

UK Pandemic Preparedness

A Cross-government Approach

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Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Programme



Overview

- The importance of a cross-government approach for the UK
- UK Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Programme
- Business continuity planning: generic and for pandemic flu



Pandemic 'flu

- Top risk in National Security Strategy
- Cross government collaboration in planning for and responding to a pandemic

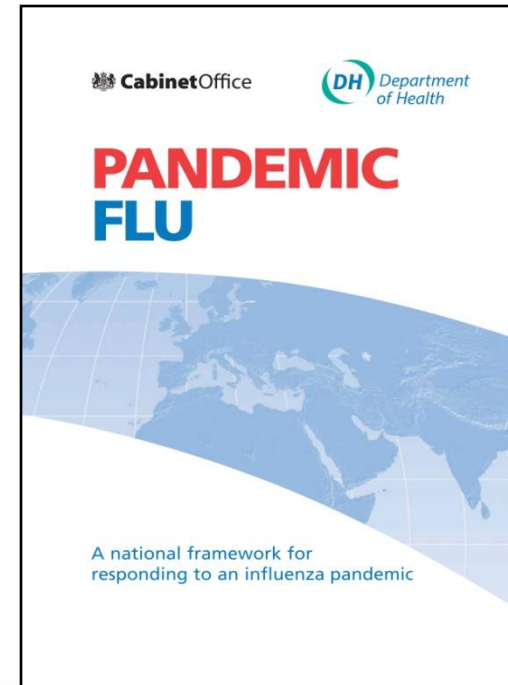
National Framework for responding to an influenza pandemic

- Robust plans in place by end 2008



Pandemic preparedness aims

- Minimise illness and death
- Internationally prevent or slow emergence and spread
- Reduce societal (incl. economical) disruption
- Support the continuity of essential services and protect critical national infrastructure
- Keep the public and media well informed
- Promote a return to normality as soon as possible



UK planning assumptions

- Spread from the source country to the UK likely to take two to four weeks
- Up to **50%** of the population may suffer symptoms of pandemic flu over a 15 week period and up to **2.5%** of those may die (750,000 people)
- Up to **50%** of the workforce may require time off at some stage over the entire period of the pandemic. Up to **35%** at one time in small businesses



Why a 'whole of society' approach?

- A pandemic will have a prolonged effect across all sectors, not just health
- Important to ensure all sectors are prepared



Whole of society/cross-sectoral issues

- Staff absences and disruptions to supply lines will affect many areas of society beyond health
- “Business as usual for as long as possible”
- Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) e.g. utilities, water, sewerage
- Application of Ethical Framework
- Joined-up approach



Whole of society/cross-sectoral issues

Issues such as:

- closing schools
- assistance to foreign nationals
- excess deaths
- repatriation of dead bodies/remains
- cancellation of social gatherings
- international travel
- border issues including screening
- domestic travel restrictions
- hygiene advice, including on public transport
- arrangements for payment of social benefits
- possible extension of period of sickness certification
- communications



Key Responsibilities

- Health Department leads on health and social care
 - NHS response and resilience, countermeasure management and distribution, health Critical National Infrastructure
- Cabinet Office leads on non-health aspects
 - Local Resilience Forums, Business Continuity, Critical National Infrastructure resilience, cross-government co-ordination



Key responsibilities

- Other Government Departments lead on specific aspects within their remits
 - e.g. Education on school closures, Home Office on excess deaths, Foreign Office on treatment of nationals abroad
- Health Protection Agency provides expert support and advice
- Other relevant groups include academic institutions, Royal Colleges and pharmaceutical industry



UK cross-government model for management of pandemic influenza planning

Secretariat provided by Cabinet Office

Cabinet Committee of Ministers from various Ministries, chaired by Health Secretary of State
(Prime Minister's office)

Secretariat as above

Supported by officials' group from same Ministries, eg transport, education, foreign affairs
co-chaired by CO and Health



Cabinet Committee

- Meets about every two months
- Makes key decisions on cross-government issues
- Monitors work programme and receives progress reports
- Shadowed by officials' committee that generally meets monthly



Example of cross-government co-ordination

Borders and Port Health

- Issues are whether to close borders, restrict ports of entry, screen entrants, ensure port health arrangements are robust
- Cabinet Office co-ordinates work on borders, Health Department on port health
- Work undertaken in consultation with Department for Transport, Health Protection Agency, Borders Agency, HM Customs and Revenue, Home Office, Devolved Administrations



Example of cross-government co-ordination

- Transport Department provides information on standard practices for incoming planes/ships and statistics for number of incoming passengers
- Health Protection Agency advises on which Health Protection Units could deploy screening, management of symptomatic passengers, and contact tracing
- Devolved Administrations provide perspectives on their specific issues (e.g. Northern Ireland has land border)



Example of cross-government co-ordination

- Health Department consults with Primary Care Trusts about possible extra pressures involved if screened symptomatic passengers brought to them from ports
- Policy recommendation made to cross-government Officials group by either Cabinet Office or Health Department - other Government Departments given opportunity to comment
- Ultimately policy will go to Cabinet Committee for approval



During pandemic.....

- Cabinet Committee will become crisis committee
- Will be co-chaired by Health Secretary of State and Prime Minister
- Will meet frequently (maybe twice daily initially)
- Will manage cross-sectoral response, taking decisions



Builds on general emergency preparedness arrangements

- Centre adopts control and command
- Central guidance – UK National Framework for responding to an influenza pandemic, and underpinning guidance, but much to local discretion
- Ensure planning reaches all levels and sectors
- Through resilience cross-sectoral fora at regional and local levels, both in planning and in crisis
- Strengthens general emergency preparedness through ‘whole of society’ approach to pandemic planning



Example of Local Resilience Forum interests in UK



Structure
repeated at
regional level.

Reports to
centre

The legislative framework for emergency response

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

- Core emergency responders (category 1 responders): legal requirement to put in place business continuity arrangements
- Cooperating bodies (category 2) required to co-operate and share information with category 1 responders
- Local Resilience Forums for co-ordination of multi-agency planning and preparedness at the local level.



Business continuity: pandemic 'flu

- Checklist for planners
<http://www.ukresilience.gov.uk/preparedness/businesscontinuity.aspx>
- Business Advisory Group on Civil Protection
- Sector specific planning groups:
 - Nuclear Emergency and Financial sector business continuity groups
 - Emergencies Executive Committee subgroup
 - National level workshop (end 2008) with representatives from energy, chemical industry, OFGEM and Royal Mail.



Pandemic 'flu BCM checklist (1)

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that employees who are ill or think they are ill during a pandemic are positively encouraged not to come into work.
 - Personnel policies may need to be reviewed to achieve this aim.
- Ensure that employers and employees are made aware of Government advice on how to reduce the risk of infection during a pandemic
- Ensure that adequate hygiene (e.g. hand-washing) facilities are routinely available
- Ensure that health and safety responsibilities to employees continue to be fully discharged



Pandemic 'flu BCM checklist (2)

- Identify measures to maintain core business activities for several weeks at high levels of staff absenteeism
 - Including options for remote working and expanding self-service and on-line options for customers and business partners
- Identify essential functions, posts and individuals, whose absence would place business continuity at particular risk
- Identify which services could be curtailed or closed down during all, or the most intense period, of the pandemic



Pandemic 'flu BCM checklist (3)

- Identify inter-dependencies between organisations and ensure they are resilient
 - For example by ensuring that supplier organisations delivering services under contract have appropriate arrangements in place themselves to sustain their service provision

- Recognise that medical counter-measures will not solve business continuity requirements.
 - They will neither cure it nor significantly reduce absenteeism.



Sharing good practice

- Sector specific guidance and plans on UK Resilience website: <http://www.ukresilience.gov.uk/>
 - Telecoms industry
 - Energy sector
 - Water and sewerage companies
 - Finance
 - Food
 - Transport providers
- Workshops and conferences
- Exercises - very important at all levels
- Communications and media

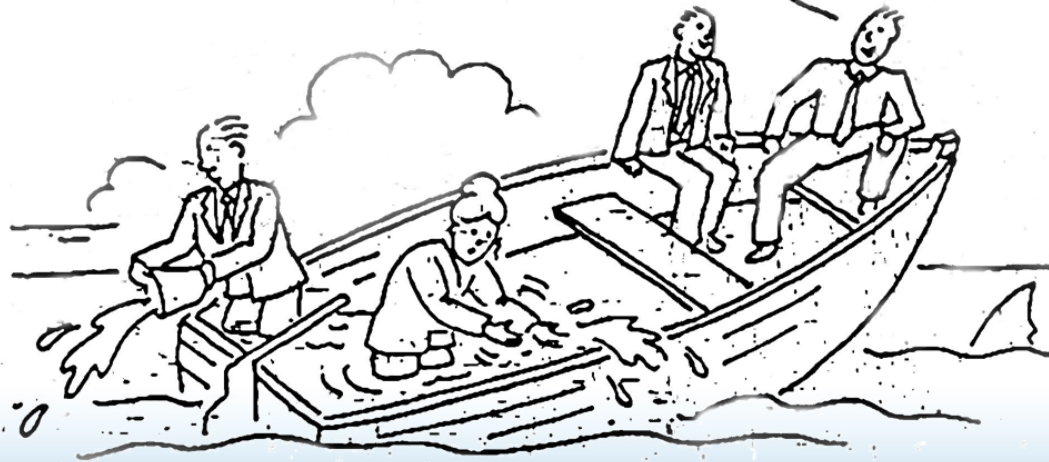


But....pandemic **will** affect the whole of society-
we must be **prepared**



And finally....

*Thank goodness the hole's
at their end!*



UK websites

- Department of Health
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/PandemicFlu/index.htm>
- Health Protection Agency
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/>
- Cabinet Office - UK Resilience
<http://www.ukresilience.gov.uk/>



Thank You

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UK Pandemic Preparedness – overview of progress



Countermeasures Stockpiles

- No pandemic-specific vaccine until at least 4-6 months after pandemic starts
- 3.3 million doses of pre-pandemic vaccine to cover all healthcare workers
- Already enough antivirals to cover 25% of the population, currently procuring additional antivirals to treat 50%, all infected in our reasonable worst-case scenario. To be completed by end March 2009



Countermeasures Stockpiles

- We plan to procure enough antibiotics (15.2 million courses) to treat all medical complications arising from a pandemic and to target clinical at-risk groups
- We are to procure 34 million disposable respirators and 236 million surgical face masks for the use of health and social care workers



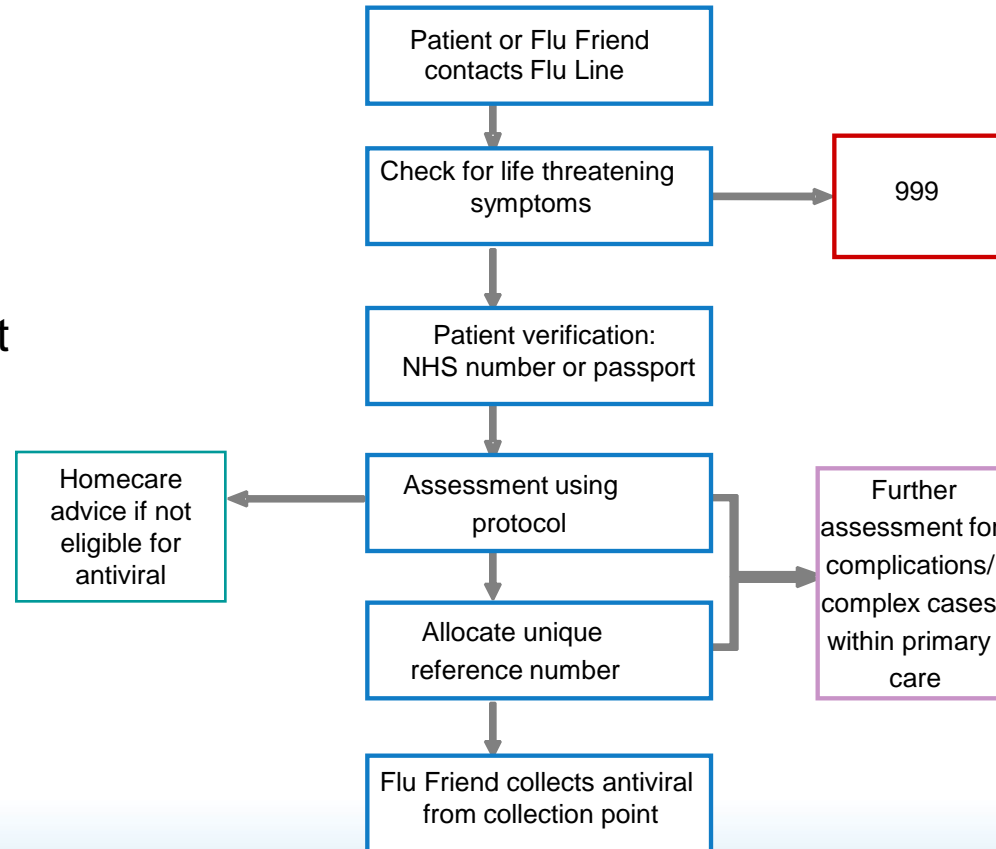
The Flu Line process

People suspecting they have flu will call Flu Line to be assessed rather than visit their GP

Call centre operator will assess symptoms against pre-determined criteria

If symptoms suggest pandemic 'flu, antivirals will be authorised for collection by 'Flu Friend'

This limits the strain on GP services and NHS Direct



NHS & social care preparedness

- Priority in Operating Framework to ensure joined-up approach
- Self-assessment of plans by December 2008, to be reviewed centrally by March 2009 with a view to further improvement
- Drive forward continuity planning by issuing guidance and supporting self-assessment of plans
- Local, regional & national exercises to test both specific aspects of planning and overall response
- Support for planning (by Health Service and Local Resilience Fora)



Communications

- Retaining public confidence in Government response is essential to ensuring advice is followed
- Public engagement research
- Public information will be available through a a variety of channels including:
 - A national door-drop to all homes
 - National TV, radio and press campaigns
 - Press briefings
 - A website and telephone information line
- Changes in alert levels & other public health information to be announced by Chief Medical Officer



Respiratory & Hand Hygiene



The Department has run a campaign which includes widespread ambient advertising promoting *CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT*, appearing on buses, trains and tubes and in offices and major shopping centres:

CATCH IT

Always cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue

BIN IT

Dispose of tissues promptly

KILL IT

Wash your hands as soon as you can

Website addresses:

www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu
pandemicflu@dh.gsi.gov.uk

