



Influenza Pandemic

Guidance Notes

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 BSDR is in the process of preparing for a possible outbreak of the influenza pandemic, known as Swine Flu. The Department of Health is currently updating and extending the UK health department's Contingency Plan, based on expert scientific advice from the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- 1.2 This BSDR guidance deals with the workforce and HR issues that may arise and is designed to give an overall framework.
- 1.3 Swine Flu is a highly infectious illness that has the capacity to spread rapidly. A pandemic is likely to occur when a new influenza strain like this emerges and it will spread rapidly because people will not have any natural resistance to it. It is impossible to predict the scale, severity and impact but it is anticipated that some of the UK's population could develop the illness.
- 1.4 This guidance looks at workforce issues that may arise in the event of a pandemic.
- 1.5 In general, BSDR should seek to operate within its existing employment principles during the pandemic. In particular, we will need to draw on a range of staff to offset the impact of absence, asking staff to work flexibly.
- 1.6 An influenza pandemic will place great demands on staff. For example, you may be asked to undertake new tasks and deal with increased demands. You may be worried about your own health and safety and BSDR, as employers, will seek to provide as much support as possible. BSDR will take reasonable steps to protect staff health and safety, provide clear communication channels and take a supportive view of those staff who have caring responsibilities (see Section 3a on absence management)

2. Before a Pandemic

- 2.1 Communication with staff
 - 2.1.1 There is likely to be a great deal of concern among staff about the potential risks of Swine Flu. To this effect, we have produced a factsheet on the Intranet and on

notice boards about how it spreads, risks of infection and the role of antivirals and vaccines.

2.1.2 Should further alerts by the Government be made, BSDR will notify all staff.

2.2 Monitoring absence

2.2.1 BSDR currently has systems for reporting absence. Where a member of staff, however, is complaining of flu-like symptoms, they should be sent home. In order to assist with planning and to provide appropriate support, HR will keep in contact with staff who are absent due to sickness. BSDR will, of course, be as supportive as possible. Staff who are confirmed as having had flu and having recovered should have developed some immunity, depending on whether/how the virus mutates or changes.

2.2.2 BSDR are investigating the availability of treatment drugs, such as Tamiflu and Relenza as these vaccinations are not available through our Paycare scheme.

3. During a Pandemic

3.1 A range of issues could emerge during a pandemic and BSDR will do what it can to maintain morale and motivation over the sustained period. It is essential that close contact is maintained and that all staff are kept fully informed at all times.

3.2 Absence Management

3.2.1 BSDR's past experience suggest that the majority of staff will approach the pandemic in a spirit of cooperation and commitment. Staff should seek to support and sustain morale during the pandemic and absence management will be handled with care and sensitivity.

3.2.2 Any member of staff displaying symptoms of flu should either not come into the office, or if the symptoms arise during working hours, be sent home and advised not to work until fully recovered. Staff will be paid under normal sick pay arrangements and they should notify their HR Manager using agreed procedures. Sickness certification arrangements will be kept under review.

3.2.3 It may be that some local schools will have to close and there may be some scope for support via local networks of childcare coordinators or between parents, although this is likely to be limited due to fear of infection.

3.2.4 BSDR will support staff with school-age children in the event of pandemic-related school closures. It may be that BSDR offer a combination of paid and unpaid leave but at all times, staff will be treated consistently and fairly.

3.2.5 BSDR will balance the need to sustain the service of the business with the pressures that will fall on staff who have childcare and other caring responsibilities.

3.2.6 BSDR will appreciate the level of anxiety that the flu pandemic will generate and we are aware of our obligation to ensure the safety of staff and the measures taken in this respect should help towards reassurance.

3.3 Working Flexibly

3.3.1 Any pandemic may lead to a need for staff to work flexibly. Taking on additional tasks may be necessary.

3.3.2 It may be necessary to limit annual leave to sustain the needs of the business, although there will not be a blanket ban on leave, as BSDR acknowledges that time away from the office is essential for health and morale. Requests for leave will therefore be considered on their merits. Pre-booked leave will be allowed unless there are exceptional circumstances.

3.4 Health & Safety

3.4.1 BSDR have the same duty of care to our staff during the pandemic as in other circumstances and we will take reasonable steps to safeguard the health and safety of staff.