



Category: Internal Communications Campaign

Company: Swindon Borough Council

Entry title: Injecting some enthusiasm for the flu vaccine

Brief and objectives:

Every year winter brings the flu and managers across the country have to deal with an increased absence rate as staff come down with the illness and take time off work.

In 2017 Swindon Borough Council ran a flu vaccination programme open to all of our 2,800 staff who could receive a free vaccination during work time, taking around five minutes out of their day. The aim of this was to reduce staff absence by protecting them against the influenza viruses that research indicates is most common during the winter season. The vaccination was especially important for those staff working with vulnerable people where having them fit and well is critical because there is an increased risk of passing on a potentially fatal illness.

Uptake in the free vaccine had been low for many years (around 30% of staff) with the programme being promoted by traditional internal communication methods. For this campaign we took a different approach based on behaviour change principles.

The objectives for the communications were:

- Achieve an increase in the vaccination rate of all SBC staff for the 2017/18 flu season
- Achieve an increase in the vaccination rate amongst health care workers for the 2017/18 flu season

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Our first task was to review national research carried out by the NHS which showed that many people, including health care professionals, believe myths about the flu vaccine that put them off getting it. We ran a quiz to find out whether this research applied to us and how many of our staff believed these myths. The average score was only 75% which showed that some did, including many who believed that antibiotics cured the flu, that you can become immune to flu and that the flu vaccine gives you flu.

We also found that other campaigns had success where they showed other staff receiving the vaccine, making staff feel like it was normal practice.

Healthcare professionals in our adults and children's teams were a target audience given the nature of their work and research suggested that these types of people care more about the wellbeing of the people they work with than they care for than their own health.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

We ran a four week internal campaign in the lead up to the vaccination sessions.

The campaign had two key themes: busting common myths around the flu vaccine and a series of graphics and posters using images of staff explaining why they had the vaccine.

Because there was such a variety of reasons for people not getting the vaccine currently, the campaign messages were cycled across the four weeks with the aim that one of the messages would ring true to each member of staff.

All messaging had a clear call to action to sign up to the vaccination programme. We also arranged several vaccination sessions in different locations within Swindon to make it easier for people to attend.

Implementation of tactics:

We used all of our internal channels including a weekly newsletter, a screensaver on all staff computers, an all staff email, posters in communal areas, a monthly manager's bulletin and our intranet which included a dedicated page for the campaign.

Targeted messages were distributed across all of our sites and featured staff from each location the posters were put up in, so that people could relate to those they were seeing in the communications. They included posters to health care staff talking about protecting those they care for, while those at sites where there were more temporary workers had messages talking about avoiding time off ill.

The myth busting messages were used across our internal digital channels, changing every few days to address a different myth. The flu myth quiz was repeated throughout the campaign as a way for staff to engage with the content.

Managers were also asked to encourage their staff to get the vaccine and make them aware of how to book one.

Measurement and evaluation:

The campaign resulted in 810 staff receiving the vaccine, a 35% increase in uptake compared to the previous year across all staff. 114 health care workers received the vaccine at work which was a 16% increase.

This was the largest increase in uptake the delivery team had ever seen and pushed them to the limit in being able to deal with all of the requests for the vaccine. Although they had planned for an increased take up, nearly all of the vaccine sessions were fully booked.

We ran a questionnaire with staff following the campaign to get their feedback, to which 219 staff responded. The results showed that 19% of those who had the vaccine had never had the vaccine before and that 36% hadn't had it in the past few years.

Despite research showing people were unselfish in their motives for getting the vaccine, 48% of our respondents said their motivation was to protect themselves, 37% to protect family and friends and only 24% to protect the people they work with.

Respondents also reported that the most effective channels were our intranet, weekly newsletter, screensavers and posters. These were the same channels as used in previous campaigns but with the right messaging they were far more effective.

Our campaign was noticed locally by our public sector partners and our local CCG were so impressed they ended up asking for the campaign materials so they could use them across all the NHS sites in the Borough.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

The campaign costs were only £110 for printing of posters and design costs.