

# UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011

meet all demands, even with the best of preparations. Step changes, including national contingency measures, could be necessary in such circumstances.

- 2.22 Despite the uncertainty associated with any planning assumptions, it is important to have a consistent basis for planning for a future pandemic response, to be used by local planners and central government alike. This avoids confusion and facilitates integrated preparation.
- 2.23 A review of the Government's approach to planning for high impact, low probability risks is currently underway. This includes an initial review of the process by which the assessments for events such as a pandemic are undertaken, with a view to ensuring that the costs and effort of planning and preparing for the unpredictable are commensurate with the risk. This is due to report in 2011. The reasonable worst case scenario (RWC) on which the planning assumptions below are based is reviewed on an annual basis. Should the RWC be altered in light of changes to the scientific or wider evidence on which it is based, the planning assumptions below may be subsequently revised.

#### **Summary of planning assumptions for pandemic preparedness<sup>4</sup>**

A pandemic is most likely to be caused by a new subtype of the Influenza A virus but the plans could be adapted and deployed for scenarios such as an outbreak of another infectious disease, eg Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in health care settings, with an altogether different pattern of infectivity.

An influenza pandemic could emerge at any time, anywhere in the world, including in the UK. It could emerge at any time of the year. Regardless of where or when it emerges, it is likely to reach the UK very quickly.

It will not be possible to stop the spread of, or to eradicate, the pandemic influenza virus, either in the country of origin or in the UK, as it will spread too rapidly and too widely.

From arrival in the UK, it will probably be a further one to two weeks until sporadic cases and small clusters of disease are occurring across the country.

Initially, pandemic influenza activity in the UK may last for three to five months, depending on the season. There may be subsequent substantial activity weeks or months apart, even after the WHO has declared the pandemic to be over.

Following an influenza pandemic, the new virus is likely to re-emerge as one of a number of seasonal influenza viruses and based on observations of previous pandemics, subsequent winters are likely to see a different level of seasonal flu activity compared to pre-pandemic winters.

<sup>4</sup> The Scientific Pandemic Influenza Advisory Committee's Modelling Sub-Group Summary (Annex 1). Available at: [http://www.dh.gov.uk/ab/SPI/DH\\_095904](http://www.dh.gov.uk/ab/SPI/DH_095904)