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# The Breastfeeding Network

## Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) Policy

Issue Date: July 2009

Review Date: October 2009

[Replaces Influenza A/H1N1 Policy June 2009]

To find your nearest Breastfeeding Supporter call the **Supporterline 0300 100 0210**

*Calls provided by BT will be charged at 5 pence per minute. A call set-up fee of 3 pence per call applies to calls from BT residential lines. Mobile and other providers' charges may vary.*

## **BREASTFEEDING NETWORK**

### **INFLUENZA A/H1N1 (INFLUENZA A/H1N1 (SWINE FLU)) POLICY**

#### **1. Introduction**

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Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) is here in the UK. Transmission of this new virus is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu and the infection can be effectively treated with antiviral medication. The Department of Health has stated that the combined incubation and infection period is believed to be around 7 to 10 days.

The World Health Organization has declared Phase 6 of its pandemic alert system, which means that influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) is now spreading in communities in several countries. (DH 11 June 2009). 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 the response in the UK. Since 02 July 2009, the UK has moved to a treatment phase to manage the current flu pandemic and is no longer attempting to limit the spread of infection and establishment of community transmission.

The localised cases of influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) found in the UK have so far experienced mild symptoms and make a rapid and full recovery, and the spread has been limited. However, a small minority have been more severe.

The available information indicates that a flu pandemic could escalate quickly, last for many months and affect large proportions of the workforce. In addition to those who are unwell, there will be other knock-on effects, for example if institutions such as schools close, then parents may need to take time off to care for their children. Past pandemics have spread globally in two and sometimes three waves over a period of months.

#### **2. BfN Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) Policy**

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- 2.1 This policy aims to set out specific issues in relation to the Breastfeeding Network's volunteers and employees and the services we provide. It

considers appropriate actions in response to individual volunteers or employees becoming infected, local outbreaks or a wider pandemic. As the situation develops we will remain responsive to national and international guidance and review this policy regularly so specific advice may change.

### **3. Protecting yourself and others from Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu)**

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- 3.1 The best advice is to be hygienic: CATCH IT. BIN IT. KILL IT. Cover your nose and mouth with tissues when you cough and sneeze, throw the tissue away, and wash your hands.
- 3.2 Clean your hands frequently. Soap and hot water is sufficient, but sanitiser gels/alco-rubs can also be effective if soap and water not available. Minimise touching your mouth, eyes or nose.
- 3.3 Use normal household detergent to clean surfaces frequently touched by hands.
- 3.4 Wash your hands as soon as you get home.

### **4. If you have been in contact with someone with suspected or confirmed Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu)**

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- 4.1 If you have been in contact with someone with a suspected or confirmed case of influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu), then you should avoid doing any face-to-face BfN activities for 10 days after the contact.

### **5. If you are caring for someone with suspected or confirmed Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu)**

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- 5.1 If you are caring for someone with a suspected or confirmed case of influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu), then you should avoid doing any BfN activities for 10 days after the person you are caring for is better.

### **6. If you are not feeling well**

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- 6.1 As with any illness, do not undertake any face-to-face BfN activities if you are feeling unwell. 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](http://www.nhs.uk) or call the Flu information line on 0800 1 513 513. If you have taken these steps and are still concerned call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or your GP (though, where possible, you should contact your GP as a last option)

- 6.2 Do NOT go into your GP surgery, or to a hospital, as you may spread the disease to others
- 6.3 Call your Supervisor or admin on 0844 412 0995, as soon as possible, as you would do normally if you were unable to come to a Breastfeeding Centre, or other commitment. Notify them of your absence and the expected date of return (if known).
- 6.4 Do not do any BfN work until you are fully recovered.

## **7. If you need medication**

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- 7.1 NHS Direct or your GP will advise you on what action you should take and how to get medication if they say it is required.

## **8. Keeping in Touch**

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- 8.1 During this flu outbreak we are developing a variety of ways of keeping in touch with each other so we are kept up-to-date with changing events. The website will be crucial in giving rapid updates but we need to develop other rapid and reliable ways of passing on information. For local communication make a list of key Health Professionals to notify in event of a Centre Closing.

### *Communication ideas*

- A notice will be posted on the BfN website
- A similar notice will be posted to the following email groups  
Admin, Tutor & supervisors list, Supporter & Helpers list, Lacthelpers and local email lists
- Text message to key staff with brief information and prompt to check website / contact tutor
- Local radio to announce closures of Breastfeeding Centres

(contact your PCT communications unit for help on this)

- Supervisors to ensure those with no internet or mobile have a reliable 'buddy' to inform them
- Monthly newsletters will be considered

## **9. General principles of health and safety**

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- 9.1 As an employer BfN has a legal duty to maintain health and safety even during an emergency so please read this policy together with BfNs Health and Safety policy. We understand you may have concerns about the risk of contracting influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) and we will take all reasonable steps to protect your health and safety. We aim to keep you informed about the changing situation and understand that the needs of your family will take priority.
- 9.2 We already work flexible hours, which may help us to combine caring for sick relatives, or for children whose schools have closed, without having to stop BfN work completely. By working from home we are helping prevent the spread of the illness.
- 9.3 A separate risk assessment will be made for volunteer and employees who are new or expectant mothers, are breastfeeding or have any other reason to need to ensure that you are not exposed to any significant risk. [As described in section 13 of the Health and Safety Policy]

## **10. Employment questions**

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- 10.1 All employees are entitled to additional "Occasional Days Absence" up to an aggregate maximum of 10 such Occasional Days Absence (pro rata for part time employees) over and above statutory sick pay.
- 10.2 If you are on annual leave and then you are off sick let the payroll manager know the date from when you became sick.
- 10.3 Where additional workers are needed to cover absence, existing employees may be willing to work additional hours due to increased sickness absence levels, (within the commitments in the Working Time Regulations). If you are working additional hours do look after yourself and avoid putting your own or

others' health and safety at risk, and ensure you get regular rest breaks. If you are asked to work extra hours, you should be remunerated through time back arrangements, or paid overtime.

- 10.4 If you are off for longer than the self-certificated period (7 days including weekends/bank holidays), then you will need to go to your GP in time to ensure you are signed off sick. At the current time, we still require Medical Certificates even if this is done retrospectively. But we will keep you up to date on whether this guidance changes.
- 10.5 If you are caring for members of your family with flu, and alternative arrangements are not possible (working from home, involving other family members). It may be possible to have special leave with pay (of up to 5 days) and in addition, 3 days emergency carer's leave is available. Where any special leave or emergency carer's leave is agreed for pandemic flu, you, and your Supervisor must ensure a record is kept. The payroll manager needs to be notified in writing.

## **11. BfN services**

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- 11.1 We are aiming to maintain BfN's support services to breastfeeding mothers wherever possible, but in areas affected by influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu), the focus may shift from face-to-face contact to telephone-based support to minimise the risks to us and those we support. The type of population we serve, i.e. families with babies, and often newborns, means that we must be particularly aware of the vulnerability of this population to infection and consider our responses appropriately. In addition, a large proportion of our volunteer base also has young families and many may be pregnant.

### **11.2 Helplines**

- If you take calls on Supporterline/NBH and become ill, call your Supervisor or the admin number 0844 412 0995 so that calls can be temporarily be diverted to other Supporters.

- If you can take some additional slots or would consider going on Supporterline/NBH for a short while then this would be appreciated.

**Alert system:** Supporters and Helpers elist & link workers.

### 11.3 **Breastfeeding Centres**

- 11.4 In areas affected by influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) BfN considers the safety of pregnant women, new mothers and their babies to be the utmost priority and we will apply the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and Health Protection Scotland (HPS) recommendations for schools to all BfN Breastfeeding Centres.<sup>1 2</sup> As of July 2009 school closures are no longer recommended because the virus is widespread within the community. People are likely to be repeatedly exposed to the virus in their every day lives so closing a school will no longer be effective in slowing the spread of the virus. In some special circumstances – for example, a school with children who are particularly vulnerable to infection – then school closures might still be recommended.
- 11.5 For Centres affected by influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu) adapting the HPA advice to a BfN Breastfeeding Centre means closing a Centre would no longer be recommended and additional risk factors would need to present for closures to be considered. An individual risk assessment should still be carried out which looks at the risk in relation to the specific Centres circumstances.
- 11.6 Where time allows consultation should be carried out with the local bodies involved (e.g. PCT, Local Authority, NHS Trust, Children's Centre) together with the BfN admin team.
- 11.7 If a Centre is closed, a decision to re-open the Centre after seven days should be based on an assessment of the information that has arisen about the occurrence of further illness in the Centre or it's communal facilities. The centre can be re-opened if there is no evidence of further spread. In addition, the Centre can be re-opened

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1244763940922>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resp/swineinfluenza.aspx>

earlier if the probable case is subsequently demonstrated not to be due to influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu).

- 11.8 This advice applies at the current time (WHO phase 6). The UK has moved to a treatment phase to manage the current flu pandemic since 02 July 2009 and is no longer attempting to limit the spread of infection and establishment of community transmission. It will be reviewed regularly.

**Alert system:** elists, Supervisors & website.

See section 8 for information on alerting others to the closure of Breastfeeding Centres.

## **12. Home visiting and other BfN activities**

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- 12.1 No volunteer will be required to offer a home visit where they would feel uncomfortable doing so.
- 12.2 Where influenza A/H1N1 is established within you community check with your Supervisor to ensure that you are not exposed to any significant risk by visiting mothers in their homes. [See section 9; about doing a risk assessment]
- 12.3 Telephone help may be offered as an alternative.

If further information is required; contact **BfN admin 0844 412 0995**  
Flu information line on **0800 1 513 513**  
NHS Direct on **0845 4647**

### **Summary of relevant websites for Influenza A/H1N1 (Swine flu)**

Topic	Website link
Pandemic Flu	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/AlertsEmergencies/Pages/Pandemicflualert.aspx">http://www.nhs.uk/AlertsEmergencies/Pages/Pandemicflualert.aspx</a> <a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/DH_098650">http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/DH_098650</a> <a href="http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resp/index.aspx">http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resp/index.aspx</a> <a href="http://www.hpa.org.uk">http://www.hpa.org.uk</a>
Guidance on closures	<a href="http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&amp;Page&amp;HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1244763940922">http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&amp;Page&amp;HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1244763940922</a> <a href="http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resp/swineinfluenza.aspx">http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resp/swineinfluenza.aspx</a>
Guidance for the Third Sector	<a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_099094">http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_099094</a>
Media sources	<a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8021958.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8021958.stm</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/ferguswalsh/">http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/ferguswalsh/</a>

To find your nearest Breastfeeding Supporter call the **Supporterline 0300 100 0210**

### **Appendix 1**

The following individuals have specific duties for safety in particular areas:

<b>Staff member/ director</b>	<b>Specific duty</b>
H & S Adviser; Phyll Buchanan [TEMP]	To ensure implementation of Health & Safety Policy
Director; Anabel Hands	Oversee implementation of Health & Safety Policy