

Winter vaccines campaign evaluation

Summary

In October 2022 the Public Health Agency (PHA) ran an eight week, multi-channel advertising campaign to support the roll-out of the vaccination programmes for seasonal flu and the COVID-19 autumn booster. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the importance of getting protected against winter viruses and encourage all those eligible to get vaccinated against seasonal flu and COVID-19.

The primary campaign audience was those at higher risk of developing serious complications from COVID-19 and flu. This included anyone aged 50+ years, all those under 49 years with an underlying health condition and pregnant women. Please see Appendix for all eligible groups.

Reach: Over half (54%) of those surveyed said they recalled seeing or hearing something promoting the flu or COVID-19 booster vaccination programmes. When prompted with PHA campaign advertising, seven out of 10 (70%) reported they had seen or heard at least one element of the campaign.

Positive action: 70% of all respondents said the advertising encouraged them to get vaccinated and 67% said the advertising encouraged them to encourage someone else to get vaccinated.

Background

Flu and COVID-19 are dangerous viruses which can be life threatening and potentially lead to hospitalisation. For some people, catching flu and COVID-19 at the same time increases the risk of complications and even death. Both viruses spread easily during the winter when people spend more time together indoors.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, flu activity levels had been extremely low over the past two years. It was therefore anticipated that both viruses would circulate at high levels and that there would also be lower levels of immunity against the flu virus in particular during winter 2022/23. Evidence shows that vaccination is the best protection against both flu and COVID-19. The winter vaccination programme was tasked with the rollout of both seasonal flu and COVID-19 booster vaccinations.

All those eligible for the annual seasonal flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster were encouraged to get vaccinated early in the season in advance of winter viruses circulating.

Campaign advertising

The mass media advertising campaign ran from 7 October – early December 2022 and included TV, radio, outdoor and digital, including social media advertising. The campaign was exposed over 44 million times.


In addition to partner and stakeholder engagement, the campaign advertising was supported by promotional activity.



**BOOST YOUR
COVID-19 & FLU
PROTECTION**

Your COVID-19 vaccine protection can fade,
and the flu virus changes every year.

nidirect.gov.uk/winter-vaccines

Evaluation method

Post campaign questions were included on an omnibus survey with a representative sample (1,018 respondents) of the adult population in Northern Ireland (aged 18+ years). Fieldwork for the survey was conducted online during December 2023 and data was analysed by the PHA's Health Intelligence Unit.

Results

High awareness of key campaign messages

Respondents were told there was a campaign running in Northern Ireland aimed at promoting awareness of the seasonal flu and COVID-19 autumn booster vaccination programmes. One in two (54%) recalled seeing or hearing this campaign. These respondents were asked what the campaign messages were and top answers noted below:

- 'boost your immune system with your free seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccines' (63%)
- 'COVID-19 vaccine protection can fade over time and the flu virus changes every year' (63%)
- 'get your free seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccine' (52%)

Those who said they recalled seeing or hearing the campaign were asked where they recalled seeing or hearing information and the most frequent answer was TV advertising (62%).

Recognition of the campaign was high

When shown PHA winter vaccine campaign materials there was high recognition of the campaign advertising with seven out of 10 respondents (70%) being aware of at least one element of the PHA's mass media advertising.

Those respondents who had seen the PHA campaign had slight variation in awareness of campaign elements. TV/Video was most popular method of awareness at 52% and slightly over half (51%) reported they saw the advertising in press/digital/outdoor. Just under half (47%) reported hearing the radio advertisement.

The campaign increased knowledge

One in three of all respondents (33%) said they found out something new from seeing or hearing the campaign advertising. These respondents were more likely to be from the most deprived areas and respondents who were eligible for seasonal flu and or COVID-19 vaccination.

Encouraging positive action

Seven out of 10 (70%) of all respondents said the advertising encouraged them to get vaccinated while two out of three (67%) respondents said the advertising encouraged them to encourage someone else to get vaccinated.

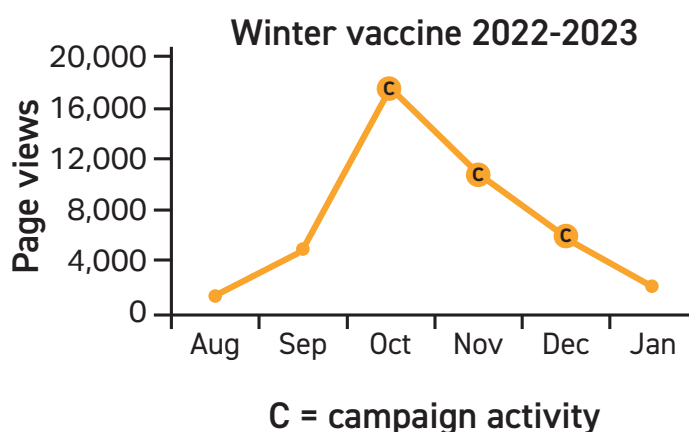
More than three out of four of all respondents (78%) felt the campaign was very somewhat thought provoking. Similarly, more than three out of four respondents (78%) felt the campaign was very somewhat relevant.

Online engagement

The campaign signposted to

www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-vaccines

During the campaign period web traffic shows the campaign generated significant interest in finding out more about winter vaccination.



Appendix: Winter vaccines *eligible groups

Where to get your vaccine	COVID-19 autumn booster	Seasonal flu vaccine
Participating community pharmacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care home residents and staff 18+ • Frontline HSC workers 18+ • Pregnant women 18+ • 18-49 who are carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care home residents and staff 18+ • Frontline HSC workers 18+ • Pregnant women 18+ • 18-49 who are carers
GPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50+ • 18-49 clinical risk group • Pregnant women • 18-49 who are carers • 18-49 household contacts of immunosuppressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50+ • 16-49 clinical risk group • Pregnant women • Pre-school children • 16-49 who are carers • 16-49 household contacts of immunosuppressed
HSC Trusts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontline HSC workers • Non-frontline HSC workers who are 50+ or 18-49 in clinical risk group • Pregnant women • 5-17 clinical risk group • 5-17 household contacts of immunosuppressed • 16-17 who are carers • Housebound via home visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontline HSC workers • Non-frontline HSC workers who are 50+ or 18-49 in clinical risk group • Pregnant women • Housebound via home visits
In school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children aged 5-17 years who attend a special school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in Primary 1 to Year 12

*Eligible groups may change if a new variant starts spreading.