

PIPP - Exercising Paper**Background**

Exercise Cygnus (2016) was a tier 1 exercise assessing the UK's preparedness for and response to a severe influenza pandemic, close to the UK's worst planning scenarios. As we approach the 2 year mark since this exercise and the completion of the cross Government Pandemic Flu Readiness Board (PFRB) programme, we are considering how we can continue to appropriately test our preparedness and response.

This paper therefore asks the Board to:

- Comment on the proposed exercise principles;
- Support the postponement of the planned Q4 tabletop exercise;
- Agree to a programme of Tier 1 pandemic flu exercises, including an exercise in 2022; and
- Consider the lessons outstanding from Exercise Cygnus, closing where appropriate.

Principles

To support in the development of future pandemic flu exercises and assist in the prioritisation of areas to exercise, this paper proposes the following principles:

- Exercises should be coordinated across DHSC, NHSE and PHE to prevent duplication;
- Exercises should test existing plans and strategies, rather than known gaps in knowledge;
- There should be a regular programme of tier 1 exercises to coincide with each new parliament and ensure continuity in preparedness;
- Where possible exercises should include Devolved Administration colleagues to ensure a joined up approach across the Four Nations (including in observer roles where active participation is not appropriate); and
- Lessons learned should be shared with other relevant Government departments to ensure continued cross-Government approach to pandemic flu preparedness.

Is the Board supportive of the above exercise principles? Are there any other principles that the Board would seek to include?

Upcoming Exercises

As part of the agreed EPRR Exercise Programme, a pandemic flu exercise is currently planned for Q4 and proposed to cover adult social care, as an area which has significantly progressed since the start of the cross-Government PFRB. In order to avoid the winter pressures period, it had been proposed that this exercise take place at the end of March 2019.

However, a number of exercises have already taken place or are planned in the Health and Social Care space, focusing on pandemic flu or the effectiveness of contingency plans, which we believe negate the need for this exercise:

Quarter/Year	Organisation/Team	Type of exercise	Exercise objective
Q1, 2018	DHSC	Ministerial	Test the Adult Social Care contingency

			plan in the context of a failure of a care home provider
Q2, 2018	DHSC	Workshop	Test how the NHS and social care would work together in the event of major power failure
Q3, 2018	NHS England	Table top	Test the Health care surge and triage guidance in the context of primary care surge during a flu pandemic
Q4, 2018	DHSC	Table top	Test the Adult Social Care contingency plan in the context of a domiciliary care provider failure

The current date for the Q4 exercise also coincides with the planned date for the UK to exit the European Union, which would pose a considerable challenge when ensuring relevant policy colleagues could attend.

Based on the number of exercises covering pandemic flu and social care contingency plans, and the impracticality of the date, is the Board content for the postponement of the Q4 exercise?

Separately, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Permanent Secretary have expressed a desire for a more regular programme of tier 1 pandemic flu exercises, to build on the learnings from Exercise Cygnus and ensure continuity in our preparedness. To mitigate the loss of expertise at a Ministerial level, CMO suggested that future tier 1 pandemic flu exercises coincide with the beginning of every new parliament, beginning with an exercise in 2022. The last tier 1 exercises were held in 2016 (Exercise Cygnus) and 2009 (Exercise X).

Is the Board supportive of a programme of tier 1 exercises, including an exercise in 2022 to coincide with a new parliament?

Annex: Lessons Learned – Exercise Cygnus

Exercise Cygnus identified 22 lessons and 4 areas of key learning, from which we agreed on 5 workstreams for further work under the governance of the PFRB:

1. Healthcare - Surge and Triage;
2. Community Care and Adult Social Care;
3. Excess Deaths;
4. Sector Resilience; and
5. Cross Cutting Enablers – Communications, Legislation and Moral and Ethical considerations.

These workstreams were identified as being the most pressing or important lessons identified during Cygnus and therefore prioritised for further development, although a small number of lessons remain outstanding. Collectively, PFRB work streams and the delivery of respective outputs are on track with the following outcomes achieved by July 2018:

- comprehensive plans developed for hospital reconfiguration and decision making during healthcare surge and triage;
- strategy developed to prioritise and augment adult social care and community healthcare during a pandemic response;
- revision of local planner's framework for the management of excess deaths;
- revision of annual Sector Security and Resilience Plans (SSRPs) for critical sectors to incorporate more detailed consideration of the pandemic influenza preparedness, including expectations of the Ministry of Defence's capacity to assist during a reasonable worst case scenario influenza pandemic; and
- UK government clauses drafted for the pandemic influenza bill; and
- 4 Nations Public Health Communications Strategy refreshed.