

Are you prepared for Swine Flu?

How will you ensure that Swine Flu has a minimal impact on your business?

Reports suggest that only a small number of businesses have plans in place to deal with Swine Flu, or other situations that might have a similar impact on staff absences.

Employers need to consider how they will continue to operate their business with potentially high levels of absence if the forecasted increases in infection occur as we approach winter.

There are four key actions that Employers should take:

1. Heightened Awareness of Workplace Hygiene

NHS Direct advise that the best thing everyone can do is to follow good hygiene practices:

- a. Sanitiser hand gels available at key locations and for staff at their workstations
- b. Tissues provided to encourage “Catch It, Bin It, Kill It”
- c. Antiseptic wipes to encourage germ free work surfaces, keyboards and telephones
- d. Download hygiene signs from www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

2. Business Contingency Plan

As part of their Business Contingency planning, employers would be wise to consider how they will manage all possible scenarios including staff sickness, employees with sick children / dependents and although unlikely, the possibility of prolonged school closures at the end of the summer holidays:

- a. Identify critical requirements and duties for the business and who needs to complete them
- b. Consider multi skilling staff to cover critical roles
- c. Consider employees working from home and how your IT systems could manage this
- d. Review flexible working and parental leave / care for dependents policies

3. Consistent Method to Manage Absence

Business should review absence management in light of the Department of Work and Pensions possible emergency plans to increase the self-certification from 7 to 14 days for a temporary period of 6 months.

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There is concern that unethical Employees may be using Swine Flu as an opportunity to go unchallenged for an extended absence, and that increasing the self-certification time may only add to this. A condition that we might call “Swindle Flu”!

Employers who have a robust absence management policy and procedure will be less likely to be affected; however, employers who do not manage their staff absences may see an increase in non-genuine cases:

- a. Review how you manage absence
- b. Introduce an Absence Policy and Procedure
- c. Have clear procedures for Employees to report their absence
- d. Introduce return to work interviews

4. Staff Communication

Information is changing rapidly and regular communication with Employees is advised:

- a. Advise Staff on the symptoms of Swine Flu and what to do if they think they are infected
- b. Keep people up to date with the latest information
- c. Ensure you have updated policies and procedures

If you require any further information regarding Swine Flu and the effect on your business we will be pleased to help you.

Businesses are well advised to take a more general consideration too; do you have a business contingency plan or disaster recovery plan in place?

How quickly could you be back up and running your business if your offices flooded, your computers were stolen, a virus infected your network, a large proportion of your workforce are absent at one time, or a major incident occurred in your business premises?

We work with a trusted associate to help businesses put plans into place that minimise disruption to your business, ensure the safety and welfare of your employees and ensure that you meet your legal obligations as an employer.

Call us today if you want to ensure the continuity of your business.

emma@challengemanager.co.uk

Office: 0845 463 9365

Mobile: 07720 263 769

www.challengemanager.co.uk

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