



What can businesses do practically about influenza A(H1N1) - previously recognised as swine flu? red24's Ian Pidgen gives his expert view:

"There is likely to be high levels of absenteeism, so prioritise your most essential services. If staff can work remotely then do so, and consider cross training your staff to maintain those essential services. Postpone all non-essential face to face meetings and training events, and maximise the use of video or teleconferencing as an alternative."

"Closely monitor government updates and strictly follow the advice on infection control and hygiene. This includes bacterial wipes or gel for telephones and keyboards. Monitor the availability of antiviral drugs for essential staff."

"Avoid panic and confusion, and keep your staff and customers up to date with your plans on a hotline or web-site. Prepare statements for the media where relevant."

"Staff who display even the most mild symptoms should be isolated and health screened before returning to work. Staff who have travelled to or from high risk countries should also be health screened before returning to work. There may be disruptions to essential supplies and transport networks, so adjust your operating procedures accordingly and consider alternative arrangements."

Ian Pidgen is a highly experienced Business Continuity consultant who has over 27 years experience.

He has worked with a wide range of organisations internationally, writing, developing and testing pandemic plans. His clients include ING Bank, Bishop Flemming Accountants and First DataBank. He has also worked with numerous Primary Care Trusts and the European Medicines Agency on flu pandemic exercises. This blend of private and public sector work has identified the best practice in pandemic preparedness and response.

Notes for editors:

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