

Edwina Hart MBE AM

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

National Assembly Members

Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA
English Enquiry Line: 0845 010 3300
Fax: 029 2089 8131
E-Mail: Correspondence.Edwina.Hart@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd CF99 1NA
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg: 0845 010 4400
Ffacs: 029 2089 8131
E-Bost: Correspondence.Edwina.Hart@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

2nd July 2009

Dear Colleagues

Yesterday, I provided an oral update to Assembly Members on the current state of the swine flu pandemic, as far as it affects Wales. Further meetings between the Health Ministers of the four UK nations took place later in the day, and this morning, the Secretary of State at the Department of Health, has made a statement of the House of Commons.

This letter provides further information about the position in Wales, as the rise in Swine Flu cases accelerates and the pressure on health services rises.

In parts of England and Scotland, where the onset of Swine Flu has been greatest, services on the ground are already operating on the basis of treatment rather than containment. Scientific advice now expects to see a further rapid rise in the number of cases and, across the UK therefore, we have now moved to the treatment phase.

As far as anti-virals are concerned, this will mean focusing treatment on at-risk groups, that is to say on those more susceptible to developing serious illness or complications. These are all the groups at risk from seasonal influenza, plus pregnant women and children under 5. Guidance will be issued to doctors to ensure that people in these groups will have access to anti-virals within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms.

For individuals outside these high risk groups, it will be a matter of clinical judgement to decide whether anti-virals should be prescribed, with rapid access to antivirals for all those who need them.

In practical terms we will now also:

- Rely more on clinical symptoms rather than laboratory tests to diagnose the illness;
- Continue to test some patients as part of our surveillance monitoring to ensure we keep receiving up to date information about the virus and its spread;
- Stop giving preventative medicine to people the patient has been in contact with;
- Stop contact tracing for all cases identified.

Although we have moved to a new phase in our response to this virus, the message to the public remains the same. Keep practising good respiratory and hand hygiene to reduce the chances of catching or spreading the virus. If you develop flu like symptoms, stay at home and seek advice.

In Wales, health services for those who require them as a result of Swine Flu will continue to be delivered through existing primary care arrangements, enhanced as necessary.

In addition to the reports which I provide to Members, updates will also continue to be available on the Assembly Government's webpages.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Jones', written in a cursive style.