

# Pandemic Influenza Planning Bulletin

October 2009 Issue 4

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## Welcome

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Pandemic Influenza Planning Bulletin update for the Health and Social Care sector in Northern Ireland.

This bulletin aims to provide an update on activity in DHSSPS around planning for an influenza pandemic. We wish to distribute this bulletin as widely as possible, so please feel free to forward this e-mail to anyone that you think will be interested in its content. If you would like to be included in the circulation of the bulletin, please let us know by e-mailing

[pandemicflu@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:pandemicflu@dhsspsni.gov.uk)



Department of

**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

## Swine Flu Outbreak

DHSSPS has been involved in a UK wide Pandemic Influenza preparedness programme of work for the past four years.

We have been working with the Health and Social Care sector, including GPs, for a number of years to ensure our preparedness is robust. A detailed programme of swine flu preparedness work is now being taken forward right across the HSC to ensure we are able to respond appropriately to this outbreak.

It should be noted that this virus is generally mild in terms of its symptoms and most people will recover at home by taking simple measures to alleviate symptoms such as resting, taking paracetamol and drinking plenty of fluids. However, people with underlying health conditions are at higher risk of complications if they develop swine flu.

## HSC wide Programme of work on Swine Flu

Ultimate responsibility and decision making on Swine Flu policy lies with the Health Minister. At a UK level, Minister's decisions are informed by recommendations from Cabinet Office, COBR and Health Officials. This advice is underpinned by scientific evidence provided by SAGE and JCVI, who are expert scientific and medical groups providing guidance on epidemiological and vaccination policies respectively.

To ensure that these strategic decisions are appropriately implemented at an operational level within Northern Ireland, a Regional Preparedness for a Swine Flu Pandemic Programme Board, chaired by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, and comprising staff from the Department, HSCB, PHA and BSO, was established on 1 July 2009. The Programme Board's primary function is to ensure coordination and provide assurance to the Minister on preparedness of Swine Flu planning and the proportionality of that preparedness across the HSC.

The Programme Board held its first meeting on 9 July 2009, and has since met 6 times to date for members to consider and scrutinise papers for approval, including the financial costs associated. There are arrangements in place to meet every Friday fortnight; the next meeting is scheduled for 16 October. The Programme comprises a number of workstreams, each with a programme sponsor who is a member of the Regional Preparedness for a Swine Flu Pandemic Programme Board. The workstreams are underpinned by a Workstream Leads Forum which meets every Tuesday fortnight to address cross-cutting issues and report back to the Programme Board. Programme support is provided by DHSSPS.

The Programme Board will remain in place until we reach the stage when the Regional Health Command Strategic Cell (RHCC) is established.

The workstreams and their leads are as follows:

- 1a.** Public Health – Information PHA Led, Dr Anne Wilson
- 1b.** Public Health – Regional Policy on Counter Measures HSCB Led, Joe Brogan
- 2.** Communications – Jointly led by PHA, Ed McClean and DHSSPS, Clare Baxter
- 3.** Surge Capacity and Business Continuity for Secondary, Community Care, Mental Health and Learning Disability – HSCB Led, Michael Bloomfield
- 4.** Surge Capacity and Business Continuity for Primary Care – HSCB Led, Michael Bloomfield
- 5.** Surge Capacity and Business Continuity for Independent Sector – PHA Led, Margaret Kelly
- 6.** Business Continuity for Management Functions – DHSSPS Led, Dean Sullivan
- 7.** Prison Service Preparedness – PHA Led, Paul Darragh
- 8.** Distribution and Storage of Supplies – BSO Led, Teresa Molloy
- 9.** Vaccination Flu Programme – PHA Led, Richard Smithson
- 10.** Flu-line – DHSSPS Led, John Farrell
- 11.** Emergency Operations Management – DHSSPS Led, Andrew Elliott
- 12.** Inter-Departmental and Inter-Agency Issues – DHSSPS Led, Andrew Elliott

13. Financial Planning – DHSSPS Led,  
Julie Thompson.

## Guidance Documents

### Guidance Documents- Pandemic

Thus far, DHSSPS have issued a number of guidance documents in relation to Pandemic Influenza for a range of areas, available at the link below, which include:

- Acute Hospitals
- Maternity Services
- Primary Care
- Social Care
- Mental Health Service
- Human Resources
- Ambulance Services

On 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009, the Department also issued pandemic guidance to Dental practitioners.

These documents are all linked to the Northern Ireland Contingency plan, which is also available at the link below.

[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious\\_diseases/pandemicflu.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious_diseases/pandemicflu.htm)

### **Future Guidance:**

- Guidance for prisons
- Ongoing reassessment of maternity guidance in light of the Swine Flu outbreak

### Guidance Documents- Swine Flu

Swine Flu guidance documents, including the latest set of Planning Assumptions, are available on the Department's website at the link below:  
[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious\\_diseases/pandemicflu.emergency\\_planning-communication.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious_diseases/pandemicflu.emergency_planning-communication.htm)

For the latest information about Swine Flu go to the nidirect website:  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/health-and-well-being/swine-flu.htm](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/health-and-well-being/swine-flu.htm)

### Sickness Self- Certification

For the present there are no changes to the rules in relation to self-certification for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) purposes - people need to get a doctor's certificate after 7 calendar days.

## Recent Developments

If a further wave of swine flu reaches levels where GPs need to prioritise other work and feel that the pressure of demand for sick certificates is more than they can cope with, the government will give consideration to expanding the duration of the self-certification period for SSP purposes.

### Critical Care Planning

As part of our plans and pandemic preparedness, work is on-going locally and nationally to plan for increasing critical care capacity to cope with additional demand during the expected surge of cases in the autumn.

### Planning Assumptions

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009, DHSSPS released the revised planning assumptions for the Swine Flu outbreak.

The updated planning assumptions indicate that in Northern Ireland during the peak of the pandemic, approximately 113,000 people could contract swine flu in one week.

The updated planning assumptions document is available on the Department's website at the following link:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious\\_diseases/pandemicflu](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious_diseases/pandemicflu)

### Delayed diagnosis of other serious illness

There are some concerns about the potential for delayed diagnosis of other serious illnesses such as meningococcal infection and Legionnaires disease because of current diagnostic bias towards diagnosing flu. If you are aware of delayed

diagnosis of Legionnaires Disease or meningococcal disease which were initially attributed to flu can you please contact CDSC at [cdscni@hscni.net](mailto:cdscni@hscni.net)

### **Definition of a 'Swine Flu related Death'**

The agreed UK wide definition for Swine Flu related deaths is:

- death caused directly by Swine Flu (part I of the death certificate);
- swine flu contributed to death (part II of death certificate); and/or
- Patient tested positive for swine flu.

### **Swine Flu Vaccination Programme**

The priority groups for swine flu vaccination are:

- (i) Individuals aged between 6 months and 65 years in the current seasonal flu clinical risk groups;
- (ii) All pregnant women
- (iii) Household contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- (iv) People aged 65 and over in the current seasonal flu clinical risk groups

In addition to these groups frontline health and social care workers will be prioritised to receive the vaccine.

Two H1N1 swine flu vaccines are being used as part of the national immunisation programme. The GSK vaccine, Pandemrix, has been granted a marketing authorisation. Adoption of an authorisation decision for the Baxter vaccine, Celvapan, is expected shortly.

For further information see circular <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss-md-44-2009.pdf>

### **Essential Medicines**

There is a UK wide project which is seeking to improve the resilience of the medicines supply chain by procuring additional stock of key medicines for life threatening conditions.

However, workstream 4 are considering measures that would help maintain patients' access to routine medicines during and after a pandemic should shortages arise.

### **Swine Flu Preparedness Workshop**

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September, DHSSPS hosted a workshop to discuss swine flu preparedness. The focus of the workshop was to take stock of the HSC response to swine flu to date, acknowledge what had been achieved and to inform the way forward in light of lessons learned.

The workshop featured a series of presentations beginning with an introduction from Permanent Secretary of DHSSPS, Dr Andrew McCormick, and followed by an update from Dr Michael McBride, the Chief Medical Officer.

The range of topics covered throughout the day included; an overview of the Programme Board, an update on antivirals, the vaccination programme, distribution and storage of PPE, the Pandemic Flu service and Surge Capacity within the HSC. The day ended with a group discussion focusing on gearing up for the next phase.

The next step will be the collation of feedback received from participants into a report.

### **Communications**

There are a number of major public awareness campaigns planned for the Autumn.

These will include a UK-wide campaign to increase awareness and uptake of good hand hygiene practices. In addition as the vaccine becomes available, there will be a campaign to maximise uptake of the vaccine. Plans are also in place for a national campaign to raise awareness of

the National Pandemic Flu Service if and when required. Other local campaigns similar to the “Stay At Home” campaign may take place in NI as the need arises.

In addition, the media receive a weekly briefing each Thursday to provide an update on recent Swine Flu developments. These are circulated to MLAs and available to view on the DHSSPS website.

### DHSSPS RSS News Feeds

An RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a feed from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) website page

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/professional/public\\_health-swine-flu-guidance-for-professional-staff.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/professional/public_health-swine-flu-guidance-for-professional-staff.htm) which enables you to stay up-to-date with the latest news articles relating to Swine Flu featured on the DHSSPS website, is now available to all HSC/Professional staff.

To subscribe to this RSS feed for this page, you will need a News Reader which is a piece of software that checks RSS feeds and allows you to access news articles in the feed.

News Readers are available in different forms - some are built into Internet Browsers and others are standalone dedicated software applications or can be obtained through google.

### Subscribe to this feed (this is a free service)

You can subscribe to this RSS feed in a number of ways, including the following:

- Drag the orange RSS button at the top of the page into your News Reader
- Drag the URL of the RSS feed into your News Reader - <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/professional/rss-swineflu.xml>

Cut and paste the URL of the RSS feed into your News Reader -

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/professional/rss-swineflu.xml>

### Sources of further information

**DHSSPS** – Access to NI guidelines and frameworks

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious\\_diseases/pandemicflu](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious_diseases/pandemicflu)

**NI Direct** – Provides guidance and updates on the Swine Influenza Pandemic

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/health-and-well-being/swine-flu.htm>

**DH** – Access to UK guidelines and frameworks

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu>

**WHO** – Provide a worldwide overview of the Pandemic Influenza situation

<http://www.who.int/>

**E-Mail:** [pandemicflu@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:pandemicflu@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

### Who's who in the Department?

Dr Liz Reaney, Senior Medical Officer is the new lead on the health aspects of pandemic flu within the Department. Dr Lorraine Doherty, has now assumed the post of Assistant Director of Public Health within the PHA. We would like to thank Lorraine for her past endeavours and look forward to enjoying a productive working relationship with her in the future.

Andrew Elliott, Director of Population Health, continues to lead the Emergency Planning Policy team, which includes Elaine Lawson, Bernie Duffy, Robert Cranston, David Robinson, Sholto Carnew, Helen Reynor, Kieran Blaney, Karen Pateman, Darren McCaw and Alan Weir.

Elaine Lawson is the new Head of Branch in the Department, replacing Joy Peden who has moved to Stakeholder Involvement. The Branch would like to thank Joy for her efforts over the past two years and wish her all the best in her new post

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