Form Title: Pandemic Flu Policy
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PANDEMIC FLU POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

We have set out the following guidance to assist staff working in our services to feel supported, informed and enable us to plan effectively, in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak.

Everyone should read this guidance and where possible, make the required preparations well in advance of a pandemic.

The organisation will take advice from the Local Authorities and through the world health organisation (WHO).

This simple guidance has been developed to raise awareness of the measures that may be employed to reduce the spread of the flu virus at work. It aims to:

- Allow the organisation/projects to evaluate potential situations where there may be possible exposure to the flu virus
- Assess the risks for the environment and to individuals by providing a matrix that can be used to consider the best ways of reducing the spread of flu in a work environment
- Describe the steps that can be taken to moderate any potential exposure to the flu virus in the projects
- Set out the measures that might be used to reduce the spread of the flu virus in the projects
- Ensure staff are aware of the importance and value of personal protective equipment and their responsibilities regarding these
- Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities to maintain and promote a safe working environment

What Is Pandemic Flu?

Pandemic influenza is different from ordinary seasonal flu, which for most people is an unpleasant illness but runs its natural course. A pandemic is a global disease outbreak.

Pandemic flu can occur when a new influenza virus emerges which is markedly different from recently circulating strains and to which humans have little or no immunity and then spreads easily from person-to-person when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. It can also spread through hand/face contact after touching anything that may become contaminated with the virus. Illness develops a few days (average 2-3) after being infected.

Everyone is susceptible. Because of this lack of immunity, the virus can:

- Infect more humans over a large geographical area
- Spread rapidly and efficiently from person to person
- Cause clinical illness in a proportion of those infected

During a pandemic, the most successful infection control measures will be those, which are outlined on the NHS please refer to www.nhs.uk. The focus should be maintaining environmental and general hygiene measures.

Symptoms of Pandemic Flu

The symptoms of pandemic flu will probably be similar to 'ordinary' flu but may be more severe. Seasonal flu usually affects your nose, throat, sinuses and airways.

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The most significant symptoms are the sudden onset of:

- Fever
- Coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath

Other symptoms may include:

- Chills
- Coughing or headache
- Sore throat
- Feeling tired
- Sore muscles
- A blocked or runny nose
- Sneezing
- Loss of appetite

People are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms. They can continue to spread the virus, for example in coughs and sneezes, for up to five days (seven days in children). People become less infectious as their symptoms subside, and once symptoms are gone, they are considered no longer infectious to others.

How can this be spread?

Any flu including pandemic flu is spread from person to person by close contact. Some examples of how this may spread are:

- Breathing in air containing the virus produced, when an infected person talks
- Large droplets from coughing and/or sneezing, within a close distance
- Direct contact, by shaking or holding hands and through touching your own mouth and eyes etc. without washing your hands
- Through hand/face contact after touching a person or surfaces contaminated with the virus
- Through soft furnishings and surfaces where the virus may be contained for longer periods

Statement on Prevention and Control of Infection

As an organisation we are committed to reducing and minimising the transition of infection. It is a requirement that everyone has the responsibility to ensure they manage the housekeeping and personal hygiene effectively.

Although you cannot prevent the spread of the disease, you can take steps to control/reduce the spread by:

- Good hand washing practices
- Practicing good personal hygiene
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue while sneezing or coughing
- Individuals should not use cloth handkerchiefs or reuse tissues. This practice carries a risk of contaminating pockets or handbags which may then re-contaminate hands every time they go into those pockets or handbags
- Disposing of used tissues promptly and carefully (bag and bin them). Tissues should be disposed of in domestic

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waste they do not require any special treatment

- Washing hard surfaces (e.g. worktops, doorknobs) with a domestic cleaner regularly. Normal household detergent and water should be used to clean surfaces
- Avoiding unnecessary travel
- Avoiding crowds where possible
- Ensuring children follow this advice

Organisational Contingency Planning

The organisation recognises the current health concerns and issues surrounding a pandemic and its potential impact on individuals and due to this we have introduced practical measures and systems that must be followed to ensure that potential risks are minimised/prevented and we have prepared a contingency plan to deal with any issues which may arise.

What should individuals do if they have symptoms or are ill?

If an individual does feel ill with symptoms consistent with pandemic flu, while at work or at home, it is important that he or she does not simply carry on working and follows the guidelines below;

If individuals develop symptoms while at work, they should adhere to the following protocol:

- Report their symptoms immediately to their Line Manager or Supervisor
- The individual may be sent home
- Contact the National Pandemic Flu Line Service for advice and an initial assessment of symptoms in the first instance
- The Line Manager should immediately contact a Director and implement the Contingency Plan.

In both cases the individual in the first instance should contact The National Pandemic Flu Line, (0800 1513513), if you are unable to make contact you should then contact, National Health Service direct (0845 4647) and your General Practitioner, who will advise you what to do, this process will be in operation at the outset of the pandemic. You should not return to work unless advised to do so and must also keep your manager informed throughout this process.

Model for Risk Assessment

The following section provides details on the route of transmission/spread of the flu virus and the routes for reducing the potential for spread.

For the disease to spread within a community there must be a source of infection, a route by which the infection is transmitted, and individuals who are susceptible to the disease.

This is illustrated below, along with additional information.



<u>The Source – the symptomatic individual</u>

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It is generally accepted that individuals should be considered potentially infectious from the time symptoms appear to the time their symptoms have completely disappeared, in general terms, the more severe the symptoms, the more infectious a person is likely to be.

Transmission – via droplets over a distance of under 1 metre or direct/indirect contact

Flu is generally transmitted from person to person through close contact and over short distances – in the region of 1 metre. This pattern of transmission is known to be associated with spread by respiratory droplets from coughs and sneezes, by direct contact with an infected person, or indirectly from objects or surfaces which have become covered with virus-infected secretions. Flu viruses are easily removed or destroyed by soap and water, normal household detergents or hand-rubs, particularly alcohol-based).

The Recipient – the susceptible individual

In order to pass on the virus, individuals who are susceptible to the disease must be present, until an individual has acquired immunity, either through natural infection or through vaccination; they remain at risk of infection.

For a person to become infected with pandemic flu, each one of three elements must be present:

- An individual with symptoms consistent with flu
- Who transmits the virus by direct or indirect contact
- A susceptible individual.

Mitigating Actions

Interventions that block all or part of the transmission route of a virus from a person with symptoms consistent with flu to a susceptible person have the potential to stop the chain of infection.

These generally have one of the following objectives:

- Reduce transmission of infection from an individual(s) with symptoms consistent with flu to a susceptible person, and/or
- Reduce the risk of susceptible people becoming infected

The measures that projects may want to consider in an effort to reduce the spread of a flu virus within the work environment are as follows:

Environmental	Actions can be taken within the environment to reduce the spread of the flu virus
Organisational	Actions taken to modify behaviour and practice in the workplace to help reduce the spread of the flu virus
Individual Behaviour	Actions taken at the level of the individual to restrict the spread of the office flu virus

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Environmental

Organisations should prominently display signs, which encourage staff, individuals and visitors to follow good practice such as:

- "How to wash their hands"
- The signs and symptoms of flu
- The importance of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene at all times. Surfaces should be cleaned frequently with the usual cleaning materials

There should be access to effective hand hygiene facilities for all staff, individuals and visitors. Staff can be issued with personal hand sanitizers where appropriate.

Organisational

It is the organisations responsibility to raise awareness among staff of the signs and symptoms of flu and the organisational and project contingency plans, to promote an environment in which staff who become unwell feel that they are given the correct advice and support to deal with this and we will consider alternatives to direct meetings and visits (e.g. phone etc.).

Where contact with those who may have symptoms consistent with flu is unavoidable, reduce the risk of transmission of disease to staff and others by encouraging:

- The use of proper hand hygiene before entering premises or handling foods. When handling documents or money, staff should be encouraged to minimise contact with their mouth, eyes and nose until their hands have been cleaned
- The practice of high standards of respiratory etiquette, such as covering the mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing
- A reduction of face-to-face meetings wherever possible and encourage only essential travel
- Identification of individuals who may be at particular risk of the adverse effects of flu and deploy them in areas where contacts are minimal

Individual behaviour

- Staff should adopt good hand hygiene practices and minimise touching the mouth, eyes and/or nose
- Minimise any contact with any individual with symptoms consistent with flu symptoms
- Adhere to policies, procedures and contingency plan in relation to pandemic flu, infection control etc.
- Have full commitment to attending work and only being off if advised to do so by a health professional

Risk Assessment Matrix

There is no single approach or measure that can be taken to reduce the spread of flu. Prompt self-isolation together with proper respiratory etiquette and effective hand hygiene should be actively promoted, encouraged and applied. An approach where environmental, organisational and individual actions are combined and applied will help to reduce the spread of the flu virus within the workplace.

To provide a simple framework to help projects assess the practicality/practicability of possible mitigation measures, a matrix has been developed. This is illustrated below.

The matrix outlines ways of reducing the spread of the flu virus which combine the different levels of intervention and how they might be used to reduce individuals with symptoms consistent with flu spreading infection, as well as reducing the risk that susceptible individuals might become infected.

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	To reduce transmission from a symptomatic individual to healthy/susceptible people	To reduce the risk of healthy/susceptible people becoming infected
Environmental (action taken to alter the immediate environment)		
Organisational (measures taken to modify the organisation/pattern of project daily life)		
Individual (action taken at the level of the individual to modify behaviour)		

A scenario showing how the assessment matrix might be applied is given in **Appendix 1**.

You will need to consider the practicability of any measures within their respective workplace and arrive at solutions and emphasise various interventions depending on the nature of their service and interaction with the individuals we support.

Organisations Staffing Levels and Arrangements

In the event of staff being absent from work due to the pandemic flu, the organisation has set out the following targets, to ensure we continue to operate effectively, and our services continue to function, despite possibility of some services being reduced. Staff can work from home where they feel well enough and this has been agreed by their Line Manager;

- A loss of more than 3 office staff will cause direct client impact and agency worker should be brought in to answer phones. All clients will be advised of the disruption and requested that only urgent requests from service be made
- A loss of 4 or more staff will result in the office closing and staff working remotely where possible
- Planning – where practicable all planning can continue from remote locations | Attendance at Planning meetings will be restricted | Network Rail to be advised of the non-attendance

All staff absences in relation to pandemic flu should be reported to head office immediately and the above should be implemented. Please ensure you have completed the emergency contingency plans.

Staff Holidays

Annual leave already authorised will be honoured where possible, although where this will adversely affect service delivery you may be asked to cancel leave.

Employees who have pre-booked and pre-paid a holiday will be released although; national and international travel may be cancelled. Where your holiday is cancelled you/we may request you return to work and your entitlement will be reimbursed.

When requesting holidays, you may be asked if you are going away and if not would be willing to receive a telephone call whilst off, requesting you to return to work, in this instance your holiday entitlement will be reimbursed.

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Appendix 1

Guidance Notes

	To reduce transmission from a symptomatic individual to healthy/susceptible people	To reduce the risk of healthy/susceptible people becoming infected
Environmental (action taken to alter the immediate environment)	• Encourage those who are ill to take advice from the Swine Flu information line • Encourage the use of the postal system, telephone and internet to communicate and stay in contact • Ensure, wherever possible, that there are physical barriers between the individual and the member of staff	○ Provide signage reminding people of the signs and symptoms of flu and the steps that can be taken to minimise risk of infection ○ Easy access to hand hygiene facilities ○ Increase environmental cleaning – normal cleaning agents can be used to clean those surfaces frequently touched by hands ○ Provide waste bins for contaminated tissues
Organisational (measures taken to modify the organisation/pattern of project daily life)	• Educate staff on the signs and symptoms of flu to promote early recognition • Be aware of organisational procedures for dealing with individuals with symptoms consistent with flu • Home support should be made to infected people so that they are able to self-isolate and stay at home • This would have to be balanced against other considerations such as staff availability or risk	○ Educate staff on the signs and symptoms of flu to promote early recognition ○ Consider the feasibility of limiting, restricting or controlling the number visitors, contractors, agency visits to the project or the individuals we support in order to decrease social interactions and increase social distancing
Individual (action taken at the level of the individual to modify behaviour)	• Individuals with symptoms consistent with flu should be encouraged to employ good hand hygiene.	○ Encourage staff to clean their hands frequently and properly and not to touch their mouth, eyes and/or nose unless they have cleaned their hands. ○ If close contact with an individual with symptoms consistent with flu is unavoidable, minimise that contact ○ as far as practicable.

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Guidance on Hand Hygiene


Wet


Soap


Wash


Rinse


Dry

Stop germs spreading.

The power is in your hands.

Have you washed your germs away?

Wash your hands?

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Checklists

To reduce transmission from an individual with symptoms consistent with Influenza-like illness to healthy/susceptible people.

Environmental issues to consider	**Tick when complete** ☑
Use prominently displayed signs reminding people of the signs and symptoms of flu and measures to be adopted.	
Clean surfaces frequently with the usual cleaning materials.	
Where practicable, make effective use of physical barriers to help restrict close interaction and direct contact with potentially ill service users" or visitors.	
Consider improving access to hand hygiene facilities, e.g. making hand rubs available.	
Minimise the number of soft furnishings and other objects that could potentially become contaminated and are difficult to clean.	
Organisational issues to consider	
Raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of flu and the need for an individual with symptoms consistent with influenza-like-illness to self-isolate.	
Consider how best to manage people with symptoms consistent with flu in the workplace.	
Consider alternatives to direct meetings and visits (e.g. phone, email).	
Where visits from individuals with symptoms consistent with flu are unavoidable, encourage the proper use of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.	
Where practicable, direct contact should be avoided and, where possible, a distance of more than one metre should be kept between staff and individuals we support or visitors.	
Where social interactions are unavoidable, individuals with symptoms consistent with flu should minimise close interactions and direct contact.	
Individual issues to consider	
Encourage proper hand hygiene.	
Encourage proper respiratory hygiene.	
Minimise interactions with people.	

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To prevent the risk of healthy/susceptible people becoming infected.

Environmental issues to consider	**Tick when completed** ☑
Assess access to hand hygiene facilities.	
Clean surfaces frequently touched by hands.	
Organisational issues to consider	
Raise awareness of the importance of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.	
Consider the practicability of the effective use of social distancing within work environments.	
Reduce face-to-face meetings wherever possible and only undertake essential travel.	
Encourage the use of email or telephone communication.	
Consider the use of home working for those staff for whom this would be a practical option.	
Identify individuals who may be at particular risk of the adverse effects of flu and deploy to areas where contacts are minimal.	
Individual issues to consider	
Identify individuals who may be at particular risk of the adverse effects of flu and deploy to areas where contacts are minimal.	
Increase social distancing.	
Minimise contact with individuals with symptoms consistent with flu.	

Signed:

Dean Jump
Role: Managing Director

Date: October 2026