



Report FLU/10/008
Name of Incident: SWINE FLU
Date & time of update MONDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 09 as at 0900 HRS

National Overview

Since the last update there were a few weeks of increased reporting of Swine Flu cases however, as has been reported widely in the press in the last few weeks, there has been a reduction in the rates of flu-like illness and related activity. Recently the Health Protection Agency estimates there were 11,000 new cases in England last week, compared with 25,000 the week before. So far, 65 people have died in the UK.

The majority of cases continue to be mild, but the virus is proving severe in a small minority of cases. To date there is no sign that the virus is changing and is not becoming more severe or developing resistance to anti-virals. All of which is positive news.

Current advice from the Health Professionals however is that a further increase in cases is expected towards the end of September. Therefore planning and preparation continues.

Specific Information

National Pandemic Influenza Flu Service. (<https://www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk/>)

The National Pandemic Flu Service is an online service which has been operational for over a month and should normally be the first point of contact if you start experiencing flu like symptoms. The service will assess the symptoms you input and, if required, it will provide an authorisation number that can be used to collect antiviral medication from a local collection point.

For those who do not have internet access, the same service can be accessed on:

Telephone: 0800 151 3100.

You should however note that you should phone your GP if:

- you have a serious existing condition that weakens your immune system, such as cancer,
- you are pregnant,
- you have a sick child under one,
- your condition **suddenly** gets much worse, or
- your condition is still getting worse after seven days (five for a child).

Antiviral Collection Points (ACP's)

<https://www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk/CollectionPoints.aspx>

As part of the initiative of the National Pandemic Flu Service a number of ACP's have been set up across the country including West Berkshire. Details of where your nearest ACP is on the National Pandemic Influenza Flu Service website. Please note that these centres do sometimes change location and opening times due to demand, therefore prior to going to collect any antivirals, this site should be checked. In addition due to the location of West Berkshire and the limited number of ACP's it may be worth checking Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire for their ACP collection points as they may be more convenient for you and your flu friend.

Flu Friends. (http://www.berkshirewest-pct.nhs.uk/page_sa.asp?fldKey=129)

What are they? Flu Friends are relatives, neighbours and friends who will collect medicines, food and other supplies if you get swine flu so that you do not have to leave home. Preventing people with the virus from going outdoors will help restrict the potential spread of flu.

It is a good idea for each person to identify up to five 'Flu Friends' because an ill or unavailable 'Flu Friend' cannot help you, but having at least one is very important.

In addition, you could consider becoming a 'Flu Friend' to a neighbour who may live alone, family members that might need help, or offer yourself as a 'Flu Friend' through networks that may be set up by local organisations, such as churches or parish councils.

Swine flu vaccine

It has been announced that a vaccine may start to become available in the autumn. However it should be noted that it will NOT be available to all straight away. Instead priority will be given to at-risk groups (of which it is estimated this will account for 11 million people). These include pregnant women and people with serious underlying health conditions. Steps are being taken to extend the vaccination programme to other people once this stage has been completed.

The following groups will be prioritised in this order:

1. People aged over six months and under 65 years in seasonal flu vaccine at-risk groups
2. All pregnant women, subject to licensing conditions on trimesters
3. household contacts of people with reduced immune systems - e.g. people in regular close contact with patients on treatment for cancer
4. people aged 65 and over in the seasonal flu vaccine at-risk groups - this does not include otherwise healthy over 65s as they appear to have some natural immunity to the virus

Vaccination of frontline health and social care workers (around two million people) will begin at the same time as the first at-risk group. This will probably be in late September or October.

This group is at increased risk of infection and of transmitting that infection to susceptible patients. Protecting these people will help the NHS workforce to remain resilient and able to treat sick patients.

What the Council and other local responders are doing.

The Council Flu Group continues to meet to ensure all services are aware of the current situation and any emerging issues are addressed. In addition the Council continues with weekly teleconferences with the Berkshire West PCT, and Thames Valley Multi-Agency Flu Planning Group.

Some key points to note are:

- 41 members of staff have been off work to date as a result of being diagnosed with Swine Flu
- There is an intranet section on Swine Flu available for staff. This should be the first place to go to for Swine Flu Queries, particularly in relation to attendance at work.
- The Internet Pages are up to date. However due to the fast moving nature of the response to this emergency you should check the NHS Choices website for up to date health advice.

SCHOOLS

As this school holidays are coming to a close it should be noted that despite press stories in the early holiday period schools **will open** as planned in September.

HYGIENE MESSAGES.

Whilst the situation appears to have improved with respect to the number of cases it is worth reiterating that in order to maintain this situation we do still need to maintain good hygiene standards. Therefore the advice is still to;

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully in the bins provided or flushed (and not left lying on your desk)
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face or to other people
- Cleaning hard surfaces (such as door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product. This should include ensuring your desk/hotdesk area is kept clear and tidy.

Specific flu issues should continue to be addressed to flu@westberks.gov.uk

PLEASE NOTE HOWEVER IF YOU HAVE SPECIFIC HEALTH QUERIES PLEASE CONTACT NHS DIRECT OR CHECK THE WEBSITES. THE CIVIL CONTINGENCIES TEAM CAN GIVE GENERAL ADVICE BUT ARE NOT MEDICALLY QUALIFIED TO GIVE SPECIFIC ADVICE.

Useful weblinks

NHS Direct	http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/
NHS Choices	http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx
World Health Organisation	http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/index.html
Health Protection Agency	http://www.hpa.org.uk/
Teachers	http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/flu/pandemic/index.html
UK Resilience	http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/pandemicflu/whats_new.aspx
Foreign & Commonwealth Office re travel	http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/
HSE Workplace Guidance re Flu	http://www.hse.gov.uk/news/2009/swineflu.htm
Direct Gov re useful source of all issues relating to flu.	http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Swineflu/DG_177831
National Pandemic Flu Service	https://www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk/
Flu Friends	http://www.berkshirewest-pct.nhs.uk/page_sa.asp?fldKey=129