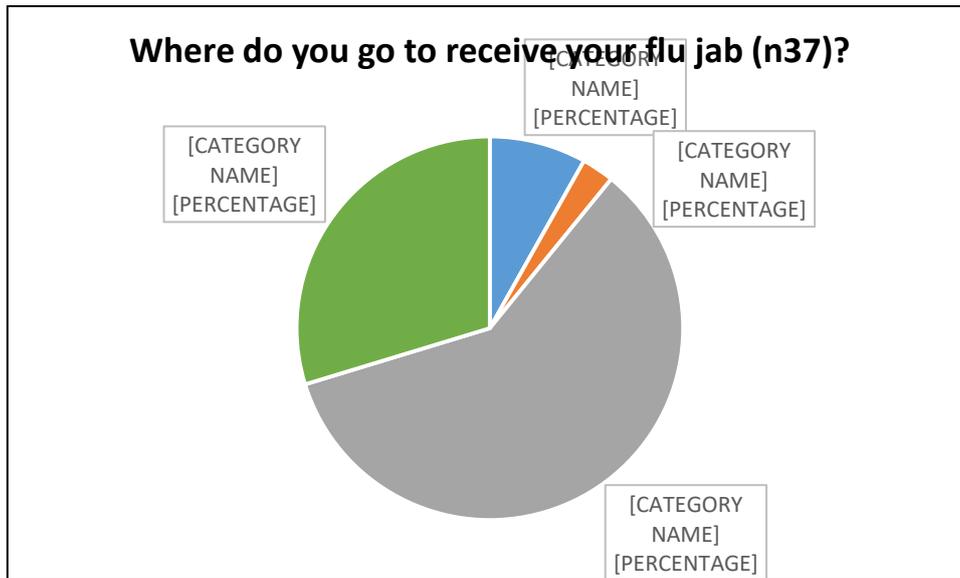
*"No reminder sent"*

*"Reminder from Day Centre (Littleheath surgery)"*

*"Text message reminder from Cairngall"*

**Where will you have the vaccination?**

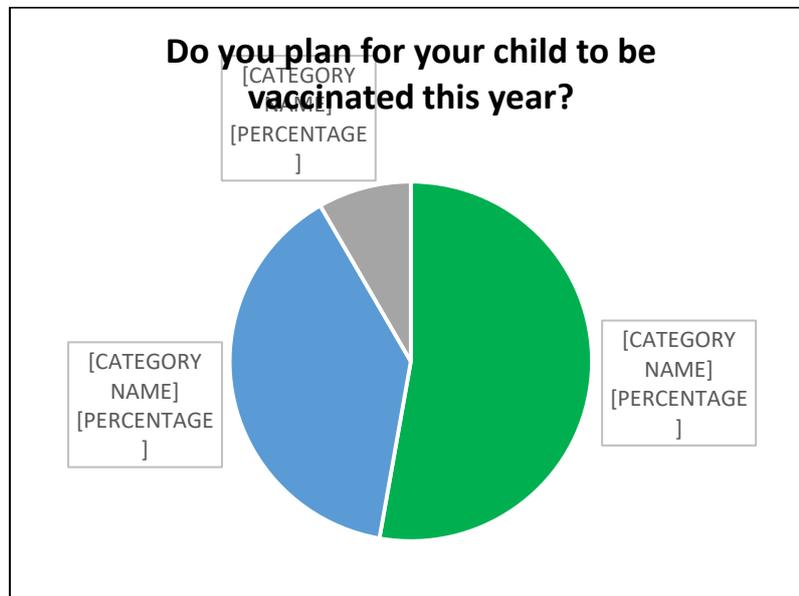
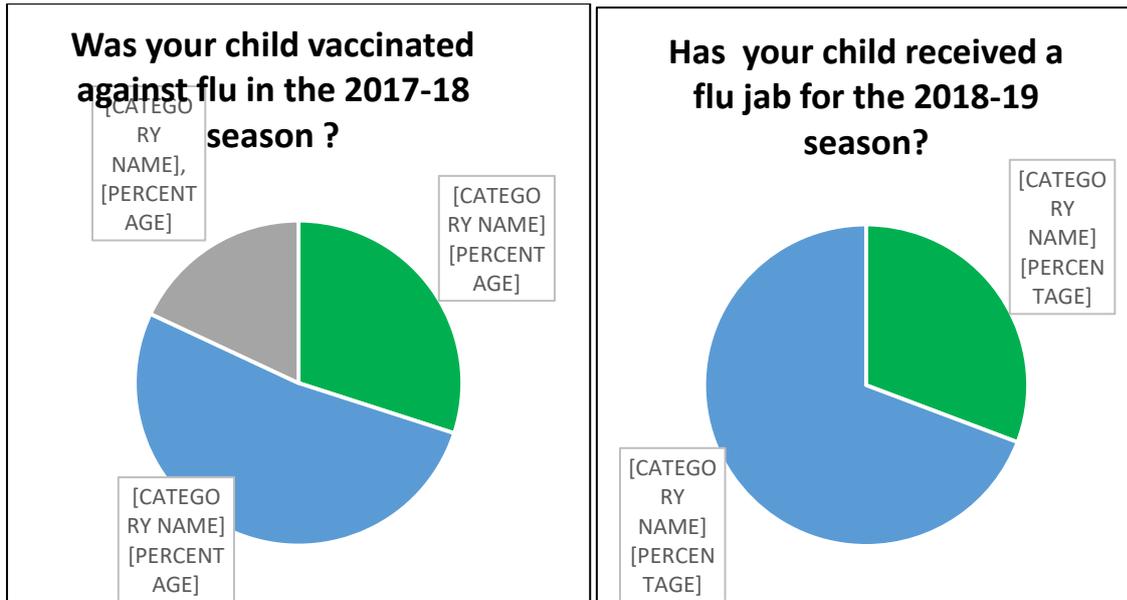
The majority attended their GP surgery to receive their flu jab, with the next most popular being the Pharmacy, representing just under a third of all vaccinations. Two of the three pregnant women spoken to, received their flu jab at their pharmacy.



**Children**

We spoke to 52 parents and guardians with regards to the intention to vaccinate children. Most of these were found at toddler groups at children’s centres and libraries and some of these parents had older children who were at school. Others were met during a visit to Queen Mary’s Hospital. 18% of children were aged below two and did not meet the long term condition criteria.

52% of children in our sample who had been eligible under the age criteria had not been vaccinated last year.



**Barriers for children being vaccinated**

Reasons given from parents/guardians whose eligible children had not been vaccinated in the 2017-18 season included children being unwell at the time of vaccination or parents forgetting to take their child. We do not know if these parents received reminders to rebook vaccination appointments or went on to have their children vaccinated at a future date.

Comments from parents/guardians whose eligible children had not been vaccinated in the 2017-18 season included:

31% of children in our sample, had already been vaccinated when their parents/guardians had been questioned.

53% of parents of unvaccinated children in our sample did plan for their children to receive the flu vaccination but we have no way of knowing if they went on to have their children vaccinated.

The following qualitative data was collected from parents who did not wish their children to be vaccinated:

*"My husband said no initially, but we haven't discussed it in depth. Need to do some research"*

*"Don't feel she needs it. The jab introduces a virus to the body"*

*"Looked at research. Due to uncertainty around the strain feel it is not worth it"*

*"Not reacted well to other immunisations. E.g. has had fits. Insufficient information to make an informed decision"*

*"Milk allergy" (x2)*

*"Ingredients do more harm than good - I have researched this intensively. I feel that information is withheld about safety"*

*"Not into getting vaccines unless absolutely necessary"*

*"No more jabs - autistic behaviours identified"*

*"Didn't have it last year. I've never been vaccinated myself so will not give it to my child"*

The following comment was made about supply issues and problems at the surgery:

*"Planned to have the jab but the surgery had run out of the nasal spray"*

*"We have had trouble getting the nurse to agree to an appointment"*

Others were uncertain:

*"I am new to this country from India. I have an appointment booked with the doctor and will discuss this"*

Parents of children who did not yet meet the age criteria offered the following comments:

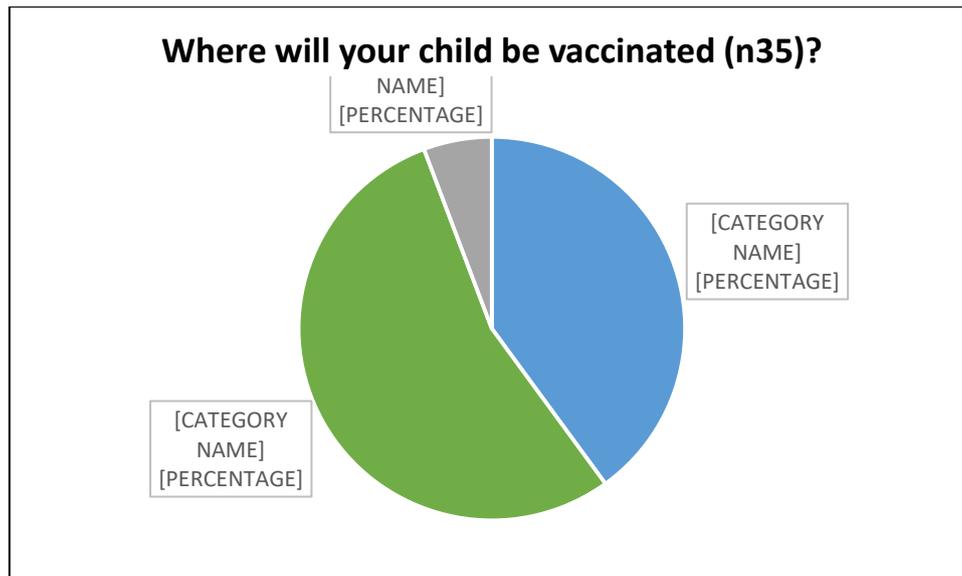
*"My child is 2 in February - she will have the jab if offered. She will be vaccinated next year when she will be old enough"*

*"My child is 2 now, but wasn't on 31.8 which is when the eligibility falls"*

### **Where will you have the vaccination?**

The majority of parents and guardians were prompted to have their children vaccinated by the school as part of the national vaccination programme, but not all parents gave their consent to this.

Most parents whose children did not meet the school programme criteria chose to have their child vaccinated at the GP surgery, with a very small number choosing the pharmacy.



## 6. Accessible Information Standard

All GP practices were contacted by telephone, letter or email and asked how they contacted eligible people with additional needs, to have the flu vaccination. 14 responded and advised us that they have procedures to ascertain patient's preferred methods of communication. Examples included questioning preferences within the new patient registration pack and a flag on the computer screen to discuss at each contact. Hearing loops were available in some of the surgeries, but not all were in service and whilst some were confident their staff would know how to operate it if requested, others felt that they would require refresher training.

In terms of communications specifically related to the flu jab, examples of good practice are listed below with regard to each category.

**Hearing impairment:** Invitations via post and text

**Visual impairment:** Telephone the family or carer. Large font letter.

**Over 65s:** Text or letter containing an invitation to receive vaccination at a walk in clinic.

**Under 65s with a medical condition:** Notes on prescriptions for the pharmacist to alert the patient that vaccination is recommended, which can then be delivered at the pharmacy.

**Learning Disability:** If a residential home is in the GP catchment area, write to the carer to arrange a visit and administer vaccines at the home. Alternatively, write to patients in easy read format.

**2 and 3 year olds:** Text parents on receipt of a batch of vaccine, offer at annual reviews.

**Home schooled:** Surgeries who are aware that they have home-schooled patients have identified and recorded this information.

**Housebound:** A list is compiled for the District Nurse to visit and deliver vaccination

We spoke to 14 surgeries, all of whom had an action plan in place to remind patients whose vaccinations were still outstanding.

## 7. Conclusion

The 2018/2019 figures show that vaccine uptake for the over 65's in Bexley remains lower than the London average and 75% coverage rate as recommended by Public Health England (Public Health England, 2018). There is no way of knowing the impact that supply issues may have had on Bexley vaccination uptake for the over 65 category. Of our sample 87% had already been vaccinated and 69% of those not vaccinated expressed an intent to be vaccinated. However, intent does not always lead to action and there is no way of knowing if those in our sample went on to be vaccinated.

With regards to barriers, a small number of our sample reported impaired mobility as a factor which prevented them from receiving the vaccination. Other barriers the sample reported were based on intrinsic beliefs, for example that having escaped flu in the past made them immune. However the overwhelming majority of those sampled who refused vaccination attributed this to lack of trust of the vaccine, with anecdotal evidence of it having a detrimental effect to health such as giving them flu symptoms after previous vaccinations.

As reported by Public Health England 2019, the significant drop in uptake of the Flu vaccine by 2 year olds in a clinical risk group and slight drop in the 3 year olds not in a clinical risk group, is a cause for concern. Putting vaccination rates for both these categories below the recommended coverage rates as recommended by NHS England, 2019. The comments made by parents in our small sample suggest that much more needs to be done by professionals to put parent's minds at ease about the safety of the vaccine. Parents suggested the vaccine 'did more harm than good' or 'wasn't needed'.

It should be considered that the views in this report are taken from a small sample of the Bexley population and therefore cannot be applied to the general population of Bexley.

## 8. Recommendations

1. Continue to promote the flu vaccination annually to increase awareness and act as a reminder to get vaccinated, particularly the CCG and Council working with partners in the voluntary and community sector, to ensure the reach of communication with the public is maximised.
2. To help overcome barriers to having the flu vaccination, circulate the 'myth buster' sheet in poster form, at strategic points in the community, for example GP surgeries, supermarkets, pharmacies, bus shelters.
3. Adopt behaviour change techniques to influence future uptake such as publication of uptake figures to 'normalise' the behaviour.
4. Work in partnership with charities and other community organisations to promote the flu vaccination and address barriers. For example, as diabetics are likely to attend weight management groups, or diabetes support groups, work in partnership with them to promote the vaccine.

## 9. References

Cosford, P., (2018). Flu and flu vaccines: 'Expert interview', *Public health matters*, Available at: <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2018/01/11/flu-and-flu-vaccines-expert-interview/> (Accessed 04 January 2019).

Daily Mail, (2018), 'NHS admits flu jab won't stop deadly Japanese flu from killing elderly this winter as vaccination will only protect against three strains', Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6157651/New-jab-WONT-protect-elderly-Japanese-flu.html> (Accessed 07 January 2019)

Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England (2018), *The national flu immunisation programme 2018/19*, Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/694779/Annual\\_national\\_flu\\_programme\\_2018-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/694779/Annual_national_flu_programme_2018-2019.pdf) (Accessed 14 January 2019)

National Health Service (2018), 'Children's flu vaccine', Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine> (Accessed 7 December 2018)

National Health Service England (2018), *Flu Vaccination Programme Delivery Guidance 2018-19*, Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/flu-programme-delivery-guidance-2018-19.pdf> (Accessed 04 January 2019)

Public Health England (2018), *Annual Flu programme*, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme> (Accessed 04 January 2019).

Public Health England (2018), 'Seasonal influenza vaccine uptake amongst GP Patients in England', Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/684554/Seasonal\\_flu\\_vaccine\\_uptake\\_GP\\_patients\\_2017\\_2018\\_01\\_September\\_31\\_January\\_CCG\\_AT.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684554/Seasonal_flu_vaccine_uptake_GP_patients_2017_2018_01_September_31_January_CCG_AT.pdf) (Accessed 03 December 2018)

Public Health England (2018)., *PHE Influenza Surveillance graphs* ,Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/762318/PHE\\_Influenza\\_Surveillance\\_graphs\\_2018\\_2019\\_week\\_49\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762318/PHE_Influenza_Surveillance_graphs_2018_2019_week_49_2018.pdf) (Accessed 14 January 2019)

Public Health England (2015), 'Influenza vaccination in pregnancy: Information for healthcare professionals', Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/393974/Influenza\\_vaccination\\_in\\_pregnancy\\_factsheet\\_v15\\_CT\\_2\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/393974/Influenza_vaccination_in_pregnancy_factsheet_v15_CT_2_.pdf) (Accessed 07 December 2018)

## Appendix 1

### Eligibility Criteria

All adults over 65 and those suffering from certain medical conditions are offered a flu vaccine free of charge by the NHS and the interim target coverage for 2018-19 is 55% but with an ultimate aim of 75% (Department of Health and Social Care/Public Health England, 2018).

These conditions include:

- Asthma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- Chronic heart disease, such as heart failure; chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- Chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, Motor Neurone Disease or Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Diabetes
- Sickle Cell disease or if the spleen has been removed
- A weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medication such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- Being seriously overweight (BMI of 40 or above).

It is also recommended that hospital staff, and carers, both informal and paid receive the flu jab and this is available free of charge on the NHS.

Vaccination is recommended to pregnant women due to the risk to themselves and their unborn babies.

Two and three year olds both with and without medical conditions are offered a flu vaccine.

Children in Reception classes through to Year 5 (aged 4 to 10) can receive their flu jab as part of a national school programme.

All children with at clinical risk aged from 2 to 17 are offered the vaccine, as well as those who are home educated providing they meet the age criteria (National Health Service, 2018).

Individuals who do not meet the criteria for a free vaccination can visit a pharmacy or a supermarket should they wish to be vaccinated. A small charge is payable for this service (National Health Service, 2018)

## Appendix 2

Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group/London Borough of Bexley (2018)

### Common myths about flu

As winter approaches, so does the flu! Stay informed and make this your healthiest flu season yet. Here is the truth behind some common myths about flu:-

1) Flu is just like having a heavy cold

**Flu is much worse.** *Complications from flu can result in hospitalisation.*

2) The flu vaccine gives you flu

*No, it doesn't. The injected flu vaccine given to adults contains inactivated flu viruses, so it can't give you flu.*

3) Flu can be treated with antibiotics

*No, it can't. Flu is caused by viruses – antibiotics only work against bacteria.*

4) Once you've had the flu vaccine, you're protected for life

*No, you aren't. The viruses that cause flu can change every year.*

5) I'm pregnant, so I shouldn't have the flu jab because it will affect my baby.

*You should have the vaccine no matter what stage of pregnancy you're in. Flu can affect both you and your baby.*

6) Children can't have the flu vaccine

*Yes, they can! The nasal spray flu vaccine is recommended for children.*

7) I've had the flu already this autumn, so I don't need the vaccination this year.

*You do need it if you're in one of the "at risk" groups. As flu is caused by several viruses, the immunity you naturally developed will only protect you against one of them – you could go on to catch another strain*

8) If I missed having the flu jab in October, it's too late to have it later in the season

*No, it's not too late. It's always worth getting vaccinated after this, even if there have already been outbreaks of flu.*

9) Vitamin C can prevent flu

*No, it can't. Daily vitamin C supplements will not prevent flu. There's no evidence to support this.*

**The reality is that flu can cause serious complications. The flu vaccine is available to all residents 65 years and over, school aged children up to year 4 and anyone with a chronic illness. It is also available to all Carers. You can get your vaccine from local pharmacies and your GP.**

Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group/London Borough of Bexley (2018)