

## Pandemic Flu & Business Continuity

On 11 June the World Health Organisation (WHO) raised the alert for a probability of Pandemic flu to level 6 –the top level which means that pandemic flu has arrived. Countries and organisations are now on alert to finalise their preparations and make sure that they are up to date.

So what does this mean for the ordinary business? Firstly it means don't panic but do review your procedures. The main wave of pandemic flu is expected to hit in the Autumn when you can expect around 40% of your employees to be off sick at any time. This will affect your processes, how you service your clients and don't forget your suppliers will be in the same position. So what can you do?

The following is only a brief overview of some of the things that you can do. We've got a few short months to prepare– let's not waste them... and remember – a good plan now won't just cover you for pandemic flu but for all the other crises that you may encounter in the future.

### For employees

- a) Start now to encourage basic hygiene. Hands should be washed regularly. Coughs and sneezes must be absorbed in a hand or tissue. Consider whether to invest in some anti-bacterial wipes or fluid to distribute in the office. Consider whether to stop the practice of hand shakes when meeting someone.
- b) Review your policy on sickness. You may want to encourage staff to stay at home if they feel ill rather than run the risk of spreading illness in the office. Remember you have a legal duty of care towards your employees and that includes not putting them at risk of catching disease.
- c) Home working. How many of your staff can work from home. Do you need to spread this so that most staff could log in from home? What security/ IT reviews do you need to enable this to take place? Should you start now to help minimise the spread of any disease in your staff?
- d) Are all your staff processes documented and your staff cross-trained in others jobs so that you have cover?

### For processes

– consider the impacts and plan for them

- a) If a pandemic is declared then the government may close schools or public transport or large gatherings. How will this affect your employees? Will this directly affect your business?
- b) Your suppliers will be in the same position as you. What do you need to consider if supplies get held up or not delivered or not even made. How will this affect you? How will this affect your clients?
- c) Your clients will also be in the same position. Will they be unable to take delivery as expected? Will they be unable to make payments as expected? How will this affect your cash flow?
- d) Infrastructure and repairs. There may be a delay on any repairs to broken equipment due to staff sickness. This may include power and water. Are your plans up to date to cover this?