

ALERTING LEVELS

ALERT LEVEL	INDICATOR
Level 0	No cases anywhere in the world
Level 1	Cases only outside the UK
Level 2	New virus isolated in the UK
Level 3	Outbreak(s) in the UK
Level 4	Widespread activity across the UK

Alert Level Zero

Background:

This is resting state in which there are no cases identified worldwide. i.e. this is the current state. During this phase organisations should be consolidating and maintaining business continuity plans which can respond to a flu pandemic.

Alert Level One

Background:

At this level of alert, cases have been identified outside of the UK, we are assuming that person to person transmission has occurred and there is a credible threat of a global pandemic. This may have been preceded by an outbreak in livestock or animals and for industries involved in import/export of animals there may be restrictions. Information would be communicated from the World Health Organisation to the Department of Health and cascaded through internal and external communications. At this level of alert it is unlikely that there will be detailed information on the level of infectiousness, death rates and projected impact on the workforce, these will be being developed as quickly as possible from national and international experiences. In the absence of such information, organisations should base scenarios on previous 20th Century Pandemics with a cumulative attack rate of 25%³ of the population over one or more waves of around 12 weeks each. During this phase there is unlikely to be a specific vaccine, however high-risk groups already identified for influenza & pneumococcal vaccine should be encouraged to take up the offer. During this phase preparation becomes crucial as the acceleration through alert levels one, two and three may be very rapid.

Alert Level 2

Background:

During this level of alert new viruses will have been isolated within the UK. Information will be coming from the Health Protection Agency through the Department of Health and London Regional Public Health Group to the London Resilience Group. At this stage the outbreaks may be small and localized and short-term interventions may be being used, which would not be appropriate to a pandemic scale, to limit the spread of the infection.

Alert Level 3

Background:

Although UK Alert Level 3 and 4 may progress rapidly from one to another there are some key differences in the organisational response. At Alert Level 3 there may be multiple small outbreaks of flu, these are likely to be limited in terms of geographic regions, for example in London there may be outbreaks in Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham and in Barnet and Brent. However many, if not all, of the outbreaks may be outside of the capital. During this phase the advice and action taken will focus on limiting the spread of these outbreaks and trying to prevent progression to Alert Level 4. At this stage also consider staff leaving work to act as carers for relatives, etc. Organisations will need to consider how their business continuity plans will function if an element of their structure/function or supply chain is affected in one of the isolated outbreaks. In some cases where the organisation is based in an area where there is an outbreak the impact will be substantially larger and some of the responses considered at Alert Level 4 will come into effect. During this phase of the pandemic there are likely to be increasing levels of anxiety in the general population and an enhanced risk of social disruption. This may be exacerbated by large scale outbreaks outside of the UK.

Alert Level 4

Background:

At this Level there will be widespread infection across the UK, with several waves of infection expected to last approximately 12 weeks each. The infectivity of the organism may vary and so it is difficult to predict the impact on workforce levels as well as the demand for services, however it is reasonable to estimate 25% of the workforce affected at any one time, with the majority taking between 5-8 working days off. Those affected may vary between organisms but active, healthy young adults may be considered at high risk of infection due to inherent socialization and mobility across the Capital, although the risk of death and severe illness is highest at the extremes of age. Although many people may take time off to care for dependants. Although there may be national guidance, organisations should have a business continuity plan, which can respond to a flu pandemic and reflects the inter-dependence of structures in the capital and the reliance on external supply chains.