



Business Continuity – Advice for Business and Organisations Preparing for Flu Pandemic

The information given in this document is to help Suffolk organisations prepare for business continuity in the event of a possible flu pandemic. It is general guidance aimed at businesses and organisations, therefore it is not exhaustive. You are advised to seek further information from the various government and health authority web sites, (see last page).

Managing Business Continuity

Having a prepared plan will help you to make key decisions ‘on the day’ that will enable you to keep at least your essential activities running. This information is intended to help you plan for Pandemic Flu in particular and you should have a more detailed Business Continuity Plan (BCP) to encompass all the key threats that face your organisation. Your Influenza Plan should consider the following:

Planning & Preparation

Plan early to get the process tried, tested and embedded. Organisations should consider:

- Making an assessment of essential services and essential staffing levels and allocate priorities.
- Training and exercising staff.
- Identifying essential staff or teams and cross skill staff so they can take on additional/different roles when needed.
- Having a contacts list of all staff/stakeholders
- Ensuring there are Occupational Health arrangements for staff for information on infection control procedures and for vaccination when available.
- Designating a pandemic influenza coordinator.
- Designating a pandemic planning committee.
- Preparing and storing non perishable goods so supplies to customers can continue.
- Outsourcing your production to a similar company which is not so badly affected. (may be a reciprocal arrangement)
- Reviewing business continuity plans each year.

BCPs should highlight:

- Key functions at risk because they are done by only one person who has the required skills or knowledge.
- Functions that can be closed down for the predicted duration.
- The minimum staff numbers required to run a particular process/task/service etc and still maintain normal health and safety standards at work.
- The resilience of key suppliers and contractors.

Compile or review the organisation’s Communications Plan ...

Consider:

- Preparing a staff briefing on
 - Hygiene (at home and at work) the official advice on how to avoid infection
 - How to report sickness (you may need to implement enhanced procedures in order to track absences and plan ahead efficiently).
 - What is expected of them during the crisis (you may consider changing the working times, implement working from home etc)
 - Give reassurance that you are doing all you can for them, the company, and the customers.
- Putting up advice notices in key areas such as washrooms and drink areas.
- Preparing a message (to reassure on your ability to manage in the present environment) for
 - Customers
 - Shareholders
 - Partners/suppliers



- Appointing a media spokesperson (preferably media trained) if it is likely that your organisation could come into the public eye.

Planning Assumption

To plan for such an event the following assumptions have been made.

- 5% of the workforce may be absent for 12 weeks because school closures oblige working parents to stay home and look after children.
- In addition there will be a significant number of absenteeism due to people looking after the sick, bereavement, the “worried well” and staff who are disinclined to travel.
- 25% of those remaining at work become ill at some time during the 12 weeks of the pandemic wave.
- The workplace attack wave follows a pattern similar to that expected in the general population.
- Each infected person is likely to be absent for 7-10 days.
- 2.5% of workers who become ill will die.

Be aware that medical counter-measures like antivirals will neither cure the flu nor prevent it, so absenteeism will not be reduced. (Antivirals merely reduce the effects).

Be aware that government may take measures which actually increase absenteeism in order to control the spread, e.g. school closure.

Structure...

Know when to invoke your plan, (what are the triggers) and who has the authority. Ensure roles and responsibilities are established and understood.

A method of quickly capturing and collating the daily absenteeism will ensure management have the relevant information to plan the company activities.

Infection Control

Consider what steps need to be taken in your work environment to keep all staff/visitors healthy. Make sure cleaning staff have been briefed about additional hygiene controls.

- Infected people should stay at home for the duration of their illness.
- People developing symptoms whilst away from home should return home as quickly as possible.
- Infected people should use disposable tissues to cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing to minimise the spread of droplets.
- People caring for others who have influenza should wash their hands regularly, preferably using a liquid soap, for about 25 seconds after close contact with an infected person and particularly before touching food.
- Hard surfaces (e.g. worktops, door handles etc) should be regularly cleaned with a normal cleaning product.

Soap breaks down virus coating and renders the virus ineffective. Cleaning of environmental surfaces with a neutral detergent followed by a disinfectant solution is recommended. Surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned often, preferably daily. Access to cleaning products should be made available to all staff, not just cleaning staff to ensure that the workplace environment is kept as hygienic as possible.

Consider moving magazines / papers from common areas (such as the canteen, reception). Cups, dishes, and cutlery should be thoroughly washed with soap and hot water after use.

When a person with suspected influenza is identified and has left the workplace, it is important that their work area / office, along with any other known places they have been, are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Increase Social Distancing

Staff should be encouraged to minimising their contact with others. Crowded places and large gatherings of people should be avoided, whether in internal or external spaces.

Suggestions on how to minimise contact include:

- Avoid meeting people face to face – use the telephone, video conferencing and email to conduct business as much as possible – even when participants are in the same building;
- Avoid any unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone non-essential meetings / gatherings / workshops / training sessions;
- Encourage flexible working and home working in all practical circumstances;
- Issue advice to travel only if essential, or stagger journeys to work if using public transport
- Bring lunch and eat at your desk or away from others (avoid the cafeteria and crowded restaurants). Introduce staggered lunchtimes so numbers of people in the lunch room are reduced;
- Do not congregate in tea rooms or other areas where people socialise. Do what needs to be done and then leave the area;

Recovery Phase

Factor the following in to your plans for recovery and return to normal services.

- Your workforce will take time to recover from the affects of the illness so you may not be back to full productivity just because you have a full workforce.
- Some people may contract long term health complications arising from their flu infection.
- Be prepared that someone in your workforce may have experienced bereavement and you may need to offer additional support such as counselling or time off.
- Your customer base, suppliers and distributors may take time to recover
- Make sure you thank staff for showing flexibility and hard work during the crisis.

Be aware that:

- Pandemic comes in two phases, a review of BC effectiveness should be made in the gap between phases.



Things worth knowing about...

World Health organisation – Levels of Alertness

WHO Level 4 (human-to-human localised outbreak in another country).

WHO Level 5 (human-to-human general outbreak in another country).

WHO Level 6 (increased and sustained outbreak in another country).

Within Level 6...

UK Alert Level 1...still only outside UK.

UK Alert Level 2...isolated outbreak in the UK.

UK Alert Level 3...outbreak in the UK.

UK Alert Level 4...widespread outbreak across the UK.

Unlike the 'ordinary' flu that occurs every winter in the UK, pandemic flu can occur at any time of the year. Once a flu pandemic starts everyone will be at risk of catching it. Certain groups may be at greater risk than others. Until the virus starts circulating we will not know for sure who the risk groups will be. The virus will last approximately 12 weeks and will peak in the middle two weeks. History shows that previous pandemics have come in waves, several months apart.

Antivirals and Vaccination

There is no vaccine available to **protect** against pandemic flu and a vaccine cannot be produced until the new strain has been identified. The use of antivirals will be for treatment and not prevention, to lessen the effect and duration of the illness. The principle treatment in the first wave will be the antiviral medicine Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) that has been stockpiled by the Department of Health.

Death Rate

Suffolk 2007 estimates: With death rates up to 2.5% of those contracting influenza (353,000 cases) there may be as many as 9,000 excess deaths in Suffolk during an influenza pandemic.

Additional data used in compiling this information was obtained from:

http://www.suffolkresilience.com/docs/pdf/pandemic_flu_plan.pdf

http://www.ukresilience.info/latest/human_pandemic.aspx

<http://www.ukresilience.info/upload/assets/www.ukresilience.info/060516flubcpchecklist.pdf>

General Business Continuity Information can be obtained from <http://www.suffolkresilience.com> and follow the link to business continuity. Enquiries can also be directed to **The Business Continuity Team:**

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The information given in this Business Continuity Guidance is provided as general information about planning for business disruption. It is not intended to replace detailed guidance and planning specific to you and your business. You should consider whether you need to obtain this. To the extent permitted by law, neither Suffolk County Council nor its partner organisations assumes any responsibility for information in this document and disclaim all liability in respect thereof.