



June 12, 2009

IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL NHS OF THE DECLARATION OF WHO PHASE 6

The World Health Organisation yesterday declared Phase 6 of its pandemic alert system which means that H1N1v flu is now spreading in communities in several countries. This decision reflects the geographical spread of the virus and not its severity.

Each country is looking at its own situation to decide whether to continue trying to contain the virus or move to treating the symptoms. The policy of containment has bought time to allow health services to be fully prepared to handle a widespread pandemic.

The virus is still relatively mild and there have been a relatively small number of cases. There are currently around 130 confirmed cases in London and approximately 560 in England.

Given that it's the summer, we expect to continue to see imported cases with some community transmission. We can expect a larger number of cases in the autumn and winter when conditions are more favourable for it to spread.

In the meantime, we will continue to concentrate on taking samples to confirm cases of flu are due to H1N1v flu so we can better understand how the virus is behaving.

Thank you for your continued vigilance and support in identifying and treating H1N1v flu. There is no doubt that this has had a material impact on our ability to react to the virus as effectively as possible.

Pui-ling Li, NHS London Deputy Director of Public Health
Deborah Turbitt, Acting Regional Director HPA London