

Standard operating procedure

Procedure: 2025 Seasonal influenza (Flu) – response to suspected or confirmed outbreaks in care homes and community institutional settings

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Introduction

This procedure describes a response which is delivered by a number of organisations. Providers will have their own, details, procedures.

Procedure overview

This operational procedure describes the response to a UKHSA request to assess and intervene in the event of a suspected or confirmed outbreak of seasonal influenza in a care home. This responsibility was given to CCGs in 2017 and transfers to the ICB.

The purpose of this operational procedure is to provide all the information required to ensure that vulnerable contacts, including staff¹, of seasonal influenza are clinically assessed and prescribed antiviral prophylaxis in accordance with guidance and the correct legal prescribing method.

Other (reference documentation)

[Services for the provision of antiviral drugs for the treatment and post-exposure prophylaxis of influenza-like illness \(ILI\) in at-risk patients including care home residents](#)

[UKHSA Antiviral Guidance](#)

¹ [Guidance on the use of antiviral agents](#)

Requirements

1. An agreed communication cascade initiated by UKHSA
2. Access to a doctor who is able to clinically assess and prescribe
3. Ability to use the correct prescription method depending on eligibility of affected individuals.
4. Ability to collect swabs, package specimens, and transport to the laboratory
5. Access to a supply of medication within 48 hours of symptom onset.

Complexities

- The process differs out of hours.
- The supplier of antiviral medication differs depending on location and number of doses needed.
- The need for swabbing differs depending on what is already known about the cause of symptoms.

Procedure

1. UKHSA receive a report of an outbreak of either confirmed or suspected influenza in a care home or community setting.
2. A clinician is contacted to make an assessment of the affected individuals
3. Swabbing for outbreak purposes is arranged by UKHSA
4. A prescription is made for anti-viral medication
5. Supply and collection of medication is arranged
6. Feedback is provided to the UKHSA and local stakeholders.

Procedure Notes

1. UKHSA receive information direct from affected settings or from a hospital which has admitted someone from an affected setting.

2. In hours

UKHSA will confirm an outbreak and firstly attempt 'In Hours' to contact the nearest and then next nearest GP Practice of the closest association to the community setting including residential setting for those with additional educational needs.

Health for Homeless provides a service for homeless individuals who are not registered with their own GP.

If no GP is found the search will be passed to NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB Primary Care Team to continue contacting practices.

Practices are able to claim for this activity against Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Provision of Prophylactic Measures in Residential and Nursing Care Settings

Out of hours

UKHSA will contact the Cornwall 111 Out of Hours (shift manager - 01872 224042)

UKHSA will provide:

- care home or setting details and contact
- the number of residents
- the number of affected individuals
- any known lab results
- any other additional information

The out of hours service will be asked to send a clinician to visit and assess people.

The out of hours service will triage this request in context of current caseload and resource and reach out for mutual aid, if required, to CFT hospital at home or SWASFT. Discussion with system leaders may be requested to support prioritisation.

3. Most outbreaks will not require swabbing where there has already been a confirmed index case, however if the infection responsible for symptoms is not known UKHSA provides swabs and advises on specific packaging and transport for the samples to go to the Bristol public health lab for full respiratory virus panel testing. (UKHSA meets this cost).

All care homes are able to conduct swabbing onsite and should swab the five people with the most recent onset of symptoms or as guided by UKHSA.

Other settings may need support to take swabs and this would need to be arranged on an individual basis.

Where point of care tests are used to confirm or exclude Influenza, swabs will still need to be sent to the laboratory regardless of point of care result.

4. The limitation of a 'Flu season' declaration has now been removed for the prescribing of antiviral medicine. Other eligibility criteria still apply although everyone over 65 is eligible and an FP10 can be used all year round.²

PSDs are still available for rare scenarios (usually individuals under 65) where cases/contacts are ineligible.

² Eligibility criteria can be found in the [Drug Tariff](#) (part XVIII B), please note prescriptions must be endorsed 'SLS' to confirm the product has been prescribed in accordance with the Selected List Scheme criteria.

The word version (for filling out electronically) and the pdf (for printing and completing by hand whilst in the care home) can be found on the [joint formulary](#), along with the claim form for such supplies, emergency ordering fees and delivery fees.

[UKHSA Antiviral Guidance should be used.](#)

5. Cornwall 111 IUCS hold a supply of medication for use out of hours. In hours Community pharmacy³ should be the first choice for the supply of medication (wholesaler emergency ordering is paid for by NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB – submit claim by email to CIOSICB.prescribing@nhs.net). 10 pharmacies in the county are commissioned to keep a defined quantity of stock all year round.

If the community pharmacy has insufficient stock and cannot obtain a supply via their usual mechanism within 48 hours, an emergency order may be placed.

Exceptionally, the on-call director may request and authorise a pharmacy to place this chargeable emergency order with a pharmaceutical wholesaler or to deliver medicines (to another pharmacy or patient/care home). Reasonable approved out of pocket expenses thus incurred by the pharmacy may be reclaimed.

As a last resort a hospital pharmacy can dispense against a PSD making use of the UKHSA stock they hold. The charge for this will be processed by the NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB Medicines Optimisation Team after the event has occurred.

The order to replenish this stock must be made with immediate effect to secure availability for high consequence infectious disease management at short notice.

PSD will be sent (initially by email to ensure prompt supply, followed by the original by hand or by post) to the relevant pharmacy (if no prior contact has been made to determine stock availability a phone call to alert the pharmacy to the incoming email will ensure prompt response) and a copy of the PSD should be retained in the care home.

6. The clinician will provide contact information to the institution should there be any queries to be addressed regarding the clinical assessments they have made. This clinician should also have a process for ensuring that patients' GPs are aware of any antivirals which have been authorised in this way.

For governance purposes, a summary (by risk group and patient/carer status) of the number of individuals who have been assessed and the number supplied with antiviral treatment or prophylaxis should be provided to the UKHSA and the ICB IPC team. These data are used to monitor the situation to completion and should not include personal identifiable data.

³ [Pharmacies providing the enhanced service for the availability of specialist medicines](#)

Contacts

1. Cornwall 111 Out of Hours (shift manager - 01872 224042)
2. NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB Primary care team: 01726 627711 or CIOSICB.primarycare@nhs.net
3. NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB Medicines Optimisation Team
CIOSICB.prescribing@nhs.net
4. NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB IPC team Ciosicb.ipc@nhs.net
5. UKHSA: 0300 303 8162. swhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk
6. RCHT Hospital pharmacy:
Telephone - contact should be made with the on-call pharmacist by contacting the Switchboard on 01872 250000.
Email the PSD to rch-tr.GeneralPharmacy@nhs.net followed by the original in the post to Hospital Pharmacy, RCHT, Treliske, Truro, TR1 3LJ.
7. ~~University Hospital Plymouth (Derriford) Hospital pharmacy.
Telephone – contact the Derriford switchboard on 01752 202082 and ask for the pharmacy team (in hours) and out of hours ask for the East locality on call pharmacist. Provide the PSD to plh-tr.PharmDispatchOffice@nhs.net AND plh-tr.pharmacydispensary@nhs.net followed by the original in the post to Pharmacy Department, Level 5, Derriford Hospital, Plymouth, PL6 8DH. *Inactive until separate MOU set up with UHP- Devon ICB progressing.*~~
8. Cornwall Health for Homeless 8 City Road, Truro,
TR1 2JJ Call: 01872 221 240
9. [NHS England — South West » South West Community Pharmacy Information](#)