

# Health Protection Agency

## Pandemic Influenza Contingency Plan

Planning Checklist:  
Communications Division



# HPA actions during an Influenza Pandemic by WHO Phase and UK Alert Level

## Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist

This edited version of the HPA Pandemic Influenza Contingency Plan has been produced to be used as a performance management tool by the Communications Division.

It includes only those actions which are the responsibility of the Communications Division.

Similar documents are being produced for the other Divisions and Centres across the Agency with responsibilities during the WHO Pandemic Phases and UK Alert Levels.

You should use this document as a tool to ensure you are able to respond at each of the WHO Phases and UK Alert Levels.

The full plan, including background information and details of the WHO Phases and UK Alert Levels, is available on the HPA website at:

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics\\_az/influenza/pandemic/fluplan.htm](http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/influenza/pandemic/fluplan.htm)

## Roles and responsibilities of the Communications Division

The Communications Division will provide information and appropriate spokespersons for the media; in liaison with the Department of Health, assist in drafting information for informing the general public; update the HPA website; liaise with DH and the NHS to ensure that regular, clear, consistent and timely messages are given to both the media and the general public. This will be done at a national, regional and local level.

## How to use this as a Performance Management Tool

Complete the third column under each phase with red, amber or green to indicate your level of preparedness:

Red = Action not started

Amber = Action in progress or partially completed

Green = Action completed

Review your pandemic preparedness regularly as planning progresses.

Please contact your local Health Emergency Planning Adviser if you have any queries about implementing the Plan, or the HPA Pandemic Influenza Office ([pandemic.flu@hpa.org.uk](mailto:pandemic.flu@hpa.org.uk)) with scientific queries.

# 1. Actions\* during the WHO Phases 1 & 2

WHO PHASES 1 & 2: INTERPANDEMIC PERIOD
<p><b>Definition</b></p> <p><b>Phase 1</b> No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection or disease is considered to be low.</p> <p><b>Phase 2</b> No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.</p>

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Develop internal key message documents, Q&As, draft statements, press release templates in liaison with HPA experts for potential scenarios. These to be shared with Department of Health when finalised	Communications Team	
Provide input to Department of Health Communications material as required	Communications Team	
Develop a communications strategy and media handling plan in liaison with Department of Health including handling protocol	Cfl Press Office and CEPR	
Identify national spokespeople	Cfl Press Office	
Develop and agree regional communications strategy and media handling plan in liaison with RDPH, GNN, SHAs and Regional Resilience Team	Regional Communications Managers	
Identify Regional spokespeople (both HPA and RPHG)	Regional Communications Managers	

# 3<sup>1</sup>. Actions during the WHO Phase 3: Pandemic Alert Period

WHO PHASE 3: PANDEMIC ALERT PERIOD
<p><b>Definition</b></p> <p>Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no new human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact</p>

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Ensure that national and regional spokespeople are well briefed and media trained	Communications Team	
Ensure that local HPUs are kept up to date with key messages and Q&As	Communications Team	
Prepare a business continuity plan which specifies duties for press team members	Communications Team	
Devise a rota system to provide resilience	Regional Communications	

\* The actions listed in each phase assume that the actions in the previous phase have been implemented. Where a phase or phases are passed over eg a move from Phase 4 direct to Phase 6, the actions in the intermediary phases should also be implemented.

<sup>1</sup> The section numbering moves directly to 3 in order to match WHO Phases

in the regions	Managers	
Develop strong working relationships with, DAs and local partners/networks through RMEF, RPHG and GNN. Assist stakeholders and partners in resilience planning and exercising	Regional Communications Managers	
Liaise with IKM to establish website resilience	Cfl Press Office/IKM	

## 4. Actions during the WHO Phase 4: Pandemic Alert Period

### WHO PHASE 4: PANDEMIC ALERT PERIOD

#### **Definition**

Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localised, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Activate Communications Plan	Communications Team	
Ensure that all national and regional HPA spokespeople are well briefed	Communications Team	
Set up hotline facility with Department of Health	Cfl Press Office	
Keep key messages and Q&As updated	Cfl Press Office	

## 5. Actions during the WHO Phase 5: Pandemic Alert Period

### WHO PHASE 5: PANDEMIC ALERT PERIOD

#### **Definition**

Large cluster(s) but human-to-human spread still localised, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk)

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Media handling of requests for information/experts for interview	Communications Team	
Provide advice on release of data	Communications Team	
Ensure spokespeople and HPU Directors are up to date on latest information and statistics	Regional Communications Managers	
Determine timing of announcements with regional partners, RDPH, RPHG	Regional Communications Managers	
Share daily updates in teleconference with regional partners and stakeholders	Regional Communications Managers	
Ensure national spokespeople are up to date on latest information and stats	Cfl Press Office	
Share daily updates in teleconference with Regional Communications Managers	Cfl Press Office	
Determine timing of announcements with Department of Health and International partners	Cfl Press Office	
Discuss and agree with Department of Health whether any new/amended public	Cfl Press Office	

information material is required and provide expert information from Cfl as required		
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## 6.1<sup>2</sup>. Actions during the WHO Phase 6: Pandemic Period, UK Alert Level 1

### PHASE 6: PANDEMIC PERIOD, UK ALERT LEVEL 1

**Definition**

Pandemic phase: increased and sustained transmission in the general population

**Alert Level 1**

Virus/cases only outside the UK

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Horizon scan to prepare for new news angles	Communications Team	
Review regional media coverage daily and respond/rebut as necessary (in liaison with GNN and RDPH)	Regional Communications Managers	
Media handling of regional requests for information/ experts	Regional Communications Managers	
Share daily updates in teleconference with regional partners and stakeholders	Regional Communications Managers	
Ensure national and regional spokespeople and HPUs are up to date on latest information and stats	Cfl Press Office & Regional Communications Managers	
Media handling of national requests for information/ experts	Cfl Press Office	
Take part in daily national CMO briefings and provide experts spokespeople as required	Cfl Press Office	
Review national media coverage daily and respond/rebut as necessary (in liaison with Department of Health)	Cfl Press Office	
Share daily updates in teleconference with Regional Communications Managers	Cfl Press Office	

## 6.2 Actions during the WHO Phase 6: Pandemic Period, UK Alert Level 2

### PHASE 6: PANDEMIC PERIOD, UK ALERT LEVEL 2

**Definition**

Pandemic phase: increased and sustained transmission in the general population

Alert Level 2

Virus isolated in the UK

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Horizon scan to prepare for new news angles	Communications Team	
Media handling of requests for regional	Regional Communications	

<sup>2</sup> In WHO Phase 6, the second digit of the section numbering denotes the UK Alert Level

spokespeople	Managers	
Review regional media coverage daily and respond/rebut as necessary (in liaison with GNN and RDPH)	Regional Communications Managers	
Share daily updates in teleconference with regional partners and stakeholders	Regional Communications Managers	
Ensure national and regional spokespeople and HPUs are up to date on latest information and stats	Cfl Press Office / Regional Communications Managers	
Media handling of national requests for information/ experts	Cfl Press Office	
Take part in daily national CMO briefings and provide experts spokespeople as required	Cfl Press Office	
Review national media coverage daily and respond/rebut as necessary (in liaison with Department of Health)	Cfl Press Office	
Share daily updates in teleconference with Regional Communications Managers	Cfl Press Office	

### 6.3. Actions during the WHO Phase 6: Pandemic Period, UK Alert Levels 3 & 4

#### PHASE 6: PANDEMIC PERIOD, UK ALERT LEVEL 3 and 4

##### **Definition**

Pandemic phase: increased and sustained transmission in the general population

##### **Alert Level 3**

Outbreak(s) in the UK

##### **Alert Level 4**

Widespread pandemic activity in the UK

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Horizon scan to prepare for new news angles	Communications Team	
Media handling of requests for regional spokespeople	Regional Communications Managers	
Review regional media coverage daily and respond/rebut as necessary (in liaison with GNN and RDPH)	Regional Communications Managers	
Share daily updates in teleconference with regional partners and stakeholders	Regional Communications Managers	
Ensure national and regional spokespeople and HPUs are up to date on latest information and stats	Cfl Press Office & Regional Communications Managers	
Media handling of national requests for information/experts	Cfl Press Office	
Take part in daily national CMO briefings and provide experts spokespeople as required	Cfl Press Office	
Review national media coverage daily and respond/rebut as necessary (in liaison with Department of Health)	Cfl Press Office	
Share daily updates in teleconference with	Cfl Press Office	

Regional Communications Managers		
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## 6.4 Actions during the WHO Phase 6: End of the First Pandemic Wave

### PHASE 6: END OF FIRST PANDEMIC WAVE

#### **Definition**

End of first pandemic wave; return to inter-pandemic period

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Review media coverage	Communications Team	
Evaluate and refine regional Communications strategy	Regional Communications Managers	
Review activities and outcomes with partners and stakeholders in the regions	Regional Communications Managers	
Evaluate and refine national Communications strategy	Cfl Press Office	
Work with Department of Health to devise and refine any new messages required	Cfl Press Office	
Prepare any new public information/guidance based on latest information available from experts at Cfl	Cfl Press Office	

## 6.5 Actions during the WHO Phase 6: Second or Subsequent Waves

### PHASE 6: SECOND OR SUBSEQUENT WAVES

#### **Definition**

Based on past experience, a second wave of outbreaks caused by the new virus may be expected to occur in many countries

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Evaluate media coverage and Communications strategies	Communications Team	
Identify lessons learned and share with stakeholders and partner organisations	Communications Team	
Make any required adjustments to Communications strategies in light of experience and evaluation	Communications Team	

## 7. Actions during the Post-Pandemic Period

### POST-PANDEMIC PERIOD

#### **Definition**

WHO will announce when the pandemic period is over. In the UK the pandemic will be deemed to have ceased when the epidemiological indices have returned to background levels

#### **Key planning assumptions**

- This or a similar virus is likely to remain in circulation
- It may take months or even several years for some national services to recover

Action	Implementer	Red/Amber/Green
Evaluate the impact of the pandemic in terms of public reception of risk, infection control and public health issues	Communications Team	
Stocktake with GNN, RDPH and partners and stakeholders on lessons identified, any revisions to regional Communications strategy and agree way forward	Regional Communications Managers	
Stocktake with Department of Health on lessons identified, any revisions to Communications strategies and agree way forward	Cfl Press Office	