

# **EXERCISE CYGNUS**

## **18 – 20 OCTOBER 2016**

### **LESSONS LEARNED REPORT**



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Report outlines the results of the evaluation of Exercise Cygnus which took place on 18 – 20 October 2016.

The aim of this Report is to capture learning from Exercise players, observers and planning team and provide a clear link between lessons emerging and changes to our plans and procedures.

Once this Report is published, an Action Plan will be produced through which work will commence in resolving issues identified and applying any improvements to the Department's Emergency Planning and Preparedness procedures.

### **1.1. Exercise Cygnus Phase 2**

The purpose of Phase 2 was to *enhance the UK's ability to manage the effects of an influenza pandemic by practicing and validating response policies and the decision-making process at national, regional and local levels.*

The aim of Exercise Cygnus was to *"To assess preparedness and response to an influenza pandemic in the UK.*

### **1.2. Objectives**

1.2.1 The UK Objectives were initially agreed with the 4 UK Countries as follows:

1. To exercise organisational pandemic influenza plans at local and national levels in the UK.
2. To exercise coordination of messaging to the public.
3. To exercise strategic decision-making processes around managing the wider consequences and cross-government issues at both local and national levels during an influenza pandemic (such as excess deaths).
4. To exercise the provision of scientific advice, including SAGE, during an influenza pandemic.

1.2.2 The following additional objectives were added by England in 2016 however these were not being tested by Devolved Administrations:

5. To explore the social care policy implications during a pandemic.
6. To explore the use of the 3rd sector to support the response.
7. Exercise the coordination of resources to cope with excess deaths in the community.
8. Identify issues raised around the impact of flu in the prison population.

1.2.3 In addition to the above objectives the following overarching NI specific objectives were defined for the whole exercise as follows:

1. To exercise organisational pandemic influenza plans at Health Gold and Silver levels in Northern Ireland, specifically:
  - By exercising the 4 Nations interface [Official/CMO/Ministerial level] and Health Ministers decision-making process;
  - By exercising the interface between NI Health Gold and HSC Silver.
2. To exercise strategic decision-making processes around managing the wider consequences and cross-government issues at local level during an influenza pandemic (such as excess deaths), including the activation of the NI Central Crisis Management Arrangements.
3. To exercise coordination of messaging to the public by DOH, HSC SILVER and EIS protocol.
4. To exercise the consideration and decision making process in relation to receipt of scientific advice, including SAGE, during an influenza pandemic.

1.2.4 In order to achieve the objectives the exercise focused on specific issues including:

- managing the on-going uncertainty;
- Ministerial decisions that might be required now or in the next few weeks to mitigate the projected impact of the developing pandemic;
- review of extant health advice covering communications messages, prophylaxis and stockpiles;
- consideration of the management of excess deaths that require national decisions;
- management of Health and Social Care resources

1.2.5 To facilitate consideration of these issues, a series of scheduled meetings occurred across the 3 days of the Exercise. This included:-