



## **Safety Alert 003/2012**

### **Outbreaks of Influenza in Designated Centres**

### **1. What is the risk?**

Outbreaks of influenza in designated centres can pose a serious risk to residents.

### **2. Recent incidents**

The Health Information and Quality Authority is aware of a number of serious outbreaks of influenza in designated centres in recent months.

### **3. Guidance**

Arising from the recent outbreaks, the Health Information and Quality Authority convened a Working Group, in conjunction with the HSE and NHI, to develop guidance for providers on proactive measures to take in response to actual or suspected outbreaks in designated centres. This guidance should be read in conjunction with *Interim Guidelines on the Prevention and Management of Influenza Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities in Ireland 2011/2012* which can be accessed at [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)

# Influenza **OUTBREAK** Prevention & Management

## **O**rganise:

- Prepare infection control policies/procedures in line with national<sup>1</sup> & international guidance
- Have a stock of once only medical supplies and Personal Protective Equipment for use in an outbreak
- Keep registers of all staff and residents vaccination status

## **U**nderstand:

- Ensure all staff receive regular training in infection prevention & control
- Ensure staff are aware of transmission routes/signs & symptoms of Influenza
- Know the precautions and infection control measures to mitigate spread of Influenza

## **T**ell:

- Inform all staff/residents of the importance of and risks and benefits of vaccination and non-vaccination
- Where staff/ residents wish to avail of vaccines make these readily available

## **B**e prepared:

- Ensure staff have contact details of their local HSE infection prevention & control personnel
- Nominate a senior manager to co-ordinate all communication in the event of a suspected or actual outbreak and ensure all queries are directed through this person
- Establish protocol between provider/Statutory agencies for co-ordinated public statements & media response
- Consider the need to roster additional staff members during an outbreak

## **R**ecognise:

- Recognise an Influenza outbreak by reviewing unusual illness patterns
- Influenza outbreaks<sup>2</sup> are categorised as three or more cases of influenza-like illness or influenza or serious illness suggestive of influenza arising within the same 72hr period within a designated centre which meet the same clinical case definition and where an epidemiological link can be established
- Where more than one GP serves the designated centre, ensure that GPs are informed of other potential cases and that the GP notifies the HSE Local/Regional Department of Public Health of a potential/ actual outbreak

## **E**valuate:

- Evaluate how many residents are exposed to infectious agent/ displaying positive symptoms
- Consider the need to isolate or cohort residents displaying symptoms
- Review admissions, transfers and visitors policies and put appropriate restrictions in place where required
- Identify staff who are vaccinated to care for symptomatic residents
- Advise agency/part-time staff to wait 3 days prior to working in other non outbreak units or centres<sup>3</sup>

## **A**ction:

- Implement Standard and Transmission-based Precautions immediately for symptomatic cases
- Commence infection control measures immediately regardless of whether the outbreak is confirmed or not
- Notify Local/Regional Director of Public Health
- Establish a local Outbreak Control Team in conjunction with local statutory services
- Provide clear concise information to residents/relatives/ public
- Notify HIQA of possibility/ confirmation of an outbreak at the earliest opportunity ( verbally immediately and follow up with written confirmation on NF02 form within 3 working days)

## **K**eep informed:

- Debrief at the end of each outbreak to learn lessons and implement changes required
- Review policies/procedures on a regular basis to ensure they in line with national & international guidance
- Audit infection control practices routinely to inform continuous quality improvement
- Provide regular communication and updates to staff to consolidate their training
- Further information in relation to infection control can be found at [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)

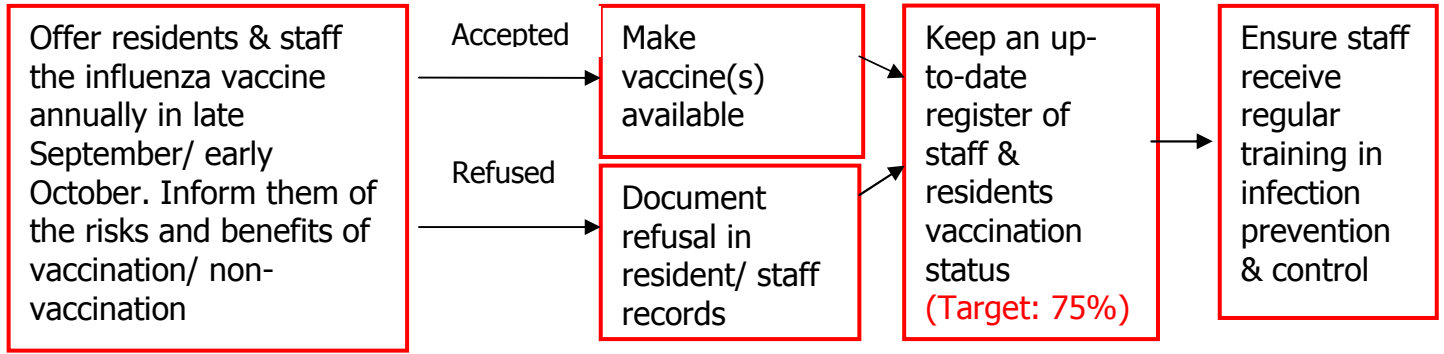
<sup>1</sup> HSE Interim Guidelines on the Prevention and Management of Influenza Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities in Ireland 2011/2012

<sup>2</sup> Interim Guidelines on Prevention & Management of Influenza Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities pg 11

<sup>3</sup> Interim Guidelines on Prevention & Management of Influenza Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities pg 17

## Decision Tree – Process Flow

PREVENTION



MANAGEMENT

