

Swine flu briefing

3 July 2009, 4:00pm

Current situation

- WHO Alert is at **Phase 6** (widespread human infection) - see [LGA website](#) for more information about Phase 6. Government advice may reflect the current situation rather than rigidly following Alert Levels and responders should be flexible to adapt to the situation facing them on the ground.
- There are 7447 (2/07/09) confirmed cases & 4 deaths in the UK. Due to the increasing number of cases, the UK has moved to the Treatment Phase with immediate effect. This means an end to contact tracing, prophylaxis, and laboratory confirmation of cases. Clinical diagnosis will be used to confirm swine flu cases. Antivirals will continue to be offered to all those who have contracted the illness. However, it remains a matter of clinical discretion to decide whether antivirals should be prescribed in individual cases
- The Health Protection Agency will no longer be releasing a daily update of the numbers of cases confirmed through laboratory tests. From next week, the Health Protection Agency's Centre for Infections press office will instead issue a weekly media alert covering the various surveillance systems the Agency will be using to monitor the ongoing situation. This will also be available in the News section of the Agency's website at www.hpa.org.uk. The exact day these new weekly alerts will start will be confirmed next week.
- In the Southern hemisphere the disease is spreading rapidly.
- The LGA is holding a **free** half day briefing session at the **Birmingham Council House** on **Friday 24 July**. Places **are now available for officers on a first come first served basis**. The day will look at some priority issues arising from the current swine flu outbreak. A new guide on swine flu, aimed at elected members will be launched at the event. If you wish to book for this event please complete the [booking form](#) on the LGA website, email: events@lga.gov.uk or call 020 7664 3131.
- The Swine Flu Community of Practise (CoP) for Emergency Planners has been created. It will be used by us to share information and good practise; we would like to encourage as many of you as possible to join. The CoP can be used for posting documents and queries, sharing good practise and interacting with other councils. Birmingham City Council has agreed to let us share their guidance pack for schools. This can be accessed through the Community of practise for modifying to use in your local authority area. The CoP can be accessed on the IDeA's [communities site](#). Word versions of LGA briefings will be available on our Community.
- There is a telephone number with the regularly updated pre-recorded information about swine flu. **0800 1 513 513**.
- Local Government Employers (LGE) has prepared an [update](#) on the WHO declaration of a phase 6 pandemic and a [paper](#) which sets out the

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briefing

options for how human resource professionals and managers within councils may wish to manage any concerns.

- The Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency have agreed that the following areas have widespread community transmission of H1N1: **London** (All PCTs within London Region); **West Midlands** (Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT, Birmingham East and North PCT, South Birmingham PCT, Sandwell PCT, Coventry PCT, Solihull Care Trust); **South Central** (Berkshire East PCT, Buckinghamshire PCT); **East of England** (West Hertfordshire PCT (Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere district council areas), Luton PCT and **NHS East Midlands** (Nottingham PCT, Nottinghamshire County PCT).

World Health Organisation assessment

- The [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO) is the United Nations specialist agency for health.
- The WHO alert is currently at level 6, the pandemic phase, i.e. community level outbreaks in two or more WHO regions. Once a fully contagious virus emerges, its global spread is considered inevitable. A briefing on the Implication of declaring phase 6 is on the LGA [website](#).
- Pandemic flu means that a virus is spreading globally through human to human contact but it is not an assessment about the severity of the virus.

Advice to the public

- The UK government is closely monitoring the situation and bringing together key agencies to ensure an effective and efficient response.
- People returning from a visit to an affected area are advised to monitor their health closely for seven days. If during this period they develop flu-like symptoms they should stay at home and contact their GP by phone or seek advice from NHS Direct (**0845 4647**).
- Every UK household should have received a [government leaflet about swine flu](#). This emphasises the importance of good personal hygiene, advises people to identify a 'flu friend' who would pick up medicine and other supplies and seeks to reassure the public that the country is well prepared to deal with a possible flu pandemic. The leaflet is accompanied by a television advert campaign and is available to view [here](#).
- [NHS Choices](#) is the main public-facing health and information and advice service and is the key website for councils to link to.
- There is a telephone number with the regularly updated pre-recorded information about swine flu. **0800 1 513 513**.
- The [Department of Health website](#) contains information for healthcare professionals and may be of interest to local authorities.

Preventing the spread of swine flu

- It is impossible to forecast the precise characteristics, spread and impact of a new influenza virus strain.
- There is no scientific evidence to support more general wearing of masks to guard against infections, other than by those healthcare professionals caring for infected people.
- The Health Protection Agency has issued [advice](#) on managing flu in nursing and residential homes.

- There are no restrictions on public gatherings in the UK and the NHS website is advising people to carry on with their daily lives as normal and maintain good personal hygiene.
- Swine influenza cannot be transmitted by eating pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is perfectly safe.

Travel advice

- For latest travel advice please visit the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office website](#).

Impact on businesses

- The latest advice to businesses can be found at the [Business Link website](#).

Government

- The government has established a stockpile of enough antiviral drugs to treat more than 33m people and is seeking to increase the stock further. Advance purchase agreements for vaccines were triggered upon move to **Phase 6**. Further details are available on the [Department of Health website](#). There is currently no vaccine available.

LGA's role

- The LGA will regularly update this briefing so that councils have the latest information about the international, national and local response to swine flu.
- The LGA is supporting a rota of Leaders and Chief Executives to represent the sector at high level meetings of the government's Civil Contingencies Committee.
- The Chairman and Chief Executive of the LGA have emailed a joint letter to Leaders and Chief Executives in member councils in England and Wales to outline what the LGA is doing to support councils in response to swine flu.

For further information; please click on the following weblinks

Guidance

- The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) has published a [case study](#) looking at how Swindon Borough Council and the PCT set about creating a flu contact centre by sharing data and using local geographical intelligence.
- CLG has published [guidance](#) about the role of faith communities in a flu pandemic.
- Additional guidance for schools and local authorities:
 - [Main emergency planning page](#):
 - [Updates page](#):
 - [Q and A page](#):
- Local Government Employers have published [advice](#) on how HR staff and managers within councils may wish to manage any concerns.
- Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) have issued updated [guidance](#) on supporting learning in cases of extended schools closure, alongside additional relevant material on the DCSF website.
- Directors of Children's Services will want to satisfy themselves that they have sound business continuity plans in place to deal with the impact of a flu pandemic on all the services for which they are responsible including children's homes, and other placements for looked after children, for whom

continuity of care is important; as well as social care for vulnerable children and other children at risk. Full guidance and Q & A from the DCSF can be accessed on the [teachernet website](#)

- [Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England](#), Dr Keith Ridge has written to the key pharmacy trade bodies updating them on the latest arrangements for supply of medicines.
- The Department of Health has published information for Third Sector organisations [Pandemic influenza – supplementary information for third sector organisations](#). The document highlights key areas for organisations to consider to plan, prepare and respond to pandemic influenza. It suggests that third sector organisations that may have the capability to provide capacity as 'flu friends' (to collect antiviral medication from the nearest antiviral collection point to vulnerable or socially isolated and hard-to-reach groups) should contact their Local Authority's Emergency Planning Office.
- Infection control guidance, jointly developed by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and the Department of Health, for use in the event of an influenza pandemic is available for some non-NHS sectors, including the fire service and the police. Each guidance has standard text to explain pandemic influenza and addresses issues relevant to the particular sector. This guidance is on the HPA website – see link below.

Links to websites

- [Government leaflet about swine flu](#)
- [Health Protection Agency](#)
- [Department of Health](#)
- [NHS Direct](#)
- [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)
- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [DCSF Guidance for schools about flu pandemics](#)
- [Directgov](#)
- [HSE advice for employers who employ staff who interact with the public](#)
- [HSE advice on the use of face masks](#)

We will update the LGA swine flu briefing when there are significant developments, but this might not be every day. The most recent briefing will contain the latest information we have.