



Flu Vaccinations during pregnancy survey results  
July 2018



## Introduction

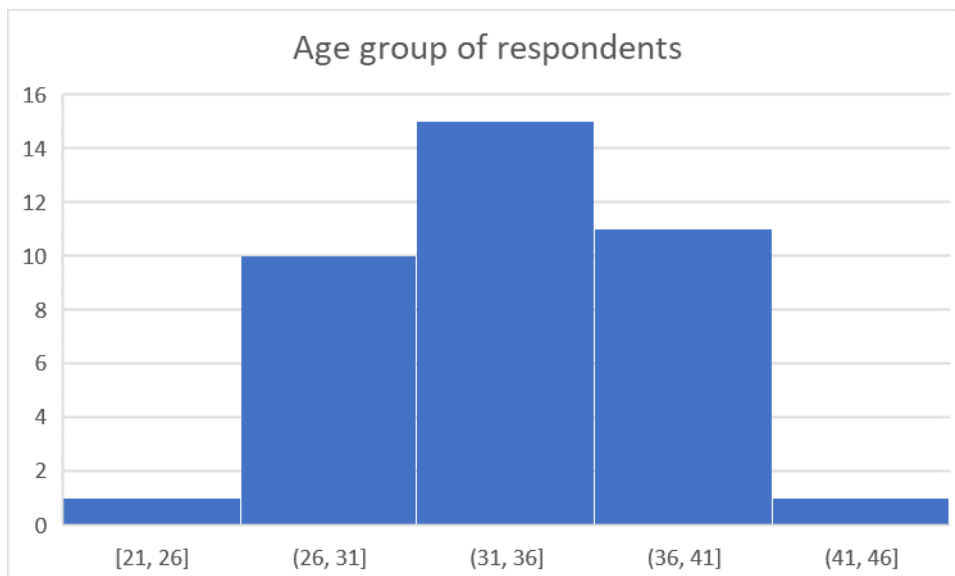
With a reported decline last year of the number of pregnant women in Milton Keynes taking up flu vaccination. In response to discussions exploring this issue at the Milton Keynes CCG Right Care Transformation Board meeting held in July Healthwatch Milton Keynes created an online survey shared with the Maternity:MK membership and through our own Membership to capture recent mothers' experiences of flu vaccination. The survey ran for two weeks.

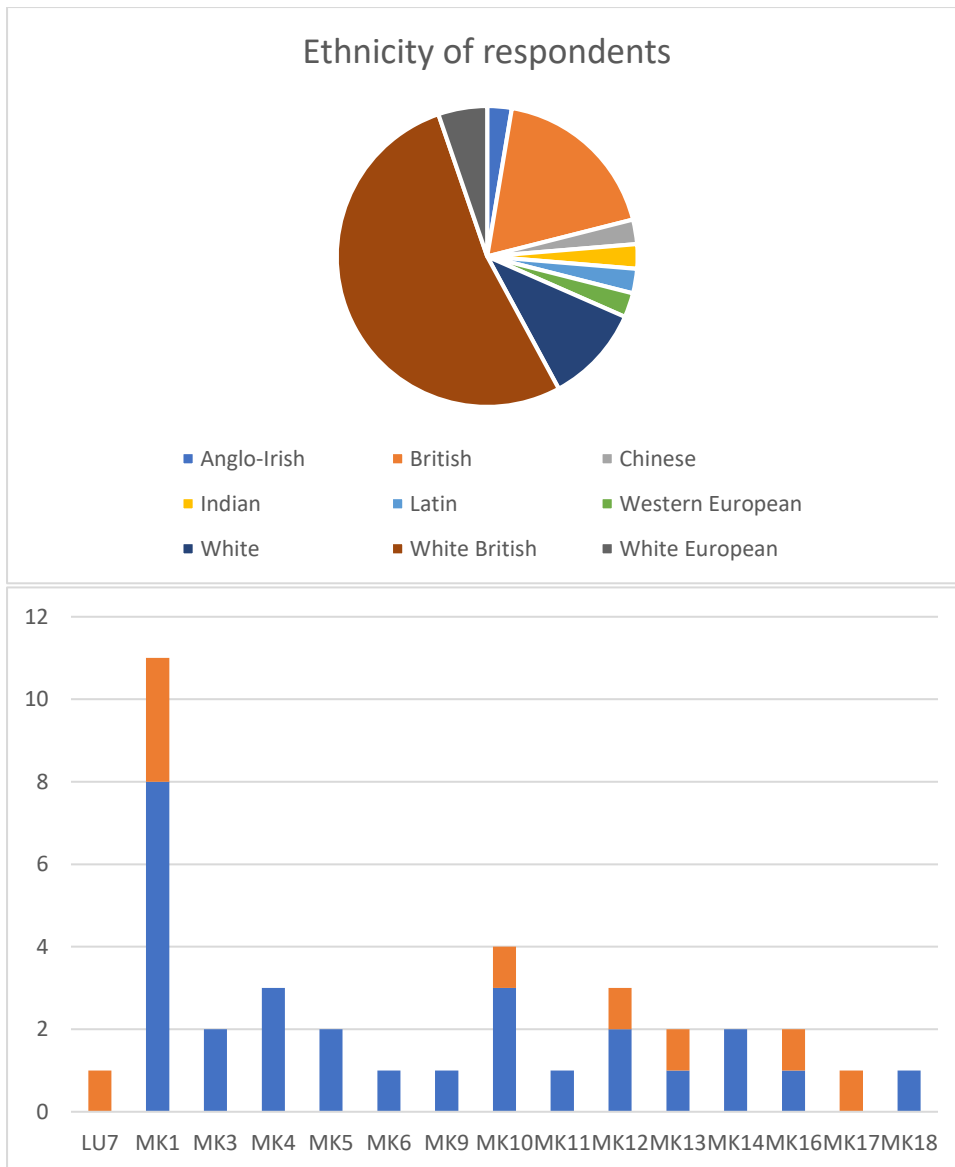
## Survey Questions

- 1) *Did you have the flu vaccine when you were pregnant?*
- 2) *If yes, where did you go to get the flu vaccination?*
- 3) *If you said other, please explain in more detail*
- 4) *If you received the flu vaccination at work, can you let us know the name of your workplace?*
- 5) *If you didn't have the flu vaccination can you give us some more details about why?*
- 6) *If you said other, please explain*
- 7) *Do you have any further comments about how easy or difficult it was to get an appointment?*
- 8) *If there is one thing that you could change about flu vaccinations, what would it be?*
- 9) *Age*
- 10) *Ethnicity*
- 11) *First 3 digits of postcode*

## Responses

We received 39 responses from women aged between 21 and 46 years of age.





The chart above highlight respondents by residential postcode area with the orange representing those women who chose not to have the vaccination. Those women who wanted, but were unable, to get the jab lived in different postcodes so it does not appear that there is an issue in a specific GP or service.

## Snapshot of respondents who did not have a flu vaccination

### Personal Choice:

All respondents citing personal choice as the reason for not having the vaccination identified as White British and they ranged in age from 21 to 37 years old.

- “It’s never been tested, so we don’t know for sure it’s safe to give pregnant women.”
- “I didn’t see it as a necessity because I don’t have the flu jab any other time. The flu jab would be for me, not my baby and it’s not necessary to vaccinate when you



don't fully know what the effects are on the baby (much like whooping cough) I am not anti-vax, both my children have had all their immunisations since birth, however I did feel it necessary to decline jabs whilst pregnant. A few friends did as well so I believe it's personal choice rather than not being aware."

- "Didn't want the vaccine as it hasn't prevented me from getting the flu in the past. I found out I was pregnant late December and didn't want to risk vaccines in the first trimester."
- "Too much literature available stating that the safety and effectiveness of the jab have not been established in pregnant."

When asked what changes they would make to the flu vaccination service they said:

- "Get rid of it completely."
- "People should be given more information about keeping themselves healthy (e.g. what can help the immune system) rather than relying on a pot luck vaccine that has very real possible side effects."

### Other reason:

Some respondents outlined different reasons for not taking up the flu vaccination.

"I booked in to get the flu jab at the GP, but they ran out. I was told to try the pharmacy, but they also ran out, so I didn't get it."

"I was told it wasn't flu season, so I couldn't have it and just to have the whooping cough vaccination instead."

"I wasn't allowed it in the first trimester and was told it wasn't necessary in the second."

When asked about ease of access these women said:

"As I have other health needs and was working as a teacher at the time I could have done with having it."

"Even though I had an appointment I couldn't get it done, why wasn't a jab ordered or reserved for me? I also wasn't told until I turned up on the day."

Their responses to the question about changes they would like to see in the service were:

"I think it should be offered to everyone for free to prevent unwanted illness and time off work. Flu can be debilitating and if a parent is ill it may mean the other parent having to take time off to look after the baby."

"More available."

## Snapshot of respondents who did have a flu vaccination



15 respondents reported it was easy, or very easy to get the Jab but only three mentioned that their midwife had either booked the appointment or that the appointment was made following advice from the midwife. These women made the following suggestions for change to the service:

“Free for all, also when not in any risk related group.”

“Offered at 12-week scan appointment? would save a trip to the GP.”

“The surgery was so full - wasn't a chance to sit down and I had PGP.... Perhaps the pharmacy or during midwife appointment would be easier.”

The one woman who used the pharmacy made no comment about the process.

Of those who found it was difficult to access the service, two had selected ‘other’ as the answer to where they received the jab. One woman said she had the vaccination at her GP but said it was not that easy to get the appointment. She reported being told the appointment “had to be done on a Saturday...weren't very accommodating...take the appointment or don't get the vaccine attitude...”

One of the women who chose ‘other’ said she received the jab at the Antenatal Clinic at Stoke Mandeville Hospital when attending a routine outpatient appointment. The second woman who chose other said that she had to go to MKUH to get hers, as her “doctors surgery (and all pharmacies that she phoned) said that they no longer had any available, as it was past a certain date and the NHS weren't providing them with any more of the vaccine this season after this date”. Her response to the ease of access question was:

“Very difficult. Involved me calling my GP surgery and 5/6 different pharmacies, but with no success. The only reason I managed to get it was because I had a



routine Obs & Gynae hospital appt and I saw the signs about the flu clinic there, so I asked for it.”

Her response to the change she would like to see in the service was to make the vaccinations easier to access at GP surgeries and all year round.

## Conclusions:

This was a small survey, but Healthwatch Milton Keynes hope that the information is an informative snapshot of what target patients are experiencing when making choices about vaccinating themselves against flu whilst pregnant, and some of the barriers to accessing services.

we are not making formal recommendations based on the findings. Instead, we have included our comments as informal suggestions for the Flu Steering Group to explore when looking at the ways they can improve the uptake of flu vaccinations in pregnant women.

- Review public health messaging and incorporate statistical or qualitative proof of safety of vaccination for both mother and unborn child as well as statistical evidence of the effects for those women and babies who were not vaccinated and developed influenza.
- Explore the offer of vaccination in planned antenatal sessions e.g. 12-week scan, visits to midwife.
- Review vaccination policy and clarify targets. Is it the case that the health system wants all pregnant women to vaccinate against flu throughout the year, or is the focus around women pregnant at high risk times of the year i.e. Winter?
- Work with GP practices to ensure that receptionists support easy access to flu vaccinations when women have consented to be vaccinated.