

Advice for businesses about Swine Flu

29 April 2009

Scottish Government is engaging closely with business organisations and will continue to keep you informed of developments for the duration of the outbreak. Our focus remains on ensuring our key sectors and indeed all businesses are fully prepared to deal with the impacts of any outbreak.

The principle risk to the continuity of critical business functions in a pandemic is the **shortage of staff** both within organisations and in suppliers and subcontractors.

Your Business

To reduce the impact of these potential problems, you will need to ensure that you have:

- identified **critical activities** that must be maintained and, by implication, what work you could defer
- identified the resources you need to deliver these, particularly **staff**
- considered both the **number of staff** and which **specialist skills, knowledge or authority** are required
- made available the information required by those staff who might be required to deputise for others
- put in place arrangements so you can implement **changes in work priorities** and **reassign resources**, in order to maintain critical activities
- put in place arrangements to maintain good **communications** with your staff, customers and suppliers

Your suppliers

You should consider the effect of staff absences on the suppliers and subcontractors on which you depend. Staff absences in suppliers may affect the services they are able to provide and the availability of some raw materials.

Your staff - absences

To prevent spreading illness amongst your workforce, **staff who think they may have influenza should go home** rather than trying to continue working. Staff should stay at home until they are completely well and follow advice from NHS24 which is available at <http://www.nhs24.com/content/default.asp>.

Infection control

You should also review advice from Health and Safety Executive concerning infection control measures in the workplace. This is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/diseases/pandflu.htm>

More information about general business continuity is available at:
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Dealingwithemergencies/Preparingforemergencies/DG_175927

Additional information

Useful links

World Health Organisation - <http://www.who.int/en/>

Department of Health - <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm>

Scottish Government - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Home>

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

- <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/north-central-america/mexico>

Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform

- <http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/sectors/infosec/infosecadvice/continuitymanagement/page33396.html>

UK Financial Sector Continuity - <http://www.fsc.gov.uk/section.asp?catid=14&docid=2417>

Influenza virus

Influenza is an acute infectious viral illness that spreads rapidly from person to person when in close contact.

Influenza is a respiratory illness with a wide range of symptoms characterised by rapid onset of illness, fever, cough, headache, sore throat, and aching muscles and joints.

The typical incubation period for non-pandemic influenza (the time between catching influenza and showing symptoms) is one to four days, with an average of two to three days.

People are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms though they can continue to shed virus, for example in coughs and sneezes, for typically up to five days (seven days in children).

Influenza is one of the most difficult infectious diseases to control because the virus spreads rapidly and easily from person to person. This is through two routes, *direct* and *indirect*:

- **Direct:** via droplets expelled from infected individuals (during talking, sneezing and coughing), which land on the mucous membranes where they enter the body and cause disease.
- **Indirect:** via hands touching contaminated surfaces or equipment and then touching the nose, mouth or eyes.

Studies suggest that influenza viruses may survive for some time on various surfaces, surviving longer on hard non-porous surfaces than on soft porous materials.

Studies have shown that careful hand hygiene, commercially available alcohol-based hand disinfectant (i.e. alcohol hand gel) and domestic cleaning products can easily deactivate the virus.

The best way to protect yourself and others from the virus is to:

- stay at home if you are ill
- cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a single use tissue
- disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully
- maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face or to other people
- cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product
- making sure your children follow this advice

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