
PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLAN

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Stephen Harker,
Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment**

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet's for approval for a plan to enable the Council to respond to a Pandemic Influenza.

Background

2. The flu virus continually evolves and mutates. A Pandemic Influenza occurs when a completely new flu virus emerges, which can be spread easily from person to person and to which there is virtually no natural immunity.
3. Worldwide Pandemics have occurred in the last century in 1918/19, 1957/58 and 1968/69. The Department of Health is of the view that further Pandemics will occur and the next one could occur at any time. The recent spread of Bird Flu (Influenza strain A/H5N1) has heightened concern that a Pandemic Flu will occur, but in fact the source could be this or other flu viruses developing elsewhere.
4. The impact of a Pandemic Influenza on individuals will not necessarily be any worse than seasonal influenza, but the impact on the population as a whole will be much greater because there is virtually no natural immunity. The virus is therefore able to sweep across the population and typically does so in two or three waves, each lasting up to fifteen weeks. At any time during these waves a large proportion of the population will be sick and unable to work and mortality rates will be raised. It is difficult to accurately predict the number of people who will fall sick or die but if the Pandemic were similar in nature to the 1918/19 strain, there could be a 50% attack rate and over 1,200 additional deaths in Darlington.
5. As a consequence of these concerns the Community Risk Register for the Durham and Darlington area identifies Pandemic Influenza as the greatest risk the area faces.

Information and Analysis

6. Should a Pandemic Flu occur it will impact severely on the local community and the Council's ability to deliver key services.

7. The PCT is leading the development of plans to deal with the health impacts on the community and the Council is participating as a partner. The Council is also working with other key partners such as the Health Protection Agency.
8. In the event of a Pandemic the Council will be under enormous pressure to continue to deliver key services, to support the community and to support the health agencies. At the same time it will be operating with a 25% to 50% reduction in staffing. An operational plan has been developed by a working party with support from the Durham and Darlington Civil Contingencies Unit. The plan is designed to:
 - (a) Identify the critical services that the Council will seek to maintain during a Pandemic.
 - (b) Provide a methodical staged response to the six international and four UK alert levels (as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO)).
 - (c) Protect staff from exposure to the virus.
9. Further detail on the potential implications of a Pandemic Flu are attached as **Appendix 1**.
10. The review of services to identify and support those deemed critical is a key element of the planned response to a Pandemic Flu. All services have been examined and categorised (solely for the purposes of responding to a Pandemic Flu) to prioritise those that are most critical to the health, safety and well-being of Darlington's community.
11. The prioritised list is attached as **Appendix 2**. In the event of a Pandemic Flu severely reducing the numbers of staff available to work low priority services will be reduced or closed down as necessary to provide sufficient staffing to continue to effectively deliver the high priority services. (The services are categorised as one star, one, two and three, with one star being the most critical and three the least).
12. It is important to note that this categorisation of services does not reflect on their value to the community in normal circumstances, only to their necessity and value (with reference to health, safety and welfare) in a Pandemic Flu situation.
13. The operational action plan focuses on several areas discussed below:
 - (a) Business Impact Analysis

To identify critical services and the key requirements to maintain them. To document key procedures.
 - (b) Workforce Analysis and Human Resources

To identify transferable skills within the workforce (that would support critical services) and to develop and maintain a staff database.

To develop policies in working patterns (leave, home working).
 - (c) Disease Control

To develop personal hygiene protocols, the need for personal protective equipment, disease monitoring guidance for Department Managers, and options to restrict

movement within and between workplaces to provide social distancing.

(d) ICT

To review alternatives to centrally hosted e-mail and telephony suppliers.
To explore the technical aspects of flexible/remote working arrangements.

Outcome of Consultation

14. The operational plan has been produced through consultation with an officer working group and liaison with partner agencies. No public consultation has been carried out in the development of the plan but there has been extensive consultation with managers, departments and partner agencies.

Legal Implications

15. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

16. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is considered that the contents of this report have such effect in that the plan identifies services in priority order (including those impacting on crime and disorder) and resources will be directed to high priority services if necessary in a Pandemic situation.

Council Policy Framework

17. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

18. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendation

19. It is recommended that the approach to planning for a Pandemic Influenza be approved.

Reasons

20. The recommendation is supported as the plan will enable the Council to maintain key services and support other relevant agencies in the event of a Pandemic Influenza.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

Darlington Borough Council's Pandemic Flu Operational Plan

Appendix

- 1 Pandemic Influenza Plan – Background
- 2 Pandemic Influenza Plan - Prioritisation of Services

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BAH