

Pandemic Business Continuity Plan

March 2020

1. Plan summary

Pandemics of influenza or other communicable diseases have the potential to severely affect our organisation, our colleagues and our family members. In the event of a pandemic being declared, additional planning over and above that made for other incidents is required.

This plan provides a methodology for SDS to plan for, respond to, and recover from a pandemic.

2. Plan purpose and objectives

The purpose and objectives of this plan is to:

- Raise colleagues' awareness of the threat of a pandemic and test their preparedness;
- Improve preventive measures for high-risk work sites and vulnerable colleagues;
- Improve existing hygiene measures
- Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for monitoring and reporting illness and absence related to the pandemic; and
- Allow for production of action plans that are specific to each of SDS's locations, if required.

3. Strategic context

In the event of a pandemic there is potential for a larger proportion of people to contract the virus or disease than would under normal circumstances. While each pandemic will differ in terms of type of virus and its severity, it is not unreasonable to anticipate a third or more of our workforce may become unwell and require time away from work. We could expect this to increase to over half of the workforce, taking account of those who are absent to care for unwell family members or for other reasons relating to the pandemic. This will be in addition to those who are already absent due to non-pandemic related issues. There may therefore be a greater impact on SDS and its operations and a need for different planning in these circumstances.

In all cases, SDS will follow Health Protection Scotland and other UK or Scottish Government guidance.

This plan is intended to help colleagues deal with potential impact of a pandemic.

4. Definitions

Pandemic: A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease.

Influenza Pandemic: An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges and spreads around the world, and most people do not have immunity.

Communicable Disease: An infectious disease that can be transmitted from person to person by direct contact with an affected individual or the individual's discharges (e.g. coughs and sneezes).

5. Scope

This plan is applicable to all colleagues and contractors who have a duty to familiarise themselves with this policy. To protect the safety of their colleagues, clients and visitors to SDS sites it is imperative that all colleagues understand what to do in the event of a pandemic.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Director of Human Resources:

- Primary lead for SDS's Pandemic Response Team, who will manage response to pandemic outbreaks.

Colleagues

- Colleagues are expected to actively contribute and participate in achieving our objectives and creating a safe environment for colleagues, clients and visitors to SDS sites or other partner sites where they work from

Colleagues also have specific responsibilities to:

- Cooperate with management and follow instructions, safe systems and procedures, including reporting illness or absence.
- Keep themselves informed and up-to-date on latest pandemic situation
- Follow official guidance e.g. NHS, Health Protection Scotland, Scottish Government etc;
- Follow Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice;

Pandemic Response Team (membership to include Human Resources, Health & Safety, Communications, Property & Facilities and Business Continuity):

- Responsible for developing awareness materials;
- Responsible for providing information and updates to all colleagues;
- Responsible for briefing Senior National Incident Management Team;
- Responsible for maintaining their own knowledge and awareness of global developments in influenza strains and other communicable diseases (including guidance on current and new strategies for containment and vaccines); and
- Responsible for ensuring that key external suppliers are all involved in planning for a pandemic.
- Handling media enquiries

People Managers

- Responsible for reinforcing the key information and instruction related to the pandemic that has been communicated to their team members

- Responsible for reviewing team compliance with any instructions or procedures to be followed during a pandemic
- Responsible for immediately informing hrcaseadvice@sds.co.uk of details of any team members who are absent or self-isolating due to confirmed or potential infection, and then updating Agresso.

Business Continuity Team:

- Responsible for escalation and coordination of incidents
- Responsible for coordinating the national response to the incident and liaising with the Senior National Incident Management Team (SNIMT) and Incident Management Site Owner.

Senior Director of Service Development & Delivery:

- Primary lead for Senior National Incident Management Team (SNIMT), who will instruct response to the incident.

Senior National Incident Management Team (SNIMT)

- Responsible for overall management of the incident (see Guide to Business Continuity Roles and Responsibilities for further information on SNIMT membership)

Incident Management Site Owners (IMSO)

- Responsible for assisting SNIMT with site-level actions

7. Plan detail

7.1 Introduction

A pandemic has the potential to impact greatly on colleague sickness absence rates and on other organisations who provide essential services upon which SDS relies.

This plan provides a system for SDS to plan for, respond to, and recover from a pandemic.

7.2 Planning for a Pandemic

SDS will define all those goods, services and functions that are essential to its operations and continuity and:

- Provide advice to all colleagues on actions that must be taken as a pandemic develops;
- Review arrangements in place to support flexible working (work from home) in the event of a pandemic;
- Plan which functions or services can be carried out by personnel other than those who are normally given the task/responsibility;
- Train additional staff to perform essential duties to avoid single points of failure;
- Ensure that all maintenance plans are up to date to ensure that, even in the event of a pandemic, all equipment and services essential to SDS's operation is capable of sustained operation;
- Identify any requirement for stockpiling essential supplies, materials and equipment;

- Identify requirement for additional/availability of existing employee support such as Employee Assistance Programme, grief counselling etc;
- Determine which services or functions can be carried out by other departments/sites (devolution planning);
- Organise timelines which demonstrate how long it will be possible for SDS to carry out its essential operations without critical personnel, supplies and/or equipment;
- Encourage employees to routinely take appropriate measures to limit the spread of germs, including uptake of annual influenza vaccinations where eligible; and
- Make sure that there are enough supplies of infection control materials (such as alcohol-based wipes, disinfectants and hand sanitisers) in readiness for a pandemic.

7.3 Responding to a Pandemic

Upon confirmation that a pandemic has been declared by the World Health Organisation or that a SDS site is affected, the Gold Level Incident Management process will be invoked, and appropriate measures taken including:

7.3.1 Transmission Interventions: Infection Control

During the pandemic, SDS will attempt to reduce the overall and specific risks to colleagues. In order to achieve this goal, the following infection control actions may be taken:

- i. Basic health protection advice will be issued to all colleagues.
- ii. Any colleague deemed to have been at risk of exposure or who displays the symptoms associated with the pandemic, will be required to stay at home until recovered (taking account of medical advice to confirm when they are no longer contagious).
- iii. The onset of pandemic disease symptoms may happen over a very short period, and colleagues may quickly develop symptoms at work. Any colleague who develops symptoms at work will be accommodated into a separate room, where available, while arrangements are made for them to make their way home safely (advice as indicated via NHS24 (by calling 111) must be sought in respect of procedures and precautions for accessing the room, onward travel etc). Any colleague who later enters or leaves this room must take the precautions as advised by NHS24.
- iv. SDS may temporarily re-assign colleagues, who have advised HR they are at a higher risk of developing medical complications (such as pregnant workers, those with underlying health issues and/or those with compromised immune systems).

7.3.2 Contact Interventions - Working practices and social distancing

In accordance with Government advice, colleagues may be advised to:

- Avoid face-to-face meetings and to use teleconferencing, the internet and video conferencing instead, where possible;

- Meet only in a large room where a minimum distance of one metre between participants can be maintained;
- Avoid congregating at break times, including work-provided kitchens and break rooms;
- Avoid crowded places and heavily populated gatherings (such as concerts and/or sporting events); and
- Avoid travelling at busy, peak periods on public transport. If appropriate, use of flexi time should be considered and discussed with people managers.

7.3.3 Work from Anywhere

It may be necessary for SDS to close offices and utilise technology to work from home or other locations. Partner sites may also close their buildings, and colleagues normally based in those locations should agree with their people manager a suitable alternative location. All colleagues will be instructed to take their laptops and relevant accessories home with them each day. SDS will endeavour to provide, subject to stock availability, appropriate antibacterial wipes that colleagues can clean their equipment with before and after use in the office.

7.3.4 Communications

SDS will issue updates where appropriate that may include:

- Information to colleagues on the symptoms of the disease and how it can be transmitted;
- Information to colleagues on personal protection and response strategies (e.g. protective equipment, sneezing and coughing etiquette and hand washing procedure);
- Details of how to contain the disease using social distancing and home working
- Details of what colleagues should do if they are not well; and
- Updates on the implementation of this plan and the spread of the disease.

7.3.5 Business and Personal Travel

If a pandemic is declared by WHO:

- i. colleagues will not be required to visit affected areas outside of Scotland unless travel is considered business critical. In this instance, the procedures for approving such travel will be significantly tightened and Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on the safety of travelling to countries outside the UK will be assessed before travel is approved. Colleagues must seek approval for travel from Senior Directors, Director of Finance and Governance or the Chief Executive.
- ii. any non-essential, pre-arranged business travel outwith Scotland during a pandemic will be cancelled.
- iii. colleagues who visit affected areas outside of the UK for non-business reasons may, depending on Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice at the time, be required to stay away from work for a period of time and work from home. The duration of quarantine will be as directed by NHS or other Government authority.

7.4 Absence management during a pandemic

Colleagues who are unwell due to a confirmed or suspected case of the pandemic must stay away from work and should report their absence as set out in the Absence Management Policy. Additionally, People Managers must then inform HR case advice on hrcaseadvice@sds.co.uk.

Should colleagues feel able to work, they should utilise technology to work from home where appropriate. This should be agreed with the People Manager, with advice from HR Case Advisers via hrcaseadvice@sds.co.uk where necessary.

Colleagues who become unwell at work with symptoms linked to the pandemic must gain advice as indicated via NHS24 order to return home safely etc and inform their People Manager. The People Manager must then inform HR case advice as required.

Any absence resulting from contracting a pandemic disease will not result in absence management triggers being met for this period of absence.

In some instances, advice from NHS or other government authorities will be that some individuals who have been exposed (or potentially exposed) to the disease but not yet showing any symptoms, should self-isolate. During this quarantine period colleagues are not permitted to come to their place of work. Colleagues should utilise technology to work from home where appropriate. If employees are not able to work from home the People Manager should discuss this with HR case advice for further advice.

Should colleagues be unable to attend work for other reasons related to the pandemic, e.g. due to childcare issues because schools are closed, or caring for dependants who are unwell, this will be managed under the Dependants Leave Policy. For the duration of a pandemic, the amount of paid dependants leave will be increased for requirements related to the pandemic and will be proportionate to the circumstances. HR case advice will be available as a consistent source of advice and guidance in relation to this.

7.5 Recovering from a pandemic

Recovery interventions in the case of a pandemic must consider the likely possibility of follow-on waves. This may place SDS in a critical response phase for up to 12 months and all recovery actions will need to be balanced against actions to prepare SDS for the next wave of the pandemic (e.g. hitting a different geographic area).

SDS's Pandemic Response Team will assess all physical, economic and social impacts of the pandemic and any recovery actions will be adjusted accordingly.

SDS will continue to liaise with external stakeholders during the recovery phase (such as Scottish Government and suppliers) and regular updates on recovery interventions and preparations for another wave of the pandemic will be communicated.

Colleagues will continue to gain assistance to access government and employer provided support services. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available to all colleagues to access free, confidential, impartial advice and support.

7.6 Testing and Reviewing this Contingency Plan

This plan and the processes that are described herein will be reviewed regularly by management in order to ensure that SDS is fully prepared to respond to and recover from a severe pandemic.

During a pandemic, the Pandemic Response Team will implement actions as appropriate according to the World Health Organisation pandemic phase and other trigger points used by government and other official agencies.

The Pandemic Response Team will continually monitor and assess actions as they are implemented to ensure that the plan is being followed correctly and that the plan is on target.

During the pandemic, this plan will be adjusted as necessary to ensure that SDS's response is flexible, efficient and effective. The plan will be reviewed every 90 days during the early stages of a pandemic, and more frequently thereafter.

8. Further guidance

Further guidance on actions to take during a Pandemic is available on Connect.