



Cymru Gydnerth
Wales Resilience

EXERCISE TALIESIN/SWINE FLU

STRUCTURED DEBRIEFING REPORT

Title:	Ex Taliesin / Swine Flu Structured Debrief
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Conclusions

It was ironic that a worldwide pandemic started to emerge for the first time in over 40 years the day after one of Wales' largest emergency exercises to test pandemic flu response plans. However, the reality of the pandemic fell significantly below the expectations set out not only in the exercise itself but in the national planning assumptions to which planning at all levels had been geared for a number of years previously. The reaction experienced at all levels was a direct consequence of this inherent anticipation of a flu pandemic having wide-ranging socio-economic impact. The fact that Exercise Taliesin had been held the previous day and had tested all those involved on a worst case scenario served only to heighten such expectation in Wales.

The response to the pandemic at the UK level also anticipated a worst case scenario and this drove the pace of the initial response at the centre and the resultant requirements for regular and detailed information from the local level of its impact on the ground. In reality, whilst the pandemic resulted in some cases in fatalities, it generally proved to be far less severe than anticipated across both waves which resulted in the planning assumptions published periodically by Government reducing on each occasion.

Against this background, the workshop held on 18th November aimed to debrief the performance of plans and arrangements against both the pandemic envisaged in the national planning assumption and the swine flu pandemic which emerged in reality. It was inevitable that attendees brought their experience of the swine flu response into the feedback for Exercise Taliesin but this proved to help rather than hinder the process.

The following conclusions are based on the issues raised at the workshop for swine flu and Exercise Taliesin as well as those provided in the Gold Standard reports:

- In spite of pandemic flu being known as the highest risk and with considerable investment being made in recent years to ensure that the UK is prepared to cope with such an event, a number of gaps were exposed in plans which need to be addressed ahead of a more serious pandemic. These issues in particular are:

○ Excess Deaths

- While funeral directors do not have any formal obligations under the Act, their professional services will nevertheless be critical in maintaining smooth and effective arrangements for dealing with the deceased. Information on funeral directors' capacity for body holding is necessary so that local responders can understand the totality of local capacity and capabilities, as well as the need for support in difficult conditions.
- The legal responsibilities of a local authority for the collection and transport of the deceased during a pandemic has emerged as something of a grey area. Whilst there are clear duties on local authorities in respect of emergency mortuaries, burials and cremations, the legislation does not put explicit duties on local authorities to collect and transport bodies from the place of death through to burial or cremation.
- Further work is required on the policy of collective burials to enable local plans to be made accordingly against the national planning assumptions.
- Further policy work is required on the death certification process to inform local planning and the timeframe required from death to burial.
- Further work is required to develop resilience of coffin supplies during a pandemic.

○ Social Care

- Although considerable progress was made in developing resilience within the social care sector during the response to swine flu further work is required to enhance the engagement with, and preparedness in, the independent care sector.

○ Schools and Early Years Settings

- The policy of school closure which existed at the time of Exercise Taliesin for closing schools when a pandemic is confirmed in schools in an LRF area proved to be unrealistic. The practice adopted during swine flu of schools/local authorities seeking the advice of the National Public Health Service on closing and re-opening proved to be pragmatic and effective.
- Concerns over the resilience of school transport highlighted the need for local authorities and schools to maintain

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