

News story: Flu vaccine effectiveness in 2017 to 2018 season

Public Health England (PHE) has today (Wednesday, 18 July 2018) published data on the effectiveness of the flu vaccine in the 2017 to 2018 season. The data show that overall, flu vaccine was 15% effective in all age groups. However, effectiveness varied considerably. By age-group, the vaccine was overall:

- 26.9% effective in children aged 2 to 17 years (who received the nasal spray)
- 12.2% in at risk groups aged 10 to 64 years
- 10.1% in those aged 65 and over

There were higher levels of protection against flu B and H1N1pdm09, especially in children (60.8% effective against flu B and 90.3% against H1N1pdm09 in children).

Read the full [influenza vaccine effectiveness: seasonal estimates data](#).

In 2018 to 2019, a new 'booster' vaccine is being made available for all those aged 65 and over which should provide better protection than the current vaccines. We are also recommending that the quadrivalent vaccine, which protects against 4 strains of flu rather than 3 and is currently used for all children under 18 years of age, is made available to all adults in at-risk groups aged between 16 to 64 years.

Dr Paul Cosford, Director for Health Protection and Medical Director, said:

Vaccine effectiveness varies year on year as the flu virus changes and is difficult to predict. Last winter's flu vaccine provided good protection against A(H1N1)pdm09 and good protection for the quadrivalent vaccine in children against the main Flu B strain which circulated last season. This upcoming season we are recommending that all those under 65 have the quadrivalent flu vaccine, which protects against both the main B strains and the 2 main flu A subtypes. We are also making a new booster vaccine available for all adults aged 65 or over in order to improve the immune response.

The vaccine offered lower protection against Flu A(H3N2), which also circulated. This is likely due to several factors including a suboptimal match between the main circulating A(H3N2) viruses and the vaccine, the strains for which are recommended by the World Health Organization each year.

Vaccines are the best defence we have against flu and not only protect people who have received the vaccine but also those around them. We encourage everyone eligible to take up the offer of the

vaccine this winter.

News story: Crown Commercial Service Annual Report and Accounts 2017/18 Published

The report shows that £13 billion of common goods and services are now being procured through CCS, whose aim is to become the 'go to' provider for the procurement of common goods and services across the entire public sector.

During the year, CCS – an executive agency of the Cabinet Office – has delivered £354 million in commercial benefits including savings for central government, and £247 million for the wider public sector – helping to deliver world-class public services that offer best value for taxpayers.

CCS's work is an important part of the #SmarterGov campaign, which aims to drive innovation and deliver savings and service improvements across the entire public sector.

At the same time, CCS has led on work to level the playing field for small and medium-sized enterprises, entered a new phase for the Crown Marketplace programme, and introduced its first Dynamic Purchasing Systems.

CCS uses its commercial expertise and bulk buying power to help the UK public sector get the best deal on the everyday goods and services they need.

Tony van Kralingen, Chair of CCS, said:

The Crown Commercial Service continues to make good progress against its business plan and objectives. This is a testament to the quality and commitment of our people who have worked tirelessly to deliver against their objectives. I would like to record our appreciation for their efforts and congratulate them on their achievements.

Malcolm Harrison, Chief Executive Officer of CCS, said:

CCS has come a long way over the last two years. The organisation has some ambitious goals and together we have built strong foundations. I have no doubt that CCS will go from strength to strength in the coming years with a relentless focus on demonstrating value for money and providing excellent customer

service.

Performance highlights for 2017/18 include:

- £13bn of public sector spend channelled through CCS commercial agreements, an increase of £0.6bn from 2016/17
- Customers who have used CCS agreements have achieved commercial benefits worth £601m compared to current market comparators
- 1260 procurements (including call offs) carried out for customers
- Employee Engagement index as measured by the Civil Service People Survey has increased from 58% in 2016 to 63% in 2017
- Our Net Promoter Scores (NPS) for customer satisfaction are consistently positive, reaching +24 in Post Procurement Surveys and +36 in Post Enquiry Surveys over the year
- 28 new commercial agreements awarded during 2017/18

To read the full report and accounts, visit [the annual report and accounts web pages](#).

Press release: Geoffrey Cox QC MP sworn in as Attorney General for England and Wales

Geoffrey Cox QC MP was sworn-in on Thursday 18 January in Court 4 at the Royal Courts of Justice as Attorney General for England and Wales.

The Lord Chancellor, David Gauke MP, the Lord Chief Justice, The Lord Burnett of Maldon, and the Chair of the Bar Council, Andrew Walker QC, spoke at the ceremony to welcome Geoffrey Cox QC MP to his role.

The Lord Chancellor said it gave him “great pleasure” to welcome Geoffrey Cox to the role of Attorney General for England and Wales. David Gauke MP went on to say:

“In advising the Government, you will be drawing on your vast experience from a long and distinguished career in private practice as a barrister on areas from civil fraud to human rights, from defamation to judicial review.”

The Lord Chancellor also thanked the previous Attorney General, Jeremy Wright QC MP, for his four years of service in the role.

Commenting on the ceremony, Geoffrey Cox QC MP said:

“It is a privilege to be sworn-in as Attorney General for England and Wales. I am grateful for the warm welcome I have been given from both the Lord

Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice and I thank them for their kind words. I very much look forward to working with them both in the unique roles we each play in upholding the rule of law at the heart of the UK constitution.”

The Attorney General was joined by his family and the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, for the ceremony.

Corporate report: Environment Agency corporate scorecard quarter four 2017 to 2018

The Environment Agency has 12 corporate measures. These are:

- the water environment is healthier
 - we protect people, the environment and wildlife by reducing serious pollution incidents
 - we create new habitats
 - we reduce the number of high risk illegal waste sites
 - we reduce the risk of flooding for more households
 - we maintain our flood and coastal risk management assets at or above the target condition
 - we have a first class incident response capability
 - we manage our money efficiently to deliver our outcomes
 - we respond to planning applications within 21 days
 - we reduce our carbon footprint
 - we have a diverse workforce
 - we provide a safe place to work
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Corporate report: Royal Mail Statutory Pension Scheme annual accounts 2017 to 2018

This report provides the Royal Mail Statutory Pension Scheme’s annual accounts for 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.