



**healthwatch**  
Gateshead

**healthwatch**  
Newcastle

# **Covid 19 and Flu Vaccination Take Up by the Public**

## About Us

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle are one of 152 local Healthwatch organisations established throughout England on 1 April 2013 under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act, 2012.

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle are independent not-for-profit organisations. We are the local champions for everyone using health and social care services in the boroughs.

- We help people find out about local health and social care services.
- We listen to what people think of services and feed that back to those planning and running services, and the government, to help them understand what people want.

We help children, young people and adults to have a say about social care and health services in Gateshead and Newcastle. This includes every part of the community, including people who sometimes struggle to be heard. We work to make sure that those who plan and run social care and health services listen to the people using their services and use this information to make services better.

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle are part of Tell Us North CIC (company no. 10394966)

**Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle would like to thank everyone who generously gave their time and expertise to assist with this report.**

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# Summary

This report has been produced for informational purposes since a trend of a decrease in vaccination uptake for Covid-19 and Flu jabs has been identified in many different forums.

The uptake of the annual vaccination programme this year has been 18% lower than in previous years – *North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) data 25/02/2025*. As part of this, Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle conducted a small piece of research to find out if residents in Gateshead and Newcastle have been receiving their vaccination and if not, finding out the reason(s) for this.

The NHS has produced variations of a slogan ‘Be wise, Immunise’ with an owl character to encourage members of the public to receive their vaccinations. The impact of this slogan will be explored within this report also.

## Method

To carry out this research, we produced an online survey to find out experiences of residents. An online survey was predicted to be the most appropriate method due to the short time frame put in place to gather evidence. The survey was open to receive responses for a total of 14 days.

A total of 7 questions were asked on the survey with no obligation to answer all questions.

There was a mixture of questions which had scope for quantitative and qualitative answers to have the best understanding of resident experiences as well as allowing them to elaborate further if needed. There were no personal questions asked on the survey to maintain confidentiality and allowing respondents to feel more encouraged to answer the questions on the survey.

The survey was promoted across our social media pages asking if anyone across Gateshead and Newcastle received their Covid-19 and/or Flu vaccine and anonymously give feedback as to why did they not get the vaccine. A QR code was provided which could be scanned to access the survey as well as a short link to the survey. To promote our survey to anyone who did not want to respond or could not access the survey, digitally, to it online, our office telephone and text line numbers were added to allow people to fill in the survey over the telephone.

## Findings

A total of 17 responses were received back after 14 days of the survey link being opened. 14 out of 17 respondents were Newcastle residents, with two (2) Gateshead residents and one (1) who specified that they were from North Tyneside.

We asked on the survey if residents had seen a variation of the 'Be wise, Immunise' slogan with the NHS owl character. An example of the slogan was provided to help answer the question as seen in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1- Example of the 'Be wise, Immunise' slogan which was provided to respondents of the survey

There was an equal split of seven (41.1%) for respondents who said 'Yes' they had seen the slogan and seven (41.1%) respondents who said 'No' they had not seen the slogan before. Three (17.7%) responded that they didn't know.

We asked where respondents thought they had seen the slogan. A series of options were provided to choose from for where the slogan had been advertised. Out of the 17 respondents, there were only six answers. Most respondents (n=4) to this question said they saw it at their GP Practice. Only one (1) respondent saw it on social media.

We wanted to support the ICB to explore the impact of the 'Be wise, Immunise' slogan on members of the public, if it did make them consider booking an appointment for their annual vaccinations.

We asked, "Did you consider booking an appointment after seeing this advert?"

A total of 12 out of 17 responses were received following this question. A series of options were provided, and the responses are displayed below in Table 1 with a majority (nine respondents) said that they did not consider booking an appointment after seeing the advert, as they were going to book an appointment anyway.

*Table 1 - Results of responses to consideration of booking a vaccination appointment after seeing the advert.*

<b>Did you consider booking an appointment after seeing this advert?</b>	<b>Responses for those who had seen the advert</b>
Yes, I booked an appointment	0 (0%)
Yes, I considered it, but I didn't book an appointment	1 (8.3%)
No, I was going to book an appointment anyway	9 (75%)
No, and I didn't book an appointment	2 (16.7%)

We then asked if respondents had their vaccination for Covid-19 and/or Flu.

- All 17 respondents answered this question.
- Nine (9) respondents said they have had both their seasonal vaccines.
- Eight (8) respondents had one of the seasonal vaccines or had neither of the vaccines.
  - There was an equal split between respondents who only had one of the seasonal vaccines with two (2) who had their Covid-19 vaccination and two (2) respondents who only had their Flu vaccination.
  - Four (4) said that they had received none of their vaccines.

From this point of the survey, we asked for more qualitative answers from respondents with no obligation to do so. We asked respondents, if they hadn't received their Covid-19 or Flu vaccination, why did they not.

A total of seven (7) out of eight (8) respondents answered this question, who either only had one seasonal vaccine or neither vaccine.

Arising themes in terms of respondents not receiving the Covid-19 vaccine was because it has made them poorly in the past or have had a reaction to the vaccine which has reduced their consideration of receiving the vaccine.

In terms of why respondents didn't receive the Flu vaccine was due to various reasons including not sure if they were eligible and usually had the service

arranged at their workplace, appointment times don't fit in with busy life schedule and have never experienced the Flu so didn't feel the need to be vaccinated as well as describing the Flu vaccination as a 'risk'.

The final question on the survey, was an opportunity to allow respondents to describe their recent vaccination experience.

There were nine (9) respondents to this question with a mix of positive and negative experiences shared.

- Positive experiences - many respondents said that they were able to get their seasonal vaccinations quite close to their home and didn't have any severe reaction to their vaccinations.
- Negative experiences - there was a varied response including impolite staff members, unpleasant/severe reactions to the Covid-19 vaccination and no basic sanitary precautions made at a local pharmacy.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, there are varied reasons as to why people in Gateshead and Newcastle have not received their seasonal vaccines which have mostly been based on previous negative experiences when receiving their vaccine including impolite staff members, not knowing if they are eligible and unpleasant reactions.

Although these experiences, have not been experienced by all respondents, the majority did have negative experiences which has subsequently contributed to the 18% decrease (*NENC ICB data 25/02/2025*) to seasonal vaccination uptake in the region.

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