

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Seasonal Influenza Immunisations

Summary points

- Bristol's seasonal flu immunisation coverage rates are broadly in line with the national averages for over 65s and those younger in a clinical risk group.
- Seasonal flu immunisation uptake decreased slightly in Bristol in 2022/23 for the GP-administered populations of over 65's, under 65s at risk and 3 year olds following significant increases experienced in 2020/21 in Bristol and nationally
- Bristol coverage rates for primary school aged children increased significantly in 2022/23 but still compare poorly to the national average

Seasonal influenza (flu) is an acute viral infection that is easily transmitted. For otherwise healthy individuals, seasonal flu is an unpleasant but usually self-limiting disease. However, the risk of serious illness from seasonal flu is greater in babies under six months, older people, pregnant women and those with underlying health conditions and can therefore have a significant impact at population level. Annual flu vaccination programmes are the main protective action against influenza.

Seasonal flu immunisation uptake in GP-administered populations

The vaccine programme has been offered to those age 65 and over for many years in addition to pregnant women, those who have immune-suppressing or long-term conditions, and 2-3 year old children. In 2020/21 those age 50 years and over were added to the eligible population for flu vaccination, this offer continued for 2021/22 and 2022/23 season. Within the population groups for whom the seasonal flu immunisation is administered by their GP, Bristol's uptake rates for 2022/23 are broadly in line with national averages (Figure 1).

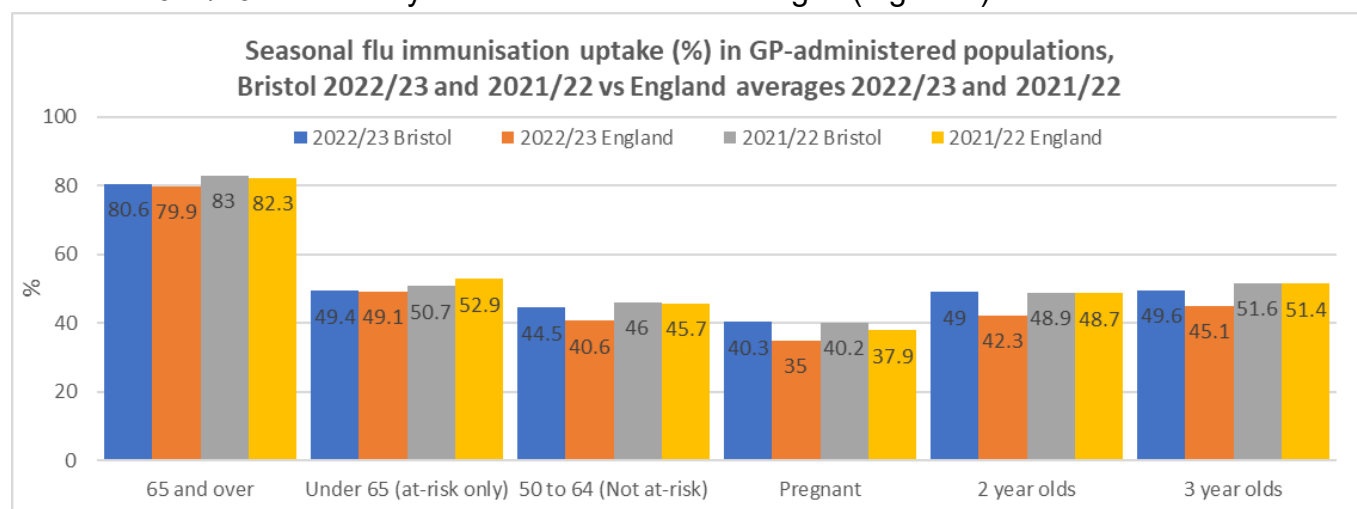


Figure 1: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for GP administered populations, 2021/22-2022/23

There has been a significant decrease nationally in terms of uptake for 2 and 3 year old children compared with the previous year, although Bristol has maintained a similar rate for 2 year olds but experienced a slight decrease for 3 year olds. Rates for pregnant women are higher than nationally and also similar to the previous year.

Coverage rates for people in Bristol aged 65 and over decreased in 2022/23 following last year's peak (which was thought to be due to increased awareness of the vaccine as part of the

communications around the COVID-19 pandemic) but are still higher than pre-pandemic levels (Figure 2). Data at GP practice level aggregated to locality level shows the variation in uptake across the city, from 75.2% in Inner City and East Bristol to 80.1% in South Bristol to 83.5% in North and West Bristol.

In the under 65 at risk groups Bristol's uptake was similar to the England average. Coverage rates in Bristol decreased for the second year running (Figure 3) but were still in line with those experienced between 2017/18 and 2018/19.

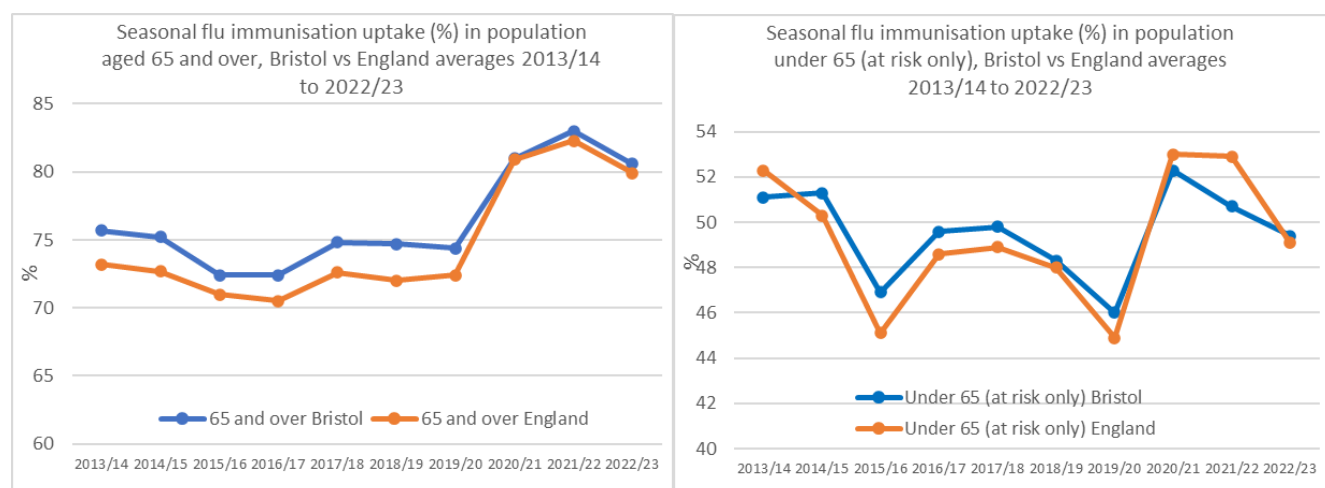


Figure 2 & 3: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for selected GP administered populations, 2013/14 to 2022/23

Seasonal flu immunisation uptake in school-age children

For the winter season of 2022/23 vaccination of primary school age children, and those in at-risk groups were prioritised first with secondary age students becoming eligible at a later date. Figure 4 below shows that whilst uptake in primary school age children is lower than the England average it is much improved from the previous year.

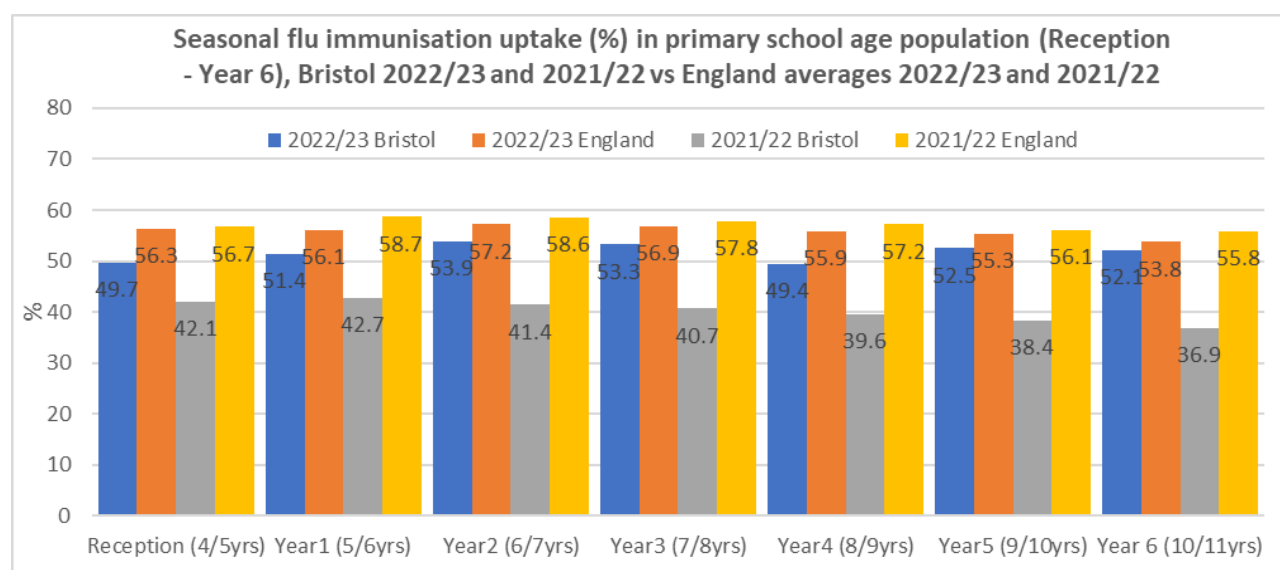


Figure 4: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for GP administered populations, 2021/22-2022/23

Childhood seasonal flu vaccination for young school-age children (reception and years 1 & 2) was implemented in Bristol in 2015/16, using a pharmacy-based model. Since 2016/17, a school-based model has been used, delivered by a school aged immunisation service, resulting in significantly higher levels of uptake. However, coverage in all academic years in Bristol schools decreased in 2021/22. Delivery of Covid-19 vaccinations to 12 to 15 year olds was prioritised during the Autumn and Winter of 2021/22 and was the likely reason for the reduced capacity to deliver flu immunisations in schools and uptake over the same period (Figures 5,6 and 7). Uptake has increased significantly in 2022/23 but is still lower than the England average.

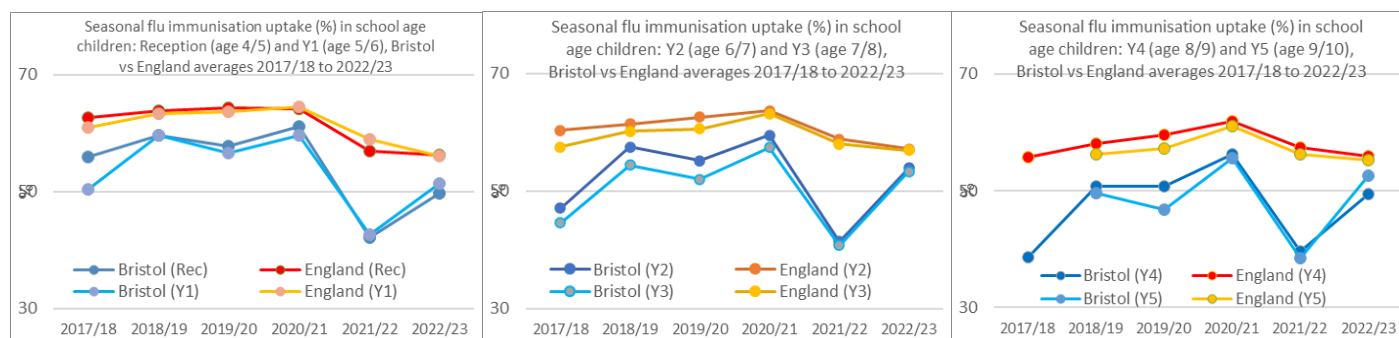


Figure 5,6,7: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for primary school aged children, 2017/18 to 2022/23

The improvement in uptake in 2022/23 has increased Bristol's overall standing when compared with other local authorities but uptake is still in the lower half of the table. A contributory factor to this low uptake may be that the trans nasal version contains porcine gelatine. Bristol's school-age population is much more ethnically and culturally diverse than much of the country, and there are large numbers of children in the city for whom porcine products may raise objections due to their faith or other beliefs. The injectable flu vaccine is now being offered and promoted as an alternative to this group to improve uptake. It should be noted that other childhood immunisations are also below the level needed to protect at a population level and targeted work is ongoing to improve these also.

At present there is no routinely available data on the variation in vaccination rates between schools in the city, which previous analyses have shown to be considerable. Work is underway to receive this data annually to allow for a more detailed understanding of this variation in future.

Equalities data:

At present, Bristol City Council does not have access to detailed seasonal flu vaccination coverage data that would permit an analysis of coverage variation between population groups in the city.

National data (available via the Public Health England fingertips tool: <https://fingertips.fingertips.phe.org.uk/>) indicates that there is relatively little variation in the coverage for the population aged 65 years and over, and those aged under 65 years at clinical risk, when analysed in reference to the relative deprivation of the area in which they live.

Covid-19 impact:

The threat of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the associated campaigns educating the public around viruses and vaccine development may have had an impact on attitudes on acceptance

and uptake of Flu vaccine over the last two years. Significant increases in uptake were experienced in most age groups in 2020/21 but particularly in the 65's and over which increased further in 2021/22. Data for 2022/23 shows small decreases in most of the GP-administered populations indicating that attitudes are starting to change.

Further data / links / consultations:

- Seasonal flu vaccine uptake: figures <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-uptake#seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake:-figures>

Date updated: June 2023**Date of next update:** June 2024