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To:

- Local Authority Chief Executives
- NHS Board Chief Executives
- Health & Social Care Partnership Chief Officers
- Resilience Partnerships
- Exercise Silver Swan participants (H&SC, Co-ordination & Follow-Up events)
- Local Authority & NHS Resilience Officers
- NHS Pandemic Flu Co-ordinators

6 November 2017

PANDEMIC FLU: NATIONAL EXERCISE ACTIONS UPDATE AND READINESS PLANNING GOING FORWARD

Dear Sir/Madam

Many of you were involved in the pandemic flu exercise, Silver Swan, which took place in 2015 and in the follow-up event in December 2016. Since then further work has been completed and this letter provides you with information on developments around pandemic flu planning and intentions for further action at national level.

We urge stakeholders to continue to work together to ensure plans are robust in addressing the requirements of a serious flu pandemic, which remains the top risk in the national risk assessment.

This letter contains details of the following:

- conclusions of the short life group announced at the Silver Swan Follow-Up Event in relation to priorities for national guidance – along with planned actions (Annex A)
- key lessons from the UK-wide Tier 1 pandemic flu exercise, Cygnus, which took place in October 2016 (included alongside summary lessons from Silver Swan in Annex B – the full report from Exercise Cygnus was issued to pandemic flu planners in July)

- new pandemic flu work being undertaken in collaboration between the 4 UK nations, drawing on the lessons from recent exercises (Annex C)

Perhaps the two main themes from recent exercises have related to developing:

- pandemic planning & response as a multi-agency function
- plans to deal with a serious escalation of demand for services

The new Scottish Resilience Partnership, which brings together senior leaders from across Scotland to address strategic resilience priorities, discussed pandemic flu recently. At this meeting, the Deputy First Minister emphasised the need for multi-agency partners and government to work together to develop plans to optimise pandemic capacity and to develop a common understanding of local and national roles in decision-making where normal capacity is exceeded.

Within the Scottish Government, we are undertaking pandemic flu planning as a cross-government function and we know that the Resilience Partnerships in Scotland and others have developed or are in the process of developing multi-agency pandemic plans. Together we must continue to develop such approaches.

We would particularly like to highlight the development and/or updating of key pandemic guidance over the coming months which many of you will have an opportunity to feed in to, including guidance for:

- Resilience Partnerships
- Health & Social Care

Much of the content highlighted in the attached annexes will feed in to this guidance. Some of this work will necessarily continue beyond the first iterations of the guidance and so the documents may be updated on an ongoing basis as required.

We look forward to your continuing support in developing our common preparedness for what might be the most serious resilience challenges we are likely to face.

Kind regards



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Priorities Identified By Pandemic Flu Short Life Working Group

The Deputy Chief Medical Officer chaired a SLWG which examined priorities for updating pandemic flu guidance following recent exercises. Members were drawn from various stakeholder groups and Scottish Government. The following were agreed as priority actions:

Governance/Management of Response			
	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
1	Develop 'clear pandemic framework', noting reporting and potential command & control arrangements	SG to clarify in updated guidance, pandemic planning & response structures and reporting arrangements	By March 2018
Guidance			
2	Develop Scottish version of the <i>Health & Social Care Influenza Pandemic Preparedness & Response</i> document	SG to draft guidance for consultation	By March 2018
Local Planning			
3	Clarify expectations around multi-agency planning and response	SG to include comment in any new guidance	By March 2018
4	Comment on role of HSCPs in planning & response	SG to continue to facilitate local discussions, where requested, around such roles	By March 2018
Responding to Increases in Demand for Services			
5	Clarify mechanisms for service prioritisation during a pandemic	UK/SG pandemic work to consider how service prioritisation detail and/or mechanism can be developed	Initial views by March 2018 in guidance – may require further development thereafter
6	Clarify measures which may be implemented to enable flexible pandemic response by local agencies	UK-wide pandemic work examining legislative, regulatory & other measures which may enable flexible response	Initial outputs likely by Spring 2018, though likely to require further work beyond that point
Antiviral Distribution			
7	Developing community pharmacies as a primary (though not exclusive) option for NHS Boards	A SG Working Group is examining feasibility and developing a plan for implementation by 2019.	New approach noted in guidance by March 18. Implementation in 2019
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)			
8	Awareness raising of requirements e.g. in	HPS and Scottish Health Protection Network: Health Protection Preparedness Group have lead role	Ongoing

	relation to PPE required & fit-testing		
9	Clarify access arrangements to national stockpiles	SG to clarify in updated guidance	By March 2018
Other Health Protection/Public Health Issues			
10	Other HP/Public Health Issues	Scottish Health Protection Network: Health Protection Preparedness Group has role in considering/addressing other relevant issues	Ongoing

** Note that excess deaths issues are being/have been addressed separately*

Annex B

Recent Pandemic Exercise Recommendations and Lessons

Over the past two years, there have been 2 major pandemic flu exercises in Scotland:

- Exercise Silver Swan (2015): Scotland-wide exercise involving local stakeholders and Scottish Government
- Exercise Cygnus (2016): UK-wide Tier 1 exercise (in Scotland involving Scottish Government only)

Key Recommendations/Lessons

Exercise Silver Swan recommended that local agencies (resilience partnership partners, and sometimes in collaboration with national agencies) should:

- Review plans to deal with a serious escalation of demand for services as set out in pandemic planning assumptions, including business continuity arrangements
- Produce a multi-agency pandemic plan, including a review of sharing and integration of local pandemic plans between health & social care agencies
- Clarify local response structures (in particular in relation to role of Resilience Partnerships & H&SC partnerships); and relationships with national government during a response
- Review plans to optimise use of staff resources, including staff redeployment within and across agencies
- Personal Protective Equipment: ensure appropriate plans for fit-testing, distribution and prioritisation of key staff are in place

Exercise Cygnus noted lessons in areas including:

- Pandemic Influenza Planning should be considered a multi-agency responsibility.
- Further work is required to consider surge arrangements for a reasonable worst case scenario pandemic.
- All organisations should examine the issues surrounding staff absence during a pandemic to provide greater clarity for planning purposes
- Procedures for coordination of messaging to the public should be re-enforced and practised
- The possibility of expanding social care real-estate and staffing capacity in the event of a worst case scenario pandemic should be examined.

- Stakeholders should work together to review the capabilities for managing excess deaths during an influenza pandemic

4 Nations Pandemic Flu Workstreams

In summer 2017, the UK Government established a new Pandemic Flu Readiness Board, in which the Scottish Government and other devolved administrations are involved. This has established workstreams to address some of the key lessons.

To underpin the UK-wide workstreams, the Scottish Government has established equivalent governance structures and workstreams, to take forward Scotland focussed action where required.

The focus of these workstreams are as follows:

- Health:
 - further develop plans for managing pandemic surge demand
- Adult Social Care:
 - develop better understanding of capacity and likely pandemic demand
 - consider novel proposals to augment capacity, noting links to hospital and community based health care
- Excess Deaths:
 - further develop understanding of capacity
 - develop plans to augment capacity during a serious pandemic
- Sector Resilience:
 - review pandemic preparations of critical sectors
- Cross-Cutting measures: including:
 - *public communications*: further develop communication plans and strategies, which both prepare and inform the public during a pandemic about response measures and actions they can take – and which include a more sophisticated understanding of likely public expectations and reactions
 - legislative measures: develop preparations to enact possible legislative/ regulatory measures to support a pandemic response