Seasonal Influenza Immunisations

Summary points

- Across England vaccination uptake has declined across GP administered populations.
- Bristol's seasonal flu immunisation coverage rates are now higher than the England average across all GP-administered populations in 2024/25.
- Bristol's seasonal flu immunisation uptake decreased across the GP-administered populations aged 65 years and over and 2 and 3 year olds in Bristol in 2024/25, but increased in the 'under 65's at risk' population and pregnant people, mirroring the national profile with the exception of 'under 65's at risk' which decreased nationally.
- 55.1% of primary school aged children in Bristol received a flu immunisation in 2024/25, higher than the national average of 54.6%. With the exception of 4 to 5 year olds, uptake increased in all other primary school aged children compared with the previous year.

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 severe influenza illness.

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were added to the eligible population for flu vaccination, this offer continued for 2021/22 and 2022/23 season but was withdrawn for the 2023/24 season. Within the population groups for whom the seasonal flu immunisation is administered by their GP, Bristol's uptake rates for 2024/25 are higher than the national average across all groups (Figure 1).

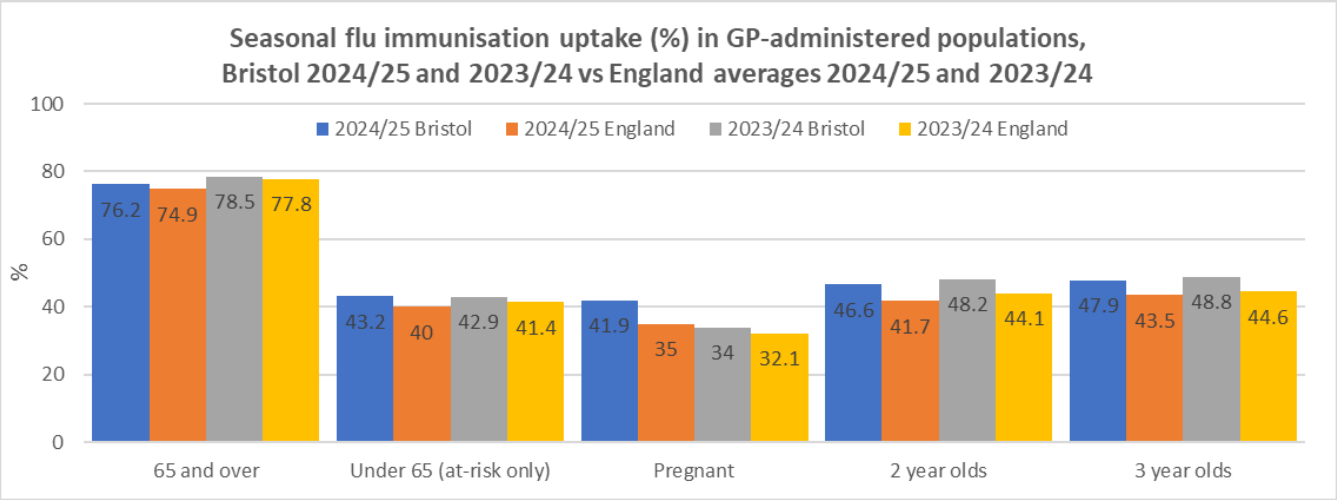

Figure 1: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for GP administered populations, 2023/24-2024/25

In 2022/23 there was a significant decrease nationally in terms of uptake for 2 and 3 year old children compared with the previous year. This was not experienced in Bristol where rates have

been fairly consistent over the last three years although significantly lower than 2020/21 when uptake reached 57.7% for 2 year olds and 59.5% for 3 year olds. In Bristol rates for pregnant people have increased by nearly 8% compared to the previous year. and continue to be higher than the England average.

Coverage rates for people in Bristol aged 65 and over decreased further in 2024/25 following the 2021/22 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 69.4% in Inner City and East Bristol to 75.9% in South Bristol to 78.9% in North and West Bristol.

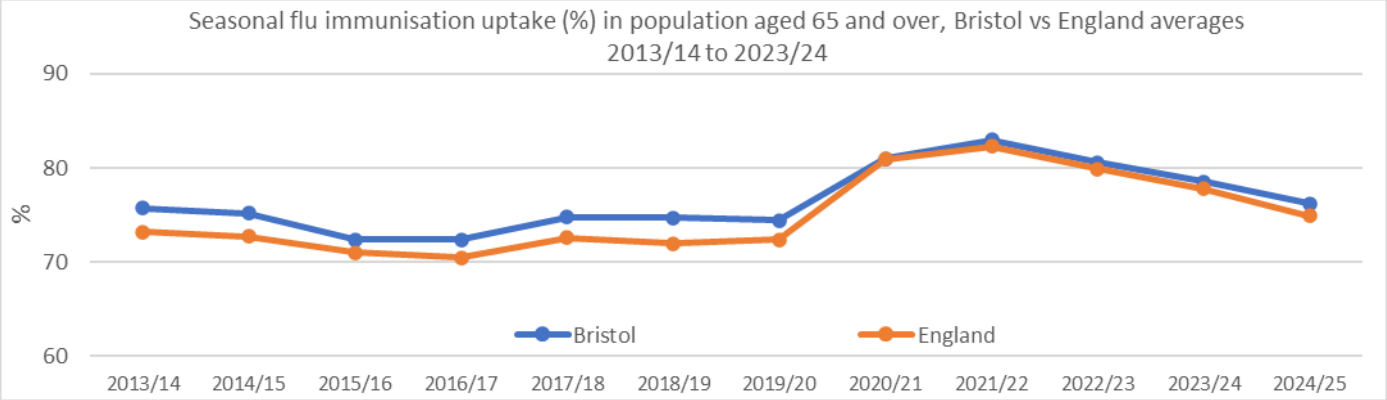

Figure 2: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for GP administered population aged 65 and over, 2013/14 to 2024/25

In the under 65 at risk group Bristol's uptake was higher than the national average. Coverage rates in Bristol and nationally have been decreasing over the last few years but whilst England's average has continued to reduce in 2024/25 to its lowest recorded uptake in the last 12 years, Bristol bucked the trend and experienced a slight increase (Figure 3).

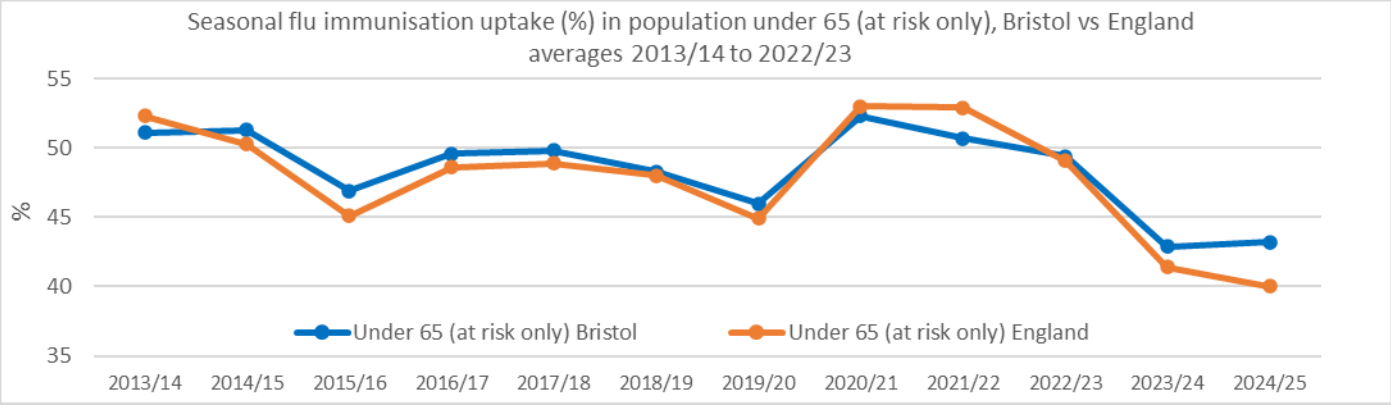

Figure 3: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for GP administered population under 65 (at risk only), 2013/14 to 2024/25

Seasonal flu immunisation uptake in school-age children

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. For the winter season of 2024/25 vaccination of school age children, was offered from age 4 to 16 years (reception to year 11). This was through school based clinics plus several community clinics for those who were out of school, absent on the day of the school clinic. Figure 4 below shows that Bristol has increased uptake in primary school age children across all year groups in 2024/25 with the exception of 4/5 year olds where uptake was slightly lower than the previous year. Bristol's uptake was higher than the national average for Reception year pupils through to Year 2 pupils but from Year 3 onwards Bristol's coverage falls below the national average.

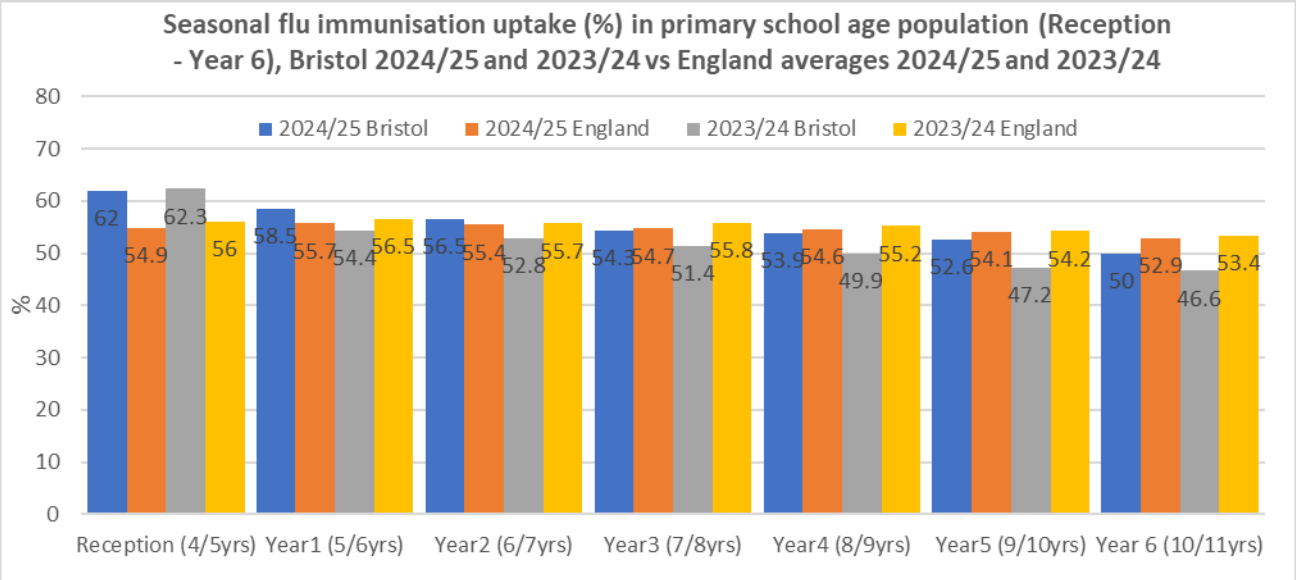

Figure 4: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for GP administered populations, 2023/24-2024/25

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). However uptake increased significantly in 2022/23 and increased further in 2023/24 and 2024/25 for Year 1 and Year 4 children. Contrary to the downward national trend, Bristol shows an increasing trend in vaccination uptake across all primary school year groups.

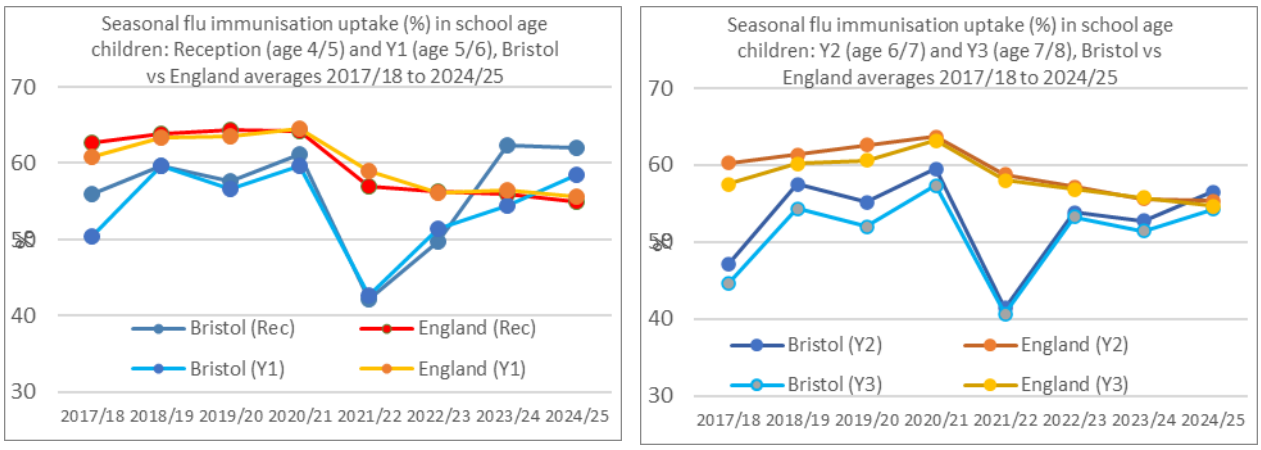

Figure 5 and 6: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for primary school children aged 4 to 8 years, 2017/18 to 2024/25

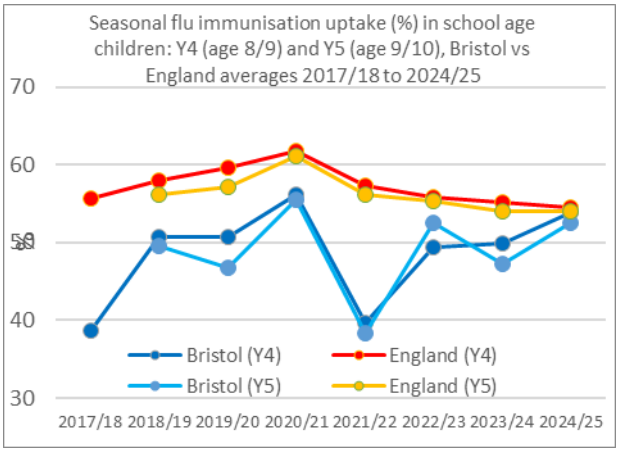

Figure 7: Seasonal flu vaccine uptake figures for primary school children aged 8 to 10 years, 2017/18 to 2024/25

Overall Bristol's vaccination uptake for school aged children aged 4 to 16 was 50.6%, just below the national average of 51.1%. This can be broken down further with 55.1% of primary school aged children receiving a vaccination in Bristol, higher than the national average (54.6%) and 44.2% of secondary school aged children receiving a vaccination, lower than the national average of 46.4%. The improvement in uptake in 2024/25 has increased Bristol's overall standing when compared with other local authorities. Of the 134 local authorities who submitted their data Bristol ranked 63rd highest across all school years from age 4 to 16 years of age. 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 offered and promoted as an alternative to this group to improve uptake.

Equalities data:

Analysis of local data by broad ethnic groups shows that 79.4% of people of White ethnicity aged 65 and over received the flu vaccination in 2024/25, higher than the city average. People of Black ethnicity had the lowest uptake at 46.3%, significantly lower than the city average. There was no difference between male and female take-up in the over 65's age group.

In the younger age groups (2-15 years) vaccination take-up mirrored the over 65's coverage with children of White ethnicity significantly more likely to receive the vaccination than children of Black ethnicity. Analysis identified that in the 2-3 age group a higher proportion of females received the vaccination than males but between the ages of 4 and 15 take-up by gender was similar.

National data (available via the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) 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.

Further data / links / consultations:

- Seasonal flu vaccine uptake: https://www.gov.uk/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake:-figures

Date updated: June 2025 **Date of next update**: June 2026