

**CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF
DINAS A SIR CAERDYDD**

Employment Conditions Committee: 15 January 2007

Report of the Chief Executive

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA – HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

Background

1. Current advice from the World Health Organisation is that countries, including the United Kingdom, should be planning for a possible influenza pandemic although its timing is highly unpredictable. The Cabinet Office is also encouraging business continuity planning in preparation for a possible influenza pandemic.
2. Cardiff Council has established an internal Pandemic Planning Group. It is chaired and co-ordinated by the Emergency Management Unit and it is currently planning and developing the Council's response to such an event. This initial report highlights the progress made to date and identifies some key issues that will need to be considered in the future in the event of an influenza pandemic.
3. If an influenza pandemic occurs, the Council will need to maintain essential services and play a role in managing the pandemic.
4. The assumption is being made that during the pandemic, at least 25% of employees will be absent through sickness directly attributable to the pandemic or as a result of having to look after sick persons at home. In addition, there will be employees who will be off work because of illness or injury not related to the pandemic. There will also be employees with parental responsibilities wishing to take time off work to look after children whose school has been closed or who wish to keep their children at home to reduce the risk of infection.
5. At the present time there is little detailed advice for businesses on managing a possible pandemic but if the risk increases and should one occur, HM Government will issue further public health information and guidance.

Issues

6. A number of human resource issues have already been identified by the internal Pandemic Planning Group which will need to be addressed by the Council. Further issues will be identified as work progresses on planning the Council's response to pandemic influenza.
7. Essential services will have to be maintained, eg refuse collection, and there will be possible additional duties for local authority employees, e.g. provision of temporary mortuaries, distribution of vaccines and provision of temporary hospital accommodation. Employees will be needed to provide these services and, based on

assumption that at least 25% of employees will be absent, it will be necessary to transfer fit employees from non-essential services to undertake these duties. Service Areas need to identify essential and non-essential services. Employees in non-essential areas will need to be identified and trained, where appropriate, to assist in essential areas. Due regard will have to be had in some service provision to employees having been CRB checked.

8. In the event of pandemic influenza occurring, the transferring of appropriate employees to assist in the delivery of essential services will have to be co-ordinated and managed.
9. In the event of a pandemic, fit employees whose normal workplaces are closed will have to be accommodated elsewhere if possible.
10. Prior to a pandemic, employees who can work from home to deliver services or who have caring responsibilities, should be identified. Provision should be made to enable them to work at home in the event of a pandemic.
11. Consideration needs to be given to the action the Council will take if employees are absent without leave ie are not sick and have not booked flexi, special or annual leave. Consideration should be given to whether the normal disciplinary procedures should be followed.
12. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether subject to certain criteria, the Special Leave Policy could be amended to include certain situations eg caring responsibilities, in excess of existing Special Leave criteria.
13. Communication with employees will be a key issue if pandemic influenza is imminent and in the event of an outbreak. HM Government will be issuing advice which will be readily available through the media and internet but the Council will need to advise employees on the organisational arrangements within the Local Authority. Advice given to employees must be consistent across the Council.
14. The Health Promotion Agency is currently advising that employees dealing directly with the public should be issued with surgical masks
15. Health and safety risk assessments and arrangements will need to be undertaken or reviewed in respect of delivering essential services taking into account the pandemic and reduced staffing levels.
16. The Trade Unions will need to be consulted and involved in organisational arrangements for ensuring essential business continuity in the event of pandemic influenza and they were briefed at the Health and Safety Advisory Forum on 11 September 2006.
17. If an appropriate flu vaccination is developed it is possible that local authorities, together with other essential service providers eg NHS, will be allocated supplies for key employees. The Council will need to have a mechanism in place for collection and administration of the vaccination. The in-house Occupational Health Service, if fit, would be able to administer the vaccinations.
18. The full impact of pandemic influenza is an unknown commodity. It is possible that there could be fuel shortages through lack of supplies from “panic buying” or distribution problems. The Council needs to have identified essential fuel users prior to any outbreaks to ensure, so far as is practicable, delivery of essential services.

19. In addition to developing a response to the threat of pandemic influenza, the Council will need to consider business recovery once the event has occurred.

Proposals

20. It is proposed that:
- Service Areas should identify essential services which will need to continue in the event of pandemic influenza.
 - The Emergency Management Unit and Service Areas should identify additional services which the Council will have to provide in the event of pandemic influenza.
 - The minimum number of employees required to provide the essential and additional services needs to be calculated
 - Service Areas need to identify the skills needed and the checks/training required by employees who will provide the essential and additional services
 - Once delivery needs have been assessed, further consideration needs to be given to organisational arrangements required to ensure delivery of essential and additional services.
 - Service Areas need to plan how to accommodate employees whose normal workplaces are closed in the event of pandemic influenza.
 - Service Areas need to identify employees who could effectively work at home in the event of pandemic influenza.
 - Service Areas need to identify employees who as a result of caring responsibilities may be unable to attend work.
 - A future meeting of Employment Conditions Committee decides on whether the Special Leave Policy should be amended in the event of pandemic influenza.
 - Communications, Emergency Management and Human Resources need to jointly develop an Employee Communication Plan to be implemented if the likelihood of a pandemic increases or the pandemic materialises.
 - Emergency Management Unit, Human Resources and Financial Services should, investigate the purchase of appropriate respiratory masks. Service Areas will need to provide information on the number of employees who will be directly dealing with the public in order to calculate the number of masks required.
 - Trade Unions should be kept fully briefed and consulted in the development of organisational arrangements in the preparation for pandemic influenza through the Health and Safety Advisory Forum, Works Council, Health and Safety Committees, Service Area Joint Consultative Committees and other mechanisms, as appropriate.
 - Service Areas identify employees who will need fuel for private vehicles in order to deliver essential and additional services.
 - The Council should identify financial resources to address the issues raised in this initial report on the implications of pandemic influenza.

Investment for Reform/Benefit to service user

21. Early consideration of planning for such as outbreak will ensure that the council is able to deliver and maintain essential services. Under such extreme circumstances, a number of existing services will need to be suspended, delayed or delivered in a different way. Effective communication with employees and service users will be critical.

Council Policies Supported

22. This report supports the Council's Emergency Plan.

Advice

23. This report has been prepared in consultation with relevant Corporate Directors and reflects their advice. It contains all the information necessary to allow Members to arrive at a reasonable view, taking into account the following advice.

Legal Implications

24. Local Authorities

Under the Wales Framework for Managing Major Infectious Disease Emergencies published by WAG, Local Authorities will need to:

- Have arrangements in consultation with partner agencies, to respond to major infectious disease emergencies.
- Participate in Outbreak Control Teams (OCT)
- Through the OCT, agree provision of personnel to assist with contact tracing, working in collaboration with the NPHS-W
- Help with investigation of the outbreak
- Be a source of timely legal advice in relation to the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, as appropriate
- Whenever possible, provide premises with staff to support the public health management of the outbreak e.g. vaccination centres

25. Provide social services support

- Support provision of public information/advice
- Establish temporary mortuary if needed
- Address issues relating to increased pressure on registration/burial/cremation services
- Provide environmental health services
- Provide other assistance as agreed with other agencies
- Have arrangements to manage increased staff absenteeism and maintain essential services.

Financial Implications

26. The report identifies a range of issues that may arise in the event of a possible influenza pandemic. Whilst It is not possible to calculate the financial implications at this stage it is clear there may be significant implications in respect of staffing arrangements and the need for cover and these would have to be managed by service areas from within their existing resources wherever possible. The Council has no specific budget for such an eventuality and therefore should an outbreak occur and costs arise then these will have to be met from within the Council's overall budget. In cases of emergency or disaster the WAG may also establish a Bellwin Scheme which might also provide an additional source of funding to the Council although this will depend upon the circumstances and will be at the discretion of the Assembly Government.

Human Resource Implications

27. An outbreak of pandemic flu will provide a significant challenge for the organisation. The deployment of available employees to deliver essential services will require careful planning and managing. Key employment policy decisions, as required, will need to be considered by this Committee in future.

Trade Union Comments

28. The Trade Unions welcomed the early contingency planning in relation to an influenza epidemic. They acknowledged the key role the Council would be required to play in these circumstances. They requested to be kept informed of developments and consulted upon any proposals being considered which would impact on Council employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

29. It is recommended that:-
- (i) this Committee note the work that has been undertaken to date in reviewing the implications of an influenza pandemic.
 - (ii) an update be submitted to a future meeting of this committee on further developments and proposals.
 - (iii) any amendments required to the Council's Special Leave Policy be submitted here for consideration.

BYRON DAVIES
CHIEF EXECUTIVE