

Guidance for IMB members in the event of a Flu pandemic

- All Boards and their members should make themselves aware of the content of **PSI 29/06 – Contingency Planning for Pandemic Influenza**, implemented on 23 October 2006.
- As required by the PSI, Governors/Directors of all prisons are preparing to produce their individual establishment contingency plans. Once these have been agreed by Area Managers/ROMs, IMB chairs should study them carefully, consult with their Board, and agree local policy concerning IMB duties with the Governor/Director. It would be expected that the IMB is kept fully informed throughout any outbreak.
- In the event of an outbreak some statutory elements of the regime such as visits and exercise may be suspended to prevent contamination. The knock-on effect of the delivery of essential supplies may also impact greatly on the regime. There will be a high degree of risk to all those who work in the prison setting, including IMB members.
- Should a pandemic occur in the UK it will not be possible to keep infection out of prisons, therefore the main objective will be to minimise onward transmission of the infection.
- It is believed that because prisons are closed communities up to 90% of prisoners and staff will become infected over the period of the pandemic, of whom about half will fall ill.
- The pandemic would be expected to last 12–15 weeks with a peak at 5-6 weeks. At the peak up to 50% of prisoners could be ill, with only 50% of staff on duty.
- Duty of care will have the highest priority but in a worst case scenario a very limited regime will be inevitable, possibly limited to providing food for prisoners at cell doors, and providing medical help.
- Obviously, containment of any outbreak will be priority, so IMB members would have to make individual decisions, agreed with the IMB Chairman and the Governor/Director, about whether to continue attending to their monitoring duties once flu had been diagnosed within the prison. Please note – undue risk taking could negate the terms of private health insurance policies.
- Likewise, should an IMB member be in contact with flu in their home or social environment, and the prison still be clear of infection, it would be inappropriate for that member to continue to visit the establishment.
- However, any person recovering from the virus will be immune from further infection so could resume monitoring duties if they so wished and this was agreed.
- The Governor/Director of an infected establishment may refuse access to any person not already in that establishment, and a core of staff may reside within the establishment for the duration of the outbreak.
- The normal statutory duties of the IMB may be suspended for the duration of the outbreak.

Sheila Royle
February 2007