

Public Health Link

From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales

Distribution:	As Appendix 1
From:	Sir Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer
Date:	16 January 2024
Reference:	CEM/CMO/2023/4
Category:	Immediate (cascade within 6 hours)
Title:	Revised Communicable Disease Outbreak Control Plan for Wales
What is this about:	The Communicable Disease Outbreak Control Plan for Wales has been revised by Public Health Wales in consultation with partners across the system and is published today.
Why has it been sent:	All services need to be aware of their responsibilities as set out in the updated plan. This revised version should be followed from now onwards to manage all communicable disease outbreaks in Wales.

Dear Colleague,

One of the most important functions of the Health Protection system in Wales is to protect the public from communicable disease outbreaks. This requires the health protection system to establish and implement effective outbreak control arrangements for communicable disease threats as they arise.

The Health Protection system needs a comprehensive Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan to inform an effective response, whether to a discrete local outbreak or to a major national outbreak. The Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (“the Outbreak Control Plan”) has been in place and used as a single, ‘all communicable disease’ plan for over 10 years.

Public Health Wales (PHW) has recently undertaken a comprehensive review of the Outbreak Control Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose. PHW worked in collaboration with key partners across the system and the review involved a range of joint working, engagement, and consultation.

The review concluded that the core parts of the Outbreak Control Plan remained fit for purpose. However, the review highlighted areas where there was a need for update and improvement, including lessons identified by partners who used the Outbreak Control Plan during and prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The review also considered recommendations from external reviews of the Health Protection system in Wales.

The revised version of the Outbreak Control Plan has now been published and can be found here:

ENG: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/the-communicable-disease-outbreak-plan-for-wales1/>

CYM: <https://icc.gig.cymru/pynciau/cynllun-ar-gyfer-brigiadau-o-achosion-o-glefydau-trosglwyddadwy-yng-nghymru/>

Key conclusions and improvements include:

- The Outbreak Control Plan is currently and will remain a single plan for 'all communicable disease'.
- The core aspects have been used/tested post pandemic and remain generally fit for purpose.
- The revised document has been restructured to remove duplication and make the document more accessible and easier to navigate.
- The flow of the document has been revised, to follow the order of key stages of outbreak management response from initial identification through to the end of an outbreak and recording any new learning identified. This includes a dedicated section which describes all aspects of 'Communication'.
- The reference to Risk Assessment in all stages of outbreak response has been strengthened, including revised wording (paragraph 1.6.5) for situations which should be considered and may influence 'outbreak declaration'.
- References to appropriate 'escalation' process including to Welsh Government have been strengthened. This includes the update and retention of specific narrative and links to Wales Civil Contingency arrangements (Part 7) but also includes other scenarios, (supported by algorithms) where e.g., Wales wide co-ordination maybe required (paragraph 1.10).
- Roles and Responsibilities of Outbreak Control Team (OCT) members during the initial response and management of any 'declared' outbreak were agreed to be generally 'fit for purpose' and remain largely unchanged.
- Roles and responsibilities of partner organisations in outbreak management response have been clarified.
- Further clarity (and a supporting algorithm) has been included which addresses situations where 'an outbreak is not declared' and alternative management arrangements are established to respond to a communicable disease situation (paragraph 1.5).
- Requirements relating to changes in legislation, including following the UK leaving the EU and the recent introduction of the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020 have been incorporated.
- The Outbreak Control Plan has been aligned with other existing Wales plans including for Civil Contingency response. Part 7 – Activating Civil Contingency arrangements in Wales has been

reviewed and updated to ensure alignment with the existing, all hazard, Pan-Wales Response Plan.

- Finally, to facilitate audit and continuous improvement, 'Standards for Outbreak Management' have been adopted.

I record my thanks to PHW and to partners across the system for the collaborative and thorough nature of this review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Frank Atherton', written in a cursive style.

Sir Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer

To: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

All General Practitioners - please ensure this message is seen by all practice nurses and non-principals working in your practice and retain a copy in your 'locum information pack'.

All Community Pharmacists

Deputising services

HB Chief Pharmacists

HB Prescribing Advisers

Independent/Private clinics and Hospitals and Hospices throughout Wales

To: Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives

Medical Directors

Nurse Directors

Directors of Public Health

Hospital Principals and Chief Pharmacists

Onward distribution to:

Immunisation Leads,

Infectious Disease Departments

Acute medical units

Microbiologists

To: Public Health Wales:

Chief Executive

Director of Public Health Services

Consultants in Pharmaceutical Public Health

Consultants in Communicable Disease Control

Microbiologists

Regional Epidemiologists

Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme

Cc: NHS Direct Wales
British Medical Association
Royal College of GPs
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Midwives
Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Community Pharmacy Wales
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Wales