

Swine Flu update

Summary

This paper gives a progress update on the LGA's work to support councils in dealing with the swine flu outbreak. As the situation is changing day by day, an oral update on the current situation will be provided at the meeting

Recommendations

Members are asked to note activity to date.

Action

Subject to comments from the Board, officers to take forward any suggested actions.

Swine Flu update

Background

1. The March meeting of the Safer Communities Board received a report on the LGA role in national emergencies. With the outbreak of swine flu in April, our plans have again been tested and LGA has put an incident response team in place to help councils deal with the impact of the outbreak.
2. In health emergencies, the National Health Service leads on the country's response, with help and support from local authorities who have a statutory duty (under The Civil Contingencies Act 2004) to maintain essential services and keep the public informed.
3. Councils and other local partners, such as police, fire and ambulance, meet regularly at the Local Resilience Forum (LRFs) to plan for likely emergency scenarios, including pandemic flu, so are well used to dealing with emergency situations, and have tried and tested local plans in place.
4. LRFs are generally based on local police areas (except in London), and bring together all the organisations who have a duty to co-operate under the Civil Contingencies Act, along with others who would be involved in the response.
5. Given the complexity, scale and international dimension to a flu pandemic, central government also has an important coordination role to play. In a health emergency, the Department of Health is the lead government department, but Ministers and officials across government are meeting regularly to discuss the developing situation. These are meetings of the Cabinet level Civil Contingencies Committee – colloquially known as Cobra.
6. We are currently in touch with over 300 councils and we are providing support and information widely to our membership and to Councillors, so that everyone has up to date information, and we can raise emerging issues at national level.
7. LGA members and officers are attending Civil Contingencies Committee, which currently meet several times a week. Apart from the Association of Chief Police Officers, we are the only external representatives at these meetings which confirms the importance of the local perspective and the role of councillors.
8. The LGA website contains a background briefing, Q+A and links to all relevant websites regarding public health and emergency planning. The latest briefing (at the time of drafting this report) is attached as **Appendix A**. An oral update on the current situation can be provided at the meeting.

Financial Implications

9. Efficiency savings have been established by bringing support for national emergencies in-house.

Implications for Wales

10. The LGA represents Wales at the national level for emergency planning matters, while the WLGA works with the Welsh Assembly Government. We are working closely with WLGA and CoSLA on the swine flu outbreak.

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