

Gateway Reference: 11837

7th May 2009

To: All Directors of Adult Social Services at Local Authorities in England
Social Care Reference Group

Dear Colleague

Swine Flu: Important information for commissioners and providers of social care services

This note outlines some important information for providers and commissioners of social care services. I would appreciate your support in cascading this information to your members, teams and colleagues.

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are responsible for flu planning and the health response. However, commissioners and providers of social care services also have a vital role to play. This note advises commissioners and providers on the steps they should be taking now.

The WHO has increased the alert level to Phase 5 of a possible 6 phases. This means that there are now larger outbreaks of human-to-human flu in at least two countries. We have now seen some cases of human-to-human transmission in the UK.

What you should do

Familiarise yourself with your local PCT's pandemic flu plans, and your own flu and emergency response plans. Confirm that all staff contact information, such as phone numbers and email addresses, are up to date.

It is vital that everyone practises good respiratory and hand hygiene. This is the best way to prevent the spread of the flu virus. You can read more about protecting yourself and others in the **Swine Flu Information Leaflet** (see links below)

Anti-virals

In this current containment phase, arrangements are being made for anti-viral drugs to be available to front line healthcare workers and social care workers. These will only be for those staff who come into close contact with individuals with swine flu – while they are symptomatic – for post exposure prophylaxis

(ie to be taken as a preventative measure in case of infection with swine flu but before symptoms are apparent).

Personal Protective Equipment

As a precaution, domiciliary and care home providers should increase their usual stocks of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as aprons and gloves.

Some fluid-resistant surgical facemasks have been procured by the Government. Future supplies have been secured and will be made available shortly for health and social care workers for use when working within three feet of an individual who has symptoms of a flu-like illness.

We are currently making arrangements to deliver an initial and limited number of facemasks for social care staff to local PCT delivery points. Local authorities will have responsibility to make arrangements for their further distribution to providers in all sectors of social care if they are providing care to symptomatic individuals.

We expect deliveries to commence next week. Staff should use other PPE as usual. Facemasks are only effective if used correctly. Module 4 of the *Social Care Tools and Implementation Pack, Infection Control for Social Care Workers* provides the information you will need to use facemasks effectively. Module 4 will be available shortly on the DH website at

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093380

The Department of Health's *Strategic and Operational Framework: Responding to a Pandemic in Adult Social Care*, and the nine modules of the social care tools and implementation pack to support planning by commissioners and providers of social care services, will all soon be available on the Department of Health's website

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093380

Stay up to date

It is important for us to make sure that you have up to date advice and information. This will include further information on the arrangements that PCTs are making to provide access to anti-viral drugs, should the virus become more widespread in the UK.

We will provide further briefing as more information becomes available.

Important additional sources of information:-

The Health Protection Agency
www.HPA.org.uk

Department of Health's Pandemic Flu pages
www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/PandemicFlu

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk

Swine Flu Information Leaflet
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_098685

Thank you very much for all of your support so far in relation to swine flu preparations. Once again, I would appreciate your support in cascading this information to your members, teams and colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Behan', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

David Behan