

# Is Your Business Prepared For A Flu Pandemic?

## THE SCENARIO

It has been reported on television that a new strain of pandemic flu has reached the UK.

The Health Service is preparing for a high rate of infection but a vaccine is not yet available.

The local media are reporting high levels of sickness throughout your area.

## WEEK ONE

### SITUATION NOW

You have just been informed by your HR/admin person that staff absenteeism is noticeably higher than normal.

Several members of your team are coughing and wheezing and complaining of feeling ill...

### DISCUSS and RECORD

- Does your current Business Continuity Plan cover this issue?
- What staff issues are there?
- What are the implications for your day-to-day business? What preparations do you need to begin thinking about?
- Can any of the staff work from home? What would need to change to make this happen?
- Who will you communicate with? What information do you need?
- Any other issues?

## WEEK 2

### SITUATION NOW

Staff absence is now approximately 20% higher than is normal for this time of the year.

A key supplier calls to tell you that they will not be operating for the foreseeable future because of the pandemic.

The Department of Education has decided to close all schools in the area due to staff shortages and to limit the spread of the pandemic.

The NHS say they can only deal with emergency cases and advise people to stay at home even if unwell unless their situation is life threatening.

50% of your staff who are carers have phoned in to say that they will not be attending work this week as they will be staying at home to look after their children or dependants.

### DISCUSS and RECORD

- What are your priorities?
- How do you react to:
  - Increasing staff sickness
  - Key supplier failure
  - Absence of staff caring for children or other dependants
- Do any members of the team have unique skills or knowledge? What are the implications of this? How can you reduce this risk?
- How will you deal with the increased work load on your remaining staff?
- Who will you communicate with?
- Anything else?

## WEEK 3

### SITUATION NOW

Following further staff absences, the number of staff in work has dropped to only 20%.

You have just been informed that a member of your staff has died in hospital.

A local news reporter has asked for your response to their death and the effects of the pandemic upon your business.

### DISCUSS and RECORD

- How will you manage your resources, and your workload, with only 20% of staff attending work?
- What are the implications for the team of a death of a colleague?
- How will the media enquiry be dealt with?
- Anything else?

## WEEK 4

### SITUATION NOW

You have managed to locate additional staff through an agency and alternative suppliers.

One of your key customers says it is unable to deal with your delivery of products/services and says it needs to cancel its contract with you.

The press are criticising some companies for their inability to maintain services to vulnerable groups made even more vulnerable by the pandemic.

### DISCUSS and RECORD

- Which areas of work are your priority for these extra staff?
- Who can offer them training in your work systems?
- How will you cope with a major customer being unable to take your products or services and their inability to pay you?
- Do you work with any vulnerable groups or customers? If yes, what are the implications of this group? How can you minimise the impact on this group? What plans, if any, are currently in place?
- Do you work for any customers or organisations that might themselves be suffering similar problems? Can you help them? Can they help you?

## WEEK 8

### SITUATION NOW

It has been announced by the Department of Health that the pandemic has begun to ease.

Your staff level is at 50% and rising each day as staff begin to return to work.

Suppliers and customers are beginning to contact you to begin trading again.

### DISCUSS and RECORD

- Do you have arrangements to help staff back into work after any illness or absence to care for others?
- Are there improvements you can make to your work systems to future proof them in case a second wave of illness occurs?
- What assistance would you like from the public authorities (NHS, health care providers, local council, any others?)

## CONCLUSION: REVIEW & EVALUATE

- What went well?
- What did not go so well?
- How effective was your information gathering and decision making?
- How well were you able to cope with staff shortages? Was it easy to think of ways to get additional staff and would they be readily available?
- How could you manage financially if customers and suppliers were unable to trade with you? What if payments were delayed, how would your daily/weekly/monthly cash flow be affected?
- Are there any questions this scenario has raised that you will now look into?
- What lessons have been learned? How can this knowledge be used to improve your Business Continuity Plans?