



Russell George MS
Senedd Constituency Member for Montgomeryshire

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22 January 2024

Dear Russell,

I am writing to clarify comments I made in responding to questions you asked during my oral statement on Winter Pressures in Healthcare in the Siambr on 16 January 2024. When responding to your questions regarding flu vaccination uptake, I said:

“In terms of the take-up of vaccination, I can tell you that, so far, in the 65 and older category, 74 per cent of people have had their flu vaccination update. I think it's fair to say that we are disappointed that NHS staff with direct patient contacts is at 41 per cent. So, really disappointing to see that. And I'm also disappointed that the number of people at clinical risk—only a 41 per cent uptake there.”

Unfortunately, I quoted the statistics from equivalent week in the 2022/23 flu season. The correct uptake rates for the 2023/24 flu season are as follows:

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| • 65 and older | 70.6% |
| • NHS staff with direct patient contact | 33.5% |
| • At clinical risk aged 6 months to 64 years | 36.6% |

You will note that these rates are even lower than those for the same week last year. As I said in response to your question, I am very disappointed with the uptake rates this year.

This year's Winter Respiratory Vaccination Programme has seen uptake challenges across both flu and COVID-19 vaccination. Addressing these challenges has been a matter of significant priority for me, as we are all very aware vaccination is one of the safest and most effective ways to protect our citizens and our health service.

In November, I asked Vaccination Programme Wales to work with health boards to ensure a concerted effort was being made in every area of Wales to maximise uptake. As part of this effort Public Health Wales ran an additional comms campaign in December, which coincided with health boards moving to a walk-in model as every effort was made to remove barriers to vaccination.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In response to disappointing levels of uptake amongst NHS staff with direct patient contact, I met with the medical Royal Colleges in November to seek their support with increasing uptake amongst healthcare staff. At this meeting, the Royal Colleges offered to further promote vaccination amongst their members and my officials worked with them to facilitate this.

Throughout this year's Winter Respiratory Vaccination Programme we have taken action to respond to the uptake levels not being where we would want them. As we near the end of the programme, our focus has now shifted to identifying the lessons and building these into planning for the 2024-25 programme.

I have copied this letter to the Llywydd for this letter to be appended to the Record of Proceedings for the Plenary discussions on 16 January.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services