



England Country Report 2022

Influencing Adult Pneumonia Vaccination Policy

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This project is supported by Pfizer.

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Background

In the United Kingdom, it is estimated that by 2040, one in seven will be over the age of 75 years¹ and in England by 2028, the percentage of people aged 65 and older is expected to rise to 20.7%.² Alongside population ageing is the increased likelihood of chronic diseases. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases account for 89% of all deaths in the UK.³ Older people and those with chronic NCDs⁴ have weakened and compromised immune function⁵ and are therefore at risk of serious complications from vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) such as influenza, pneumococcal pneumonia and pertussis.

On a national scale community-acquired pneumonia (CAP) is a growing public health concern in the UK, with serious social and economic consequences. CAP disproportionately affects older people, with an incidence of 7.99 per 1000 people 65 years and older.⁶ For this cohort, CAP often results in hospitalization, a diminished long-term quality of life and increasingly death.⁵ In 2017, 401.76 per 100 000 people over 70 years old died from pneumonia, compared with 3.15 deaths per 100 000 children under 5 years and 1.96 deaths per 100 000 people between the ages of 15 to 49 years.^{7,8}

According to the Immunization Agenda 2030, vaccines protect the health of older people and enable older people to live longer and healthier lives.⁹ Pneumococcal pneumonia is a vaccine preventable disease. Pneumococcal vaccination is included in the national immunisation plan schedule for those aged 65 years and over.¹⁰ There appears to be a greater emphasis on pneumococcal vaccination for young children to the extent that older adults are frequently excluded from public health messaging. According to the PneuVUE study, examining adult pneumonia vaccination in Europe, 15% of older adults in the UK consider themselves to be very well informed on pneumonia vaccination¹¹ and only 28% have received a pneumonia vaccination.¹¹

Pneumonia Vaccine Policy in UK

In the UK, the organization of healthcare and public health services is devolved to the governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.¹² The UK has a single immunisation schedule, and immunisation policy in all four nations is advised by the Joint Committee of Vaccinations and Immunisations.¹² The implementation of immunisation policy varies between the nations, therefore this report will consider pneumonia vaccination policy and campaigns in England. The National Health Service (NHS) England, Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health work jointly to implement immunisation services.¹²

There are two types of pneumococcal vaccines. According to the NHS vaccination schedule, the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) is used to vaccinate children under 2 years old, while the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPV) is given to older adults.¹³ The NHS vaccination schedule indicates pneumococcal vaccination for those aged 65 years and older and adults at risk due to long-term health conditions.¹⁰ Vaccines included in the NHS routine immunisation services are available at no cost and predominantly available through general practitioners.¹⁴



Government Pneumonia Vaccine Information

Web pages

The NHS website provides general vaccine information, such as the routine immunisation schedule.^{11,14} From the NHS vaccination schedule web page, visitors are directed to an overview of pneumococcal vaccines. The “Pneumococcal vaccine overview” web page provides information on who should have the pneumococcal vaccine, the two types of pneumococcal vaccines available and the provision of PPV to adults aged 65 and older and adults with chronic health conditions.^{14,16} From this web page, a patient information leaflet for the PPV is linked, which details what the vaccine is, what it is used for, side effects and ingredients.¹⁷ Information on pneumococcal vaccination is also accessible through a web page on pneumonia, which details symptoms, at risk groups, causes, treatment and prevention.¹⁸

Infographics and posters

Infographics and posters in support of pneumococcal vaccination for adults focus on vaccination throughout the life course and the routine immunisation schedule (Figure 1).^{19,20} These posters lack details on the burden of pneumonia in older adults and offer few details on pneumonia vaccination, such as cost, how to receive the vaccine or where to find more information.

Resources for health professionals

Public Health England provides professional guidelines for healthcare providers on pneumococcal vaccination. Resources include the Green Book,²¹ which contains the latest pneumococcal vaccination procedures, and a PPV patient group direction template,²² which facilitates the delivery of the PPV in accordance with national immunisation programme guidelines.

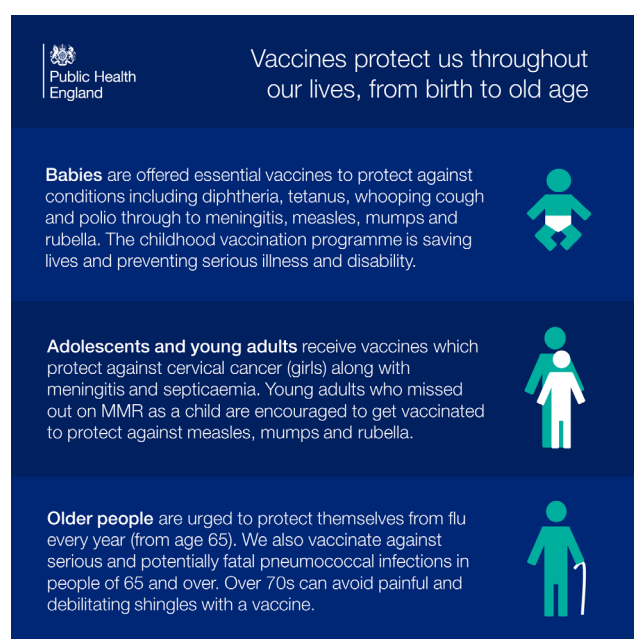


Figure 1. Poster on vaccination throughout life from Public Health England.

Non-Government Pneumonia Vaccine Information

Age UK

Web pages and guides

Pneumonia vaccination is featured in web pages discussing preventative actions such as health screening that could save your life and advice on keeping well in the winter. This information is discussed alongside influenza and shingles vaccination, and other healthy behaviours such as NCD screening, eating well and exercise.^{23,24}

Pneumonia vaccination is also mentioned as a key measure of prevention in downloadable guides on healthy living and keeping healthy in the winter.^{25,26}

Factsheet

A factsheet on NHS services provides information on a free jab against pneumonia for those over 65 years.²⁷ The factsheet indicates that the vaccine prevents pneumonia, septicemia and meningitis and is available through a general practitioner.²⁸

Diabetes UK

The Diabetes UK website features a position statement from 2014²⁸ and an update to this position statement in 2020, due to the impact of COVID-19,²⁹ which supports the recommendation for people with diabetes to receive pneumococcal vaccination.

The web page “Keep free from flu this winter” also mentions vaccination to protect against pneumonia.³⁰ The page indicates that the vaccination can be given at any time during the year and that people with diabetes should ask their doctor about receiving pneumonia vaccination.

British Lung Foundation

The British Lung Foundation (BLF) website outlines information on pneumonia and indicates vaccination as a prevention strategy.³¹ The web page “Keeping well in the cold: what you can do?” advises to “ask about a pneumonia jab” and outlines the recommendation for adults with chronic lung conditions including chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), bronchiectasis or pulmonary fibrosis.³² Many of the web pages highlight influenza vaccination by framing information with the title “free flu jab”. Pneumonia vaccination information is sometimes also highlighted in these boxes (Figure 2).³³

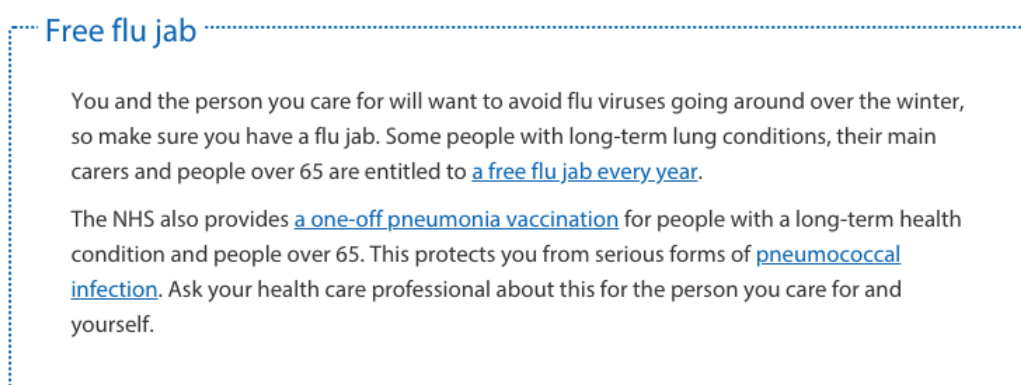


Figure 2. Web page from the British Lung Foundation highlighting pneumonia vaccination for older people.

British Heart Foundation

The British Heart Foundation provides some web pages which mention pneumococcal vaccination. Web pages titled “How to beat the cold”³⁴ and “Cold weather and your heart”³⁵. Pneumococcal vaccination is also recommended for those with heart disease on a web page primarily about flu which provides information on flu symptoms, prevention and vaccination.³⁶

A question and answer page on COVID-19 also indicates that pneumococcal vaccination does not protect against COVID-19.³⁷



Status of National Pneumonia Vaccination Messaging









Table 1 presents a comparison of pneumonia vaccine scheduling and messaging in England to that of influenza as described in Changing the Conversation on Adult Influenza Vaccination.³⁸ Changing the Conversation on Adult Influenza Vaccination identifies seven components of effective adult influenza campaigns³⁹ which have been used to evaluate pneumonia vaccination messaging.

Table 1. Status of pneumonia vaccination messaging and comparison to influenza vaccination messaging in England.

■ Well-developed
 ■ Partially developed
 ■ Not yet developed/No evidence

	Description	Influenza	Pneumonia
Comprehensive policies and programs	Influenza vaccination is recommended by government and advisory bodies for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic diseases.	■	■ Pneumococcal vaccination is recommended by government and the Joint Committee of Vaccinations and Immunisations for adults aged 65 years and older and adults at risk due to long-term health conditions.
	Vaccination is funded under the National Immunization Program (NIP) and administered through the state program for at-risk populations including older adults and people with chronic disease.	■	■ Pneumococcal vaccination is available at no cost due to its inclusion in NHS routine immunisation services.
Clear communication strategy	Published context-specific communication strategy and action plan which defines communication goals, target audiences, expected roles of partner organizations, communication tools and timeline.	■	■ No evidence of published action plan for communication on pneumococcal vaccination.
Well-defined audience	No evidence of published action plan for communication on pneumococcal vaccination.	■	■ Pneumococcal vaccination messaging prioritizes at-risk groups, including adults with diabetes, lung conditions and heart conditions and older adults generally, though messaging is sparse.
	No evidence of published action plan for communication on pneumococcal vaccination.	■	■
Multiple tools and channels	Online communication such as web content, digital technology, social media, online publications, email.	■	■ Information on pneumococcal vaccination is most often available via online web pages and documents.
	Messages are disseminated offline by TV, radio, printout (e.g., leaflet, poster, brochure, outdoor ads).	■	■ There is very little evidence of offline or interactive messaging campaigns.
	Interactive communication including individual consultation, street campaign and face-to-face mobilization.	■	■



Realistic timeline	Timely vaccination reminder.		 Pneumococcal vaccination messages are often included in influenza vaccination reminders in the winter month. There is a lack of intensive campaigns surrounding key awareness events.
	National/regional events scheduled for intensive awareness campaign such as national vaccination day/week/month.		 There is a lack of intensive campaigns surrounding key awareness events.
Regular updates of information	Information is updated on a regular basis to reflect the most recent evidence and policy, such as recommending newly licensed vaccines for specific recipient.		 Information on pneumococcal vaccination reflects most recent evidence on pneumococcal vaccines available.
Engagement of civil society	Communication by patient associations, ageing organizations and advocacy groups.		 Organizations working in diabetes, lung diseases and heart diseases provide web pages and online resources on pneumococcal vaccination, however robust campaigns are lacking. Key groups in the field of ageing lack messaging on pneumococcal vaccination.

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Published **April 2022** © Vaccines4Life