

Briefing From DH Media Centre

Swine Flu – 25 June (6pm)

The Department of Health held a press briefing today, with Secretary of State Andy Burnham and Chief Medical Officer Liam Donaldson. We announced that we are giving certain hotspot areas increased flexibility to deal with the outbreak. These areas are moving from 'containment' phase to an 'outbreak management' phase.

We also announced that we have signed contracts with GSK and Baxter to secure enough vaccine for the whole population. This takes us another step closer to what is the single most effective way of limiting the impact of this pandemic, and we expect significant supplies - more than 60 million doses - to arrive before the winter flu season.

Secretary of State for Health, Andy Burnham said:

“While containment has worked very well in its early stages, we’ve been clear all along that it was highly likely that we would be unable to prevent the spread of swine flu indefinitely.

“Following the meeting of ministers, the Department of Health wrote to all SHA pandemic flu directors to clarify the approach in those areas where we do need to move beyond containment to outbreak management.

“A containment strategy remains in place, although we are allowing more flexibility in areas where more community transmission has taken place. We don’t want to be prescriptive. We want local authorities, local health authorities, to look carefully at the evidence in their area and consult with local GPs and other health experts before deciding on the right approach.

What is outbreak management?

- in agreed areas cases of swine flu may be determined by clinical diagnosis as opposed to laboratory testing and swabbing;
- swabbing will therefore be conducted only on a small sample of cases to support the Health Protection Agency’s surveillance work. The number of samples required will be confirmed by the HPA shortly;
- anti-viral treatment will continue to be offered to all symptomatic cases;
- contact tracing of symptomatic patients and the prophylactic use of anti-virals will cease;
- This will only affect a small number of areas, large parts of the country are still very much in the containment phase and we are working hard to slow the spread of the disease locally.

Information for the public

If you have flu like symptoms and are concerned, stay at home, if you can go online check your symptoms on the symptom checker on www.nhs.uk or call the swine flu information line on 0800 1 513 513. If you have taken these steps and are still concerned call your GP or NHS Direct.

Current situation**Update on swine flu as at 3pm on Thursday 25th June 2009**

- 288 further patients under investigation in England have today been confirmed through laboratory testing with swine flu.
- Together with the 53 laboratory confirmed cases in Scotland reported yesterday (June 24 2009) by the Scottish Government, one laboratory confirmed case in Northern Ireland announced yesterday by the Northern Ireland Executive, and one laboratory confirmed case in Wales announced earlier today by the National Public Health Service for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government, this brings the total number of laboratory confirmed UK cases identified since April 2009 to 3,597.