Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust strengthens vaccination delivery through an inclusive model

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has transformed the way it delivers vaccinations across its workforce and communities, establishing a permanent, highly skilled vaccination team that improves access and tackles health inequalities.

Guided by the World Health Organisation's framework, the Trust set out to ensure vaccinations are not only clinically effective, but accessible, inclusive and responsive to individual needs.

Building a dedicated vaccination service

At the heart of the transformation is a permanent team of vaccinators embedded within Occupational Health. The team assesses staff vaccination needs based on job roles and supports a wider pool of specially trained bank staff. All vaccinators receive comprehensive training covering vaccine storage, handling and administration, alongside enhanced communication skills to address vaccine hesitancy, support needle-phobic individuals and hold sensitive, confidence-building conversations.

The service extends beyond staff vaccination. The team delivers maternal vaccines in antenatal clinics, provides vaccinations to care home residents and housebound individuals, and supports vulnerable inpatients, including people with learning disabilities or those with compromised immune systems.

Partnership working and outreach

Collaboration underpins the model. Close partnership with public health colleagues enables the team to use uptake data and insights to target efforts where they are most needed. Work with primary care ensures accurate coordination for care home and housebound patients, while collaboration with ward managers, operational leaders and specialist teams supports timely in-hospital vaccination roll outs.

Addressing health inequalities is a central priority. Team members are based daily in family hubs across some of the most deprived areas of North Tyneside and Northumberland, offering opportunistic vaccinations such as MMR catch-ups, flu vaccines for young children and maternal vaccinations. Information is provided in multiple languages and formats to meet diverse community needs.

Designing for accessibility and inclusion

As one of the largest geographically spread Trusts in the country, Northumbria faced challenges in ensuring staff could easily access vaccinations. These were addressed through improvements to the staff portal, a more intuitive booking system, Outlook calendar integration and the introduction of group booking requests, allowing vaccinators to attend team meetings and on-site events.

Recognising that busy, noisy vaccination hubs are not suitable for everyone, the Trust also developed quieter, bespoke clinics. Working with staff psychology services and the Trust's Neurodiversity Network, the team created more supportive

environments for neurodivergent staff, people with needle phobia and those who are vaccine hesitant. Initiatives include a video walkthrough of the vaccination process to help staff prepare and reduce anxiety.

Measurable impact

The impact has been significant. During the 2024/25 winter season, Northumbria achieved the highest staff flu vaccination uptake in the region. Following targeted work on measles awareness, 85% of staff are now vaccinated against measles. The Spring 2025 COVID-19 booster campaign reached over 700 housebound individuals and care home residents.

Staff feedback and survey data have also shaped ongoing improvements. Insights into concerns about side effects informed a targeted communications campaign, helping to reassure staff with evidence-based information drawn directly from colleagues' experiences.

A model for sustainable vaccination delivery

Feedback from staff highlights the value of accessibility, choice and trust built through consistent and compassionate delivery. The vaccination team's work reflects Northumbria Healthcare's wider commitment to workforce wellbeing, patient safety and reducing health inequalities demonstrating how a permanent, inclusive approach can deliver lasting improvements in public health outcomes.

"The vaccination team's creative approach to inequalities and service improvement has gained the recognition of regional and national teams. Embedded in various strategies, has been a clear and progressive plan to improve vaccine uptake within our organisation and community."