



**Date June 12 2009**

World Health Organisation Phase 6, UK, Pandemic Flu Period.

### A Joint Statement from the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum\*

We were notified yesterday that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared the Influenza A (H1N1) virus has now moved from Phase 5 to Phase 6 which is defined as pandemic stage.

A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a disease, with outbreaks or epidemics occurring in many countries and in most regions of the world.

This decision reflects the geographic spread of the virus and not its severity. The move to Phase 6 does not trigger any material change to our response in the UK. Actions taken in the UK are based on the situation here and our preparations are well advanced.

Chair of the Local Resilience Forum Working Group, Assistant Chief Constable, Brian Langston, said: "The Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (LRF) has been liaising and working hard during the last few weeks to prepare for a potential pandemic. This is in addition to a substantial amount of preparation work that has been carried out throughout the past four years. As we have reached pandemic stage the LRF group will now sit as a Strategic Coordination Group and we are prepared to turn any plans into actions should the need arise. It should however be stressed that the impact has been considerably less than we had anticipated. Therefore the escalation to Phase 6 gives us no cause for concern."

Dr. Jonathan McWilliam, Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire, explained: “A pandemic is not related to the severity of the influenza, but to its spread. The World Health Organisation is responding largely to developments in Australia. We do expect to see an increase in the number of cases in the Thames Valley but not immediately and we are confident everything is in place to ensure we are able to deal with the situation.”

\*The LRF consists of key partners across the Thames Valley including all Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) Thames Valley Police, the Thames Valley Health Protection Unit, local authorities including Oxfordshire County Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, Milton Keynes Council and all Berkshire unitary authorities.

As a result of the WHO announcement, activity on many levels between partner organisations will now be increased to ensure they meet the demands of the pandemic phase.

This has meant:

- Ensuring sufficient stock of anti viral medicines
- Ensuring sufficient stock and distribution of swabbing equipment
- Ensuring sufficient stock of personal and protective equipment for NHS staff (ie masks)

The current situation across the Thames Valley area is that, yesterday (Thursday 11 June) there were 47 confirmed cases of influenza A (H1NI). All are recovering well.

The virus first emerged in Mexico in April and has now spread to 74 countries with a reported 28,774 cases and 141 deaths.

### **General guidance**

Reduce the risk of catching or spreading flu

CATCH IT - Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Always cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.

**BIN IT** - Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.

**KILL IT** - Hands transfer germs to everything you touch. Dispose of dirty tissues promptly and carefully. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of germs. Clean hard surfaces (e.g. door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.

We are continuing to advise the following routes for patients and the public to access information regarding Swine Flu.

1st: Visit the NHS Choices [website](#) for information and frequently asked questions about Swine Flu. There is also an online flu symptom checker on both NHS Choices [website](#) and the NHS Direct [website](#).

2nd: Ring the national Swine Flu information line (0800 1 513 513). This provides pre-recorded information about Swine Flu.

3rd: Call the NHS Direct telephone service (0845 4647). Callers with flu-like symptoms, who have internet access, will be asked to try the online flu symptom checker first, if necessary, they will be able to request a call back from an advisor. Otherwise callers are asked to hold to speak to someone who can help.

4th: If you have taken these steps and are still concerned, call your GP.

