



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT**

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 12th OCTOBER 2009

Subject : PANDEMIC INFLUENZA H1N1 AWARENESS TRAINING

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on recent multi agency awareness training activity in relation to pandemic influenza.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 At an Extraordinary Meeting of the Northumbria LRF on 1st May called following the Declaration of WHO Level 5, the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum - Multi Agency Pandemic Influenza Plan (March 2009) was reviewed.

2.2 Section 1 of the Plan stated:

'In order to ensure relevancy and to avoid unnecessary expense in time and money, specific training for the activation of this plan will be carried out from transition to WHO Alert Phase 5, when it is clear that the training will be put into use. The Northumbria LRF Exercise and Training Group will then be responsible for devising and overseeing the implementation of the multi agency training programme in liaison with others as necessary.'

2.3 The extraordinary LRF subsequently tasked the LRF Exercise and Training Group, which is currently chaired by an officer from Tyne and Wear EPU, with providing multi agency training to Category 1 and Category 2 responders. The training was to be made available at the earliest opportunity.

2.4 An extraordinary meeting of the LRF Exercise and Training Group was therefore called for 5th May 2009 to consider the requirement as detailed within the LRF Multi Agency Pandemic Influenza Plan (March 2009). Following this, a report was prepared for consideration by the Northumbria LRF at a meeting held on 8th May 2009. The report was agreed and the LRF Exercise and Training Group were instructed to prepare and deliver the agreed awareness training. The Chair of this group also worked in close conjunction with the Chair of the LRF Pandemic Influenza Working Group to develop the training session.

2.5 The LRF Exercise and Training Group also proposed that multi-agency exercise and training provision should not be restricted to the requirements of Section 1.5. It was considered under 1.5 that the requirements of the exercise and training for the Pandemic Influenza Plan was specific to Strategic level. The proposed awareness sessions were to consider multi-agency Command and Control at both Silver/Tactical and Gold/Strategic levels and individual organisation Roles and Responsibilities with regard Pandemic Influenza response.

2.6 To enable the LRF Exercise and Training Group to deliver the awareness training at the earliest opportunity it was recognised that a review of current exercises and training had to be undertaken and recommendations for the rescheduling of the Exercise and Training Calendar were also put to the Northumbria LRF.

The LRF agreed that to provide planning and preparation time for the LRF Exercise and Training Group to deliver the training that the North Tyneside Norland 76 Exercise scheduled for 3rd June be postponed until early 2010. All other Calendar events were to remain unchanged.

2.7 The date for the awareness training event was agreed as 16th July 2009. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service kindly offered to host the event at its Headquarters in Barmston Mere.

2.8 The Group also identified a number of triggers where the awareness training may necessitate delivery prior to the 16th July. Triggers identified that would require changing the agreed date were:

- WHO level 6 – initiation of UK Pandemic levels
- Increase in UK infection figures
- LRF mandate

This enabled development of Pandemic Awareness Training to proceed and the existing exercise and training timetable remained relatively unchanged but would be dependant on current Influenza A (H1N1) situation and the current workloads of LRF partners within LRF E&TG.

2.9 A number of planning meetings were scheduled by the members of the LRF Exercise and Training Group to facilitate effective planning for the event. Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit was involved in the planning of the awareness session as Chair of the LRF Exercise and Training Group and as lead officer on the project.

3. PANDEMIC INFLUENZA H1N1 AWARENESS TRAINING

3.1 Aim

The aim of the event was to 'Raise awareness of partner agencies of the ongoing planning in the Northumbria LRF area regarding Pandemic Influenza'.

3.2 Objectives:

The agreed objectives were as follows:

- To detail the current Influenza A(H1N1) position.
- To raise multi-agency awareness of current situation regarding LRF Pandemic Influenza Plan
- To consider the impact on existing multi-agency arrangements
- To share levels of partner organisational preparedness.
- To highlight arrangements for the transition to Pandemic status.

4. PROGRAMME

4.1 The LRF Exercise and Training Group proposed two events of two to three hours duration, based upon Primary Care Trust areas ie North of Tyne (morning), and South of Tyne (afternoon).

4.2 The programme covered:

- Current situation update
- Transition to Pandemic status
- LRF Pandemic Influenza Plan (highlighting any differences between provisions of the Plan resulting from current practices).
- Strategic management procedures:
Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) activation
SCG protocol
- Single agency Roles and Responsibilities
- Multi-agency involvement/arrangements at Silver/Tactical and Bronze/Operational levels

4.3 Key Speakers included:

- Chair of the Northumbria LRF
- Strategic Health Authority
- Chair Pandemic Influenza Planning Group
- Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (Facilitator)

4.4 Plenary Session

The opportunity was also provided for in-depth question and answer sessions following the presentations. A multi agency panel including the speakers and Health experts provided the audience with up to the minute information regarding the H1N1 outbreak. These sessions proved particularly popular with the delegates.

5. PARTICIPATION

5.1 Strategic and Tactical level participants attended from the following organisations:

- Department of Health
- Strategic Health Authority
- Health Protection Agency

- North East Ambulance Service
- Acute Hospital Trusts
- North East Strategic Health Authority
- North of Tyne Primary Care Trust
- South of Tyne and Wear Primary Care Trust
- Northumbria Police
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
- Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service
- Gateshead Council
- Newcastle City Council
- North Tyneside Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Sunderland City Council
- Northumberland Council
- Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit
- Northumberland Emergency Planning Department
- Government Office - North East
- Newcastle and Sunderland Universities
- Category 2 (Utilities)
- Voluntary Agencies

6 AWARENESS SESSION EVALUATION

- 6.1 Delegates were asked to complete an Evaluation Form following the awareness sessions. The Evaluation results can be made available to members if required.

The report was submitted to the Northumbria LRF for comment and will subsequently be made available to all attendees.

- 6.2 Evaluation reports are considered by the LRF Exercise and Training Group to be an extremely important tool in developing all multi-agency exercises and training within the Northumbria LRF area. Delegate feedback is an important element in reviewing and developing future events.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Pandemic Influenza Awareness Training sessions were considered to be particularly successful. They provided an opportunity to focus on the work in progress to ensure effective multi-agency co-operation in this important area of resilience response. Both events were well attended by both Category 1 and Category 2 organisations. Of particular note was the effectiveness of the Plenary Sessions which allowed for greater in-depth information to be accessed from the lead health organisations.

The event also provided a greater insight for delegates into the role of the Northumbria LRF and the Sub-groups. Such events highlight the

effectiveness of the LRF and reinforce it's position as the strategic driver behind the well established multi-agency working arrangements that exist within the Tyne and Wear and Northumberland areas.

- 7.2 At a time when the H1N1 outbreak was stretching resources across all partner organisations the commitment and professionalism shown by the Northumbria LRF Exercise and Training Sub-group to provide these awareness sessions in a very short period of time with minimum impact on an already busy Exercise Calendar is to be commended.
- 7.3 Tyne and Wear EPU provided the lead within the Exercise and Training Sub-group throughout the inception, planning, organisation, delivery and evaluation of the Pandemic Influenza Awareness events.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Members are asked to note this report
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Influenza A (H1N1) Pandemic Influenza Report to this Committee submitted 6th July.2009
- Pandemic Influenza Update report submitted to this Committee 12th October. 2009

Papers relating to this report are held in the appropriate file in the EPU Offices.