

## Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County statement on the childhood flu programme: the alternative offer to live attenuated influenza vaccine

During winter, airborne infections such as the influenza virus are common. The influenza virus, commonly known as the flu, is not only distressing for children but can also lead to serious health complications such as pneumonia, bronchitis, febrile convulsions and severe respiratory distress.

To protect children against the flu, the NHS is now providing a vaccine which is administered as a spray through the nose. The vaccine is available for free on the NHS for:

- Children aged 2 to 3 years
- Primary school aged children
- Year 7 children
- Children aged 2 to 17 with long-term health conditions

Since the nasal spray is not licensed for use in children under the age of 2 years, children aged 6 months to 2 years in a high-risk group for flu are offered the vaccine as an injection instead.

Children who attend primary or secondary school are vaccinated at the school. Home-schooled children are vaccinated in a community clinic. All other children are vaccinated in their GP practice.

### **Gelatine content**

The nasal spray vaccine contains gelatine which is made from pork. The gelatine used is a highly purified product and is essential for stabilising the vaccine.

We understand that some parents may have religious or ethical objections to the pork gelatine content of the nasal spray. We hope that the information we are providing here will help you make an informed decision.

The nasal spray protects your child more effectively. Compared to the injectable alternative, the nasal spray has been shown to:

- Reduce the risk of life threatening complications
- Offer longer lasting protection
- Be effective against more strains of the virus.

Leaders of major faiths have expressed the following views about the vaccine:

- The British Fatwa Council has issued a fatwa which concluded that the nasal flu vaccine containing porcine gelatine is permissible for use. This can be accessed online in English and Urdu [here](#).
- Rabbi Abraham Adler, from the Kashrus and Medicines Information Service, said: "It should be noted that according to Jewish laws, there is no problem with porcine or other animal derived ingredients in non-oral products. This includes vaccines, including those administered via the nose, injections, suppositories, creams and ointments."

If you have previously declined consent for your child to have the nasal spray but have since changed your mind, you can complete an online consent form [here](#).

On 18 November, HM Government released [new guidance](#) stating that, "arrangements should be made to ensure that children who previously declined vaccination due to the porcine gelatine content, are recalled and offered the alternative vaccine". Parents in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire of school-

aged children who have declined the vaccination due to porcine reasons will be contacted and offered the injectable alternative by the local School Aged Immunisation Service. Clinic sessions will be available for those who accept this offer. Parents of children aged 2-3 years who have declined the vaccination due to porcine reasons and would like the injectable alternative should contact their GP.