

Pandemic swine flu and the homeless sector

General principles

Minimising the spread of infection by good hygiene practices

- Ensure a **good supply of tissues** is available and always catch any sneezes in a tissue
- **Dispose of dirty tissues** immediately and carefully in a bin
- Maintain good basic hygiene, in particular **wash hands frequently with soap and water**. A good supply of paper towels and soap will need to be provided.
- **Clean hard surfaces frequently** such as door handles, tables, desks, counters with normal cleaning product

Minimising the spread of infection by managing swine flu cases appropriately

- **People with symptoms should ring the National Pandemic Flu Service** on 0800 1 513 100 or log on to www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk. Clients without telephones or internet access will need to be enabled with this process. High risk groups should contact the GP direct.
- After going through the questionnaire, the advice may be to obtain Tamiflu or other medication. The procedure for obtaining the medication will be explained by the Flu Service operator. **Collection of medication by a 'flu friend' will be necessary** and organisations will need to make staff or volunteers available for this task. The 'flu friend' will need to show ID for themselves and for the patient and to give the unique reference number.
- **People with flu symptoms should not attend GP or other medical facilities in person** because of the risk of infecting people with other illnesses who are at greater risk
- **If a person with flu symptoms becomes suddenly more than usually unwell**, for instance with breathing difficulties or drowsiness, or is giving other cause for concern, **contact the GP by telephone and request advice**. In the eventuality of sudden severe problems, hospital management may be necessary. In an emergency, an ambulance may be called using 999.
- If an employee or volunteer has swine flu symptoms, they should remain at home and seek help as above. They should not return to work until well.
- Communities or day centres may need to ask community members to stay away while they have flu symptoms. **The local voluntary sector may wish to work in partnership with other providers in order to designate specific services for those with symptoms and others for those without symptoms**, in order to be able to offer a service to **all vulnerable clients**.

Minimising the impact of swine flu by good business continuity planning

- Absenteeism due to flu in staff members or their family will occur. Normal care arrangements may break down, and school closures may impact on staff with children.
- Staff and volunteers will need to be briefed on the flexibility that they may be requested to show during the pandemic period eg working from different workplaces or to carry out different tasks (subject to appropriate risk assessment and support)
- Plans should be in place for provision of essential services such as catering and cleaning in the event of illness in key staff.
- Stocks of essential supplies such as soap, tissues, paper towels, cleaning materials etc should be maintained.

Further information

For a very complete set of FAQs go to:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/QA.aspx#>

www.nhs.uk

Point of access for health information and advice for the public
Website of National Pandemic Flu Service

www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk

www.dh.gov.uk

Point of access for information for health and care professionals

www.direct.gov.uk

Government website for cross-government swine flu messages

www.businesslink.gov.uk

Point of access for business-related information