



**Devon County Council
Children & Young People's
Services**

**Guidance for schools
in dealing with an
influenza pandemic**

**This guidance applies to all staff employed within schools, including
teachers and school support staff.**

If you require further help in the interpretation of this guidance you can contact the Business Support Team at businesssupportcountyhallmailbox@devon.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance sets out a range of information to assist head teachers in the preparation of plans to deal with flu pandemic and the business continuity of the school or other educational establishment. Where a school has anticipated an emergency and made timely plans, the response will be more assured than one that is improvised.
- 1.2 Every school should have a **School Emergency Management Plan** and identify a **School Emergency Management Team**.
- 1.3 The guidance is not exhaustive or rigid in its format. It is provided to assist in the development of specific arrangements to support each **School Emergency Management Plan**. It should be adapted to suit the needs of individual schools, Pupil Referral Units, or other establishments.

2. Aim

- 2.1 To ensure that a flexible and appropriate response to an influenza pandemic is achieved through the essential action outlined in the *School Pandemic Influenza Action Check List* (see Appendix A).

3. Objective

- 3.1 To help schools to
 - provide accurate, timely and authoritative advice and information to staff, pupils and parents/carers
 - reduce the impact of an influenza pandemic on the school community
 - minimise the disruption to the provision of education to pupils.

4. Pandemic influenza

- 4.1 Influenza (flu) pandemics are remarkable events that can rapidly infect virtually all countries at any time of the year. Once international spread begins, pandemics are considered unstoppable, caused as they are by coughing or sneezing. The fact that infected people can shed the virus before symptoms appear adds to the risk of international spread via apparently healthy air travellers.
- 4.2 Flu viruses are constantly changing, producing new strains and varieties. Pandemics occur when a virus emerges that is so different from previously circulating strains that few people, if any, have any immunity to it. This allows it to spread widely and rapidly, causing illness in a high proportion of people.
- 4.3 Three pandemics occurred in the last century: in 1918, 1957 and 1968. Scientists predict that another pandemic will happen, although they cannot say exactly when that will be. It is also difficult to predict just how serious a pandemic will be. It depends on how easily the particular virus spreads, which age groups are affected most, the

severity of the symptoms it produces and how many deaths it causes. There may be more than one pandemic wave (with an interval of several months) and if a second wave occurs, it may be more severe than the first. It is likely that pandemic flu will affect far more people than seasonal flu and be a more serious illness. Around a quarter of the population may have been affected by the end of the pandemic.

World Health Organisation International Phases		United Kingdom Alert Level
0	No cases worldwide	
Inter-pandemic Period		
1	No new influenza virus sub-types detected in humans	
2	Animal influenza sub-type poses substantial risk	
Pandemic Alert Period		
3	Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no new human to human spread	UK not affected
4	Small clusters with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localised, suggesting the virus is not well adapted to humans	UK has strong travel/trade connections with affected areas
5	Large clusters but human-to-human spread still localised, suggesting the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans	UK affected
Pandemic Period		
6	Increased and sustained transmission in general population	UK Alert Level 1 Virus/cases outside UK 3 Outbreaks in the UK 4 Widespread activity across the UK
Post Pandemic Period		

4.4 Once in the UK, a flu pandemic will spread across the country in a matter of weeks , causing

- high levels of flu
- intense pressure on health services
- disruption to many aspects of daily life
- many deaths.

4.5 It is unlikely that a vaccine will be available in the early stages of a pandemic occurring in the UK. The lead time before a new vaccine becomes available in quantity is likely to be at least 4-6 months. Availability will depend upon the production rates achieved. By the time it is available, the pandemic will have been modelled by the World Health Organisation to determine which part of the population is being affected the most. This will help the Coordinating Group to decide who in the County Council should be vaccinated first.

- 4.6 In anticipation of a flu pandemic, the Government has drawn up an 'Influenza Pandemic Contingency Plan'. Devon County Council has written '**A Flu Pandemic Plan**' and '**Model School Pandemic Influenza Human Resources Policy**' to support the national plan locally. This will be released should the need arise.

5. Impact

- 5.1 If a pandemic occurs, 25% - 35% of the population could be affected. There may be more than one wave that will peak around week 6 for 2-3 weeks resulting in a cumulative total of 50% of workers who will take some time off work, possibly 5 -8 working days. Each wave will last around three months and have several weeks or months in between.
- 5.2 The percentage of those who become ill and who subsequently die could be between 0.37% and 2.5%.
- 5.3 Pandemic flu will spread rapidly in schools: in 1957, for example, up to 50% of schoolchildren developed flu; but even those schools which were most severely disrupted had returned to normal four weeks after the appearance of the first case. In residential schools, attack rates reached 90%, often affecting the whole school within a fortnight. Such events will also have a major impact upon working parents.
- 5.4 School closures will have a significant impact upon business continuity and the maintenance of essential services, particularly health care, due to workers who are parents needing to stay at home to provide for childcare.

6. Clinical features of influenza

- 6.1 The clinical symptoms of influenza are

- fever, dry cough and abrupt onset
- headache
- fever (38°C to 40°C)
- runny nose and sore throat
- aching muscles and joints
- fatigue and weakness
- lack of appetite
- dry cough
- restless sleep
- chills and shivers
- indigestion
- vomiting and diarrhoea

7. How influenza is spread

- 7.1 Influenza can be spread in the following ways:

- adults can be infectious from a day before symptoms begin and this may continue for approx 5 – 7 days after onset of illness;

- children can be infectious for about 7 days and can infect others for several days before becoming ill;
- the most important routes of transmission are through large droplets (from coughing and sneezing) and direct and indirect contact with infected people;
- on hard surfaces the virus can be detectable for up to 72 hours but in viable quantities, transferable and detectable on the hands for approximately 24 hours;
- soft surfaces/furnishings: detectable for up to 24 hours but in viable quantities, transferable and detectable for only 15 minutes;
- once on hands the virus may survive for approximately five minutes, but it is easily removed by washing with soap and water, or deactivating by alcohol based hand products.

8. Infection Control

8.1 Hygiene measures need to be taken to reduce the risk of infection spreading. These include:

- covering the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, disposing of used tissues carefully, sealed in a bag and placed in a bin;
- the frequency of cleaning hard surfaces such as desks, tables, worktops, door handles, phones and keyboards should be risk-assessed by the school Health and Safety Coordinator. Advice should be sought from the schools' cleaning contractor on which chemicals to use in these areas;
- staff and students should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently with liquid soap and water for a minimum of 30 seconds and to dry them with paper towels OR by using alcohol-based gels/solutions. It is important to remember that some individuals with sensitive skin may find the continued use of alcohol-based solutions causes skin problems, so these should only be used by pupils where soap and water is not readily available;
- parents should be urged to collect from school/setting children showing signs of infection.

8.2 If someone catches flu, he or she should:

- stay at home and contact local GP or NHS Direct, providing as much information as possible on symptoms, other contact and onset times;
- rest and drink plenty of fluids.

8.3 This is both for their own health and to avoid spreading the illness to others.

9. School closures

- 9.1 Schools cannot be regarded in the same way as other organisations because of the particular needs of children. There is evidence from seasonal flu that children secrete larger quantities of the virus, and for longer, than adults. Their hygiene precautions may also be less effective. Evidence shows that other infections, for example seasonal flu, spread less among children during school holidays than during term time.
- 9.2 Depending upon the circumstances, schools may be advised to close for pupils for part of, or all of, a pandemic. Department for Children Schools and Families' (DCSF) advice is, however, that staff should be asked to continue to work if they are not ill or caring for dependants. This is consistent with Government advice to employers across all employment sectors.
- 9.3 Schools need to plan to remain open until the pandemic reaches their area, and to close once advice to that effect is received from central government via the local authority.
- 9.4 A safe staff-working ratio has been determined as at least one teacher/teaching assistant per class, with one other person available for health and safety purposes.
- 9.5 Class ratios should be based on one adult per 30 pupils.
- 9.6 For short periods of emergency (no longer than 1-2 hours), larger staff/pupil ratios may be acceptable but must be based on any ratio of staff to pupils that the school's leadership team considers appropriate and fit for purpose. For example, while it might be appropriate for the head teacher to take a large number of pupils all together at the same time, it would not be appropriate for that number to be taken by a non-qualified teacher.
- 9.7 If schools remain open during the period of a pandemic, it is important that they introduce the measures set out above (paragraph 8).
- 9.8 Following Government guidance, the County Council, in conjunction with the Health Protection Agency (HPA), will **advise** the school when to close. However, the **decision** on whether to close remains with the school. Normally, the governing body would delegate that power to the head teacher. Head teachers could use this power to close their school before the advice is given when, for example, there is a high level of staff absence. The Government believes that where schools are advised to close, head teachers will share the desire to safeguard children's health and will wish to comply with such advice. There are no plans, therefore, to use emergency powers under the Civil Contingency Act 2004 to oblige schools to close.
- 9.9 The County Council should be informed at the earliest opportunity when a Head teacher has made the decision to close the school. Please refer to the **School Emergency Management Plan** and

ensure that you report the correct level of emergency when contacting the Emergency Planning Team.

9.10 School closures should be reported to the Business Support Team:

- During Office Hours: 01392 383369
- Outside Office Hours: 07699 734637
- E-mail: emergencyschoolclosures-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
- E-mail: businesssupportcountyhallmailbox@devon.gov.uk

10. Sixth Form Colleges and School Sixth Forms

10.1 The Government expects Further Education colleges and sixth form colleges to remain open as far as possible. This expectation also applies to school sixth forms.

11. Special Schools/Residential Special Schools

11.1 The DCSF advises that some children in special schools, particularly residential special schools, have complex needs which can be met better in those schools than anywhere else. Such schools will be expected to seek the advice of their designated medical officer and then decide whether the disruption of keeping children out of school outweighs the increased risk of infection within school.

12. Re-opening of a school

12.1 If schools close following Government advice, the advice to re-open and any conditions attached to this advice would follow the same communications channels, with the County Council providing the necessary local information.

12.2 The Government is currently considering the criteria for determining when schools should re-open. This is likely to be when infection rates reach a sufficiently low level. It is possible that partial re-opening would be advised in the first instance, for example for children who have been infected and who have recovered.

13. Continuing education for pupils

13.1 In its current guidance the DCSF refers to the Local Authority's statutory duty to provide education 'at school or otherwise' for children who for any reason ("illness, exclusion or otherwise") may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.

Acknowledging the practical challenges, the current national DCSF guidance suggests that the most practical way to meet this obligation is for school staff to continue to provide support remotely for pupils working from home. For pupils without Internet Access, it is suggested that hard copy work be sent by post to the pupil's home. Schools are also invited to consider how best to

support examination year students. Further advice will be issued on managing home-based learning.

- 13.2 The South West Grid for Learning (SWGFL) provides access to remote learning through an internet learning platform known as 'Merlin'. This service offers flexible solutions, integrating management information systems, virtual learning environment and additional tools. For further information contact steve.cayley@devon.gov.uk or www.swgfl.org.uk.

14. Business Continuity

- 14.1 A business continuity incident is one that interferes with the ability of an organisation to deliver its goods or services.
- 14.2 Cabinet Office guidance ("Contingency Planning for a Possible Influenza Pandemic") emphasises the need for Business Continuity plans to include the potential impact of staff absences from work at the peak of the pandemic wave.
- 14.3 Schools need to carry out their own assessments on the basis that staff may be absent from work:
- If they are **ill with flu**
 - If they **need to care** for children or other family members
 - If they have **medical problems** not caused by flu
 - If employers have asked staff to **work from home or at another location**
 - or for **other reasons** such as there could be at any time.
- 14.4 Staff should continue to follow the school's policy for notifying absence and the **School Emergency Management Team** should identify a central number for staff to use when reporting absence during the period of the pandemic.

15. Recovery process

- 15.1 The recovery process should be planned in advance. Having a recovery plan prepared in advance can greatly assist the transition back to normality. Some bullet points are provided at **Appendix B, Recovery Action Check List to assist in this process**. These are by no means exhaustive and should be tailored to suit the needs of the school and the circumstances.

16. Health and Safety

Pandemic flu is first and foremost a public health matter. However, there are clear health and safety requirements to protect employees and young people who come into contact with infectious micro-

organisms such as the flu virus. Specific health and safety advice is provided in the DCC HS0061 Pandemic Flu Health & Safety, which is available from the Devon Health & Safety Service on 01392 382027 or on The Source, including:

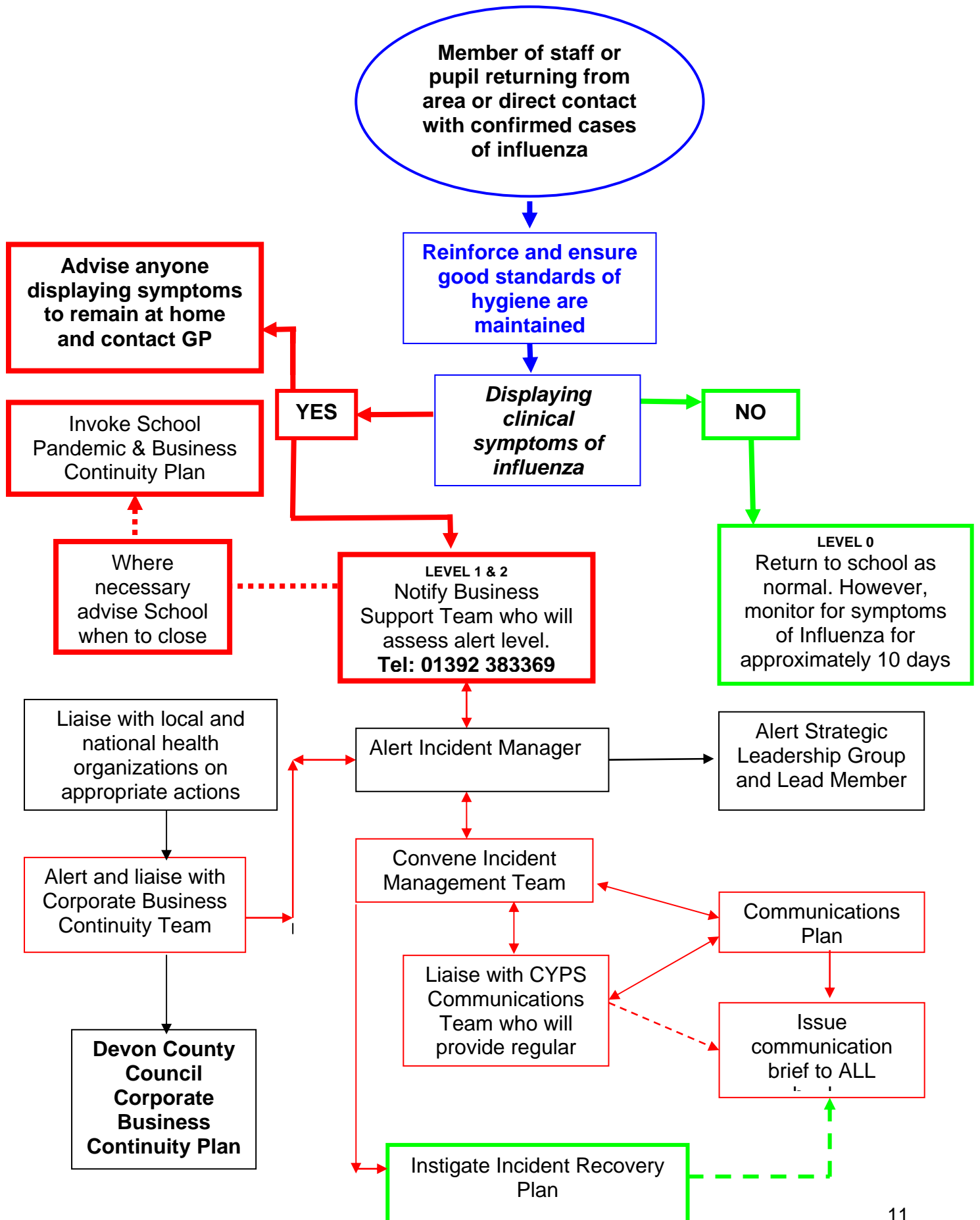
- risk assessments
- control measures (such as when to use additional Personal Protective Equipment)
- links to suitable training material for children
- a handout that should be given to all employees

17. Further Information

Appendix C provides guidance on correct hand washing procedures

Appendix D provides a list of and links to organisations that can give information about flu pandemics.

CYPS PANDEMIC RESPONSE ACTION



School Pandemic Influenza Action Check List

The following list of questions / actions should be resolved in advance of a pandemic alert so that this form can be converted into a workable plan

1. The following members of staff are empowered to make a decision on the closure and re-opening of the school
 - 1).....
or in his/her absence
 - 2).....
or in his/her absence
 - 3).....
2. Devon County Council should be contacted for all incidents on:
01392 383369 during Office Hours
E-mail: emergencyschoolclosures-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
3. The DCSF guidance on infection control has been provided to all staff and added to the curriculum. This will be repeated each term.
4.has been tasked with the provision of infection control materials/equipment as recommended in the DCSF guidance and the following arrangements have been put in place:.....
5.has been tasked with meeting with the provider of cleaning services to ensure that during a pandemic the provision of service will meet the requirements detailed in the DCSF guidance.
6. During a pandemic the school will communicate with staff, students, parents/carers via the following systems/arrangements:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)

Draft letters and information sheets have been prepared in advance and attached as appendices to this plan. They will also be provided in the following languages:

- a)
- b)

- c)
 - d)
7. Remote learning will be provided through the following arrangements:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 8.has been asked to consider how relevant information will be made available to students who are hearing or sight impaired and for those with special educational needs
 9. The contact details for staff, including email addresses, are held in hard copy (in case the person responsible is absent) and updated termly by.....
 10. The contact details for students, parents/carers, including email addresses, are held in hard copy (in case the person responsible is absent) and updated termly by
 11. Cover for absent teaching staff will be arranged by :.....
 12.has been asked to list non-teaching jobs in priority order and consider job shadowing so that the highest priority jobs can be maintained in the event of staff absences.
 13. Cover for absent non-teaching staff will arranged by
 14.has been asked to consider what pastoral arrangements need to be put in place for students and staff during or following a pandemic and whether any additional facilities or training could be put in place in advance.
 15. A contact list of willing volunteer helpers who have been CRB checked, is maintained by
 16. is responsible for reviewing or revising all risk assessments. Updated risk assessments will be shared with all staff via

School Pandemic Influenza Recovery Plan

1. Select a suitable date to re-open the school
2. Ascertain which teaching staff will be available to return to work
3. Ascertain which non-teaching staff will be available to return to work
4. Decide which year groups will return on which dates
5. Adjust curriculum in line with the above
6. Decide which facilities will not be available
7. If applicable, discuss the provision of transport with contracted provider
8. If applicable, discuss the provision of meals with contracted provider
9. Decide which methods of notification will be used e.g. letter, email, local media
10. Record details of the reopening on school answer-phone
11. Ensure that all areas are disinfected prior to reopening to staff or students
12. Review all risk assessments and the control measures in light of changes to staff, processes and procedures

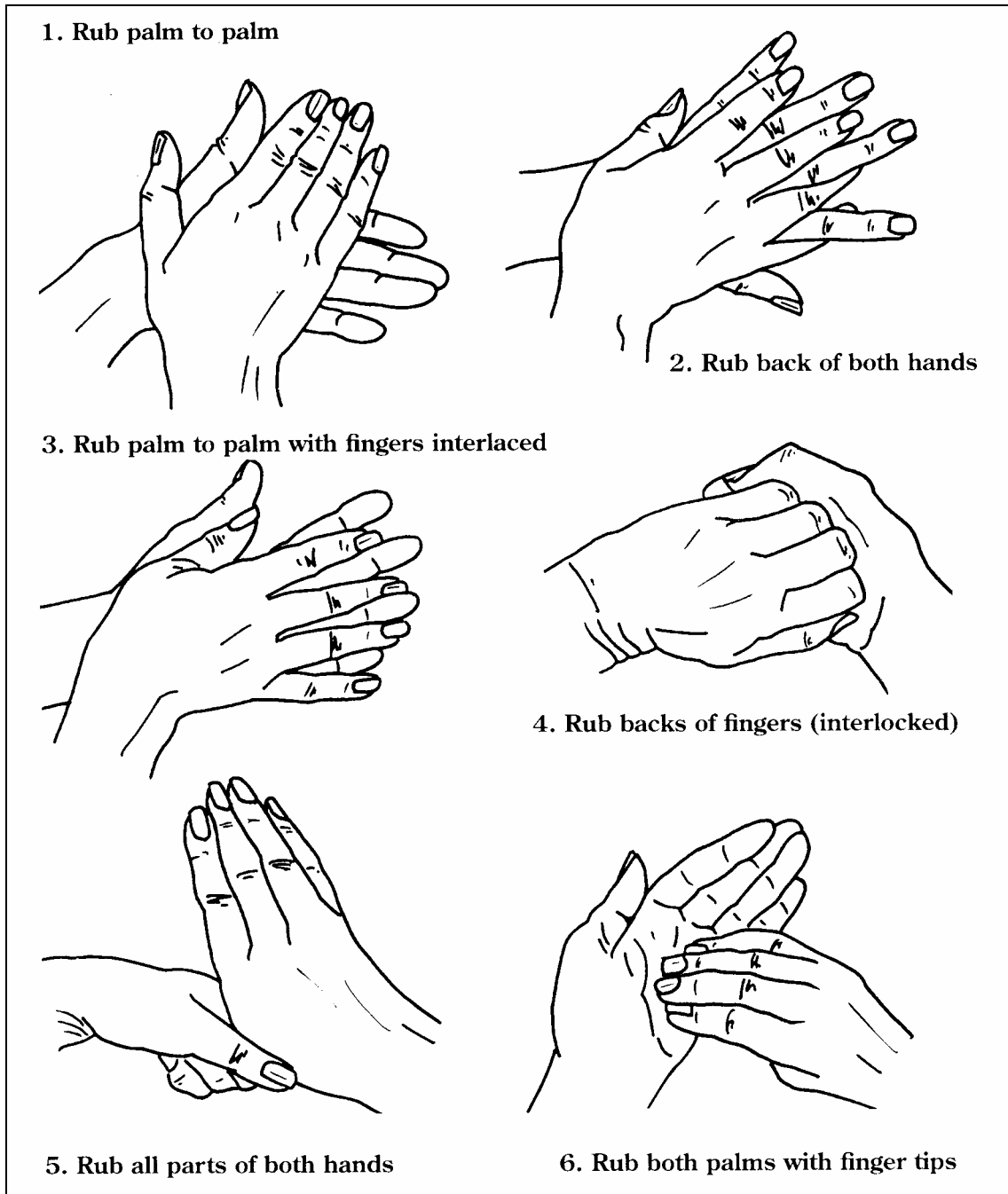
In extreme circumstances, as for any other incident with the most serious consequences:

13. Consider whether there may be a need for bereavement counselling for both staff and students

In extreme circumstances, as for any other incident with the most serious consequences:

14. Consider whether there should be a memorial service.

**THIS IS ONE OF THE SIMPLEST BUT MOST EFFECTIVE
PRECAUTIONS YOU CAN TAKE**



OTHER ADVICE IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE LINKS PROVIDED

Appendix E

Further information and links

The Devon County Council action plan for a possible flu pandemic and guidance for managers has been updated on the corporate intranet page.

For further information please see:

www4.devon.gov.uk/private/chex/emergency/bus_continuity.html

or contact Richard Horne richard.horne@devon.gov.uk

DDC HS0061 Pandemic Flu Health and Safety Guidance from the Devon Health & Safety Service on 01392 382027 or on [Source](#)

Schools and Children's Services guidance documents:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic

Government wide planning available from the Department of Health (DOH): www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu

DCSF / DOH guidance on managing medicines in schools and early years settings:

www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=product_details&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DFES-1448-2005

This has a chapter on dealing with medicines safely, including emergency procedures (e.g. staff should never take a child to hospital in their own car; it is safer to call an ambulance). Also see DCSF guidance on First Aid: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthandsafety/firstaid

Advice on supporting a school where a pupil has died is at:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthandsafety/pupildfatay

General background: NHS leaflet for families available from DOH on 08701 555 455 or dh@prolog.uk.com, or at: www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu

Information targeted at parents will be at: www.parentscentre.gov.uk or www.direct.gov.uk/Parents/fs/en

The Health Protection Agency website contains more information on relevant issues, including explaining the difference between avian, pandemic and seasonal flu:

www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/influenza/default.htm