Introduction
The government advises that, wherever possible, business should operate as usual during a flu pandemic. Estyn will remain operational during a flu pandemic unless staff shortages or other local factors, such as a failure in the transport networks or critical infrastructure, make it impossible to continue operating. Estyn has business continuity plans in place that would be activated as and when a pandemic escalates in severity.

This guidance sits within the context that there will be no suspension of Estyn’s wide-ranging statutory inspection and reporting responsibilities and the requirement for providers to continue to operate in compliance with those statutory responsibilities.

Estyn’s response to the current flu pandemic will need to be reviewed and, where necessary, changed as the pandemic evolves and further information becomes available or the impacts are better understood.

Principles
Estyn will be guided by the following principles in recognition of the likely pressures on providers and on itself in managing its own resources in a pandemic:

- minimising the harm that a pandemic could cause;
- working together;
- keeping things in proportion; and
- flexibility.

Inspection work and additional activities
In carrying out its work, Estyn will seek to maintain its current inspection patterns and methodology. Estyn will manage the work responsibly within changing circumstances. Should the current flu pandemic escalate, a judgement will be made in each case about the appropriateness of visiting a provider.

We will expect providers to continue to operate in compliance with statutory responsibilities and Estyn’s inspection framework. We also expect that any supplementary advice about regulations from WAG or advice from the Chief Medical Officer or other public health bodies will also be taken into account.

If a decision is made not to visit a provider this will be formally communicated to the provider with a requirement that learners and parents (where applicable) are informed.

We will apply the same approach to our additional activities, including the investigation of complaints, monitoring and survey visits and registration visits for independent schools.
Questions and Answers on the flu pandemic

Schools / colleges / careers companies / ACL and WBL providers

Q1. There are a number of pupils/learners/staff absent because of the flu pandemic. Will the inspection go ahead?

A. This would be considered on a case-by-case basis and the outcome would depend on the actual numbers of absentees. Where there are significant numbers of learners or members of staff absent, Estyn will consider one of the following.

Estyn may:
• defer the inspection and reschedule in consultation with the school/provider/contractor;
• go ahead but take into account the absences and set judgments in the context of the current situation; or
• reduce the number of days for inspection.

Q2. How will inspectors make a judgement on attendance where a provider has been affected by the flu pandemic?

A. In inspecting attendance, where the flu pandemic is the major cause of absence, previous patterns of attendance will be taken into account. In addition, the report will clearly explain the context of the inspection.

Local Authorities

Q3. We have a number of schools due to be inspected and all are affected both in terms of staff and pupil absences. Will the inspections go ahead?

A. Please see Q1 above.

School Inspection Contractors

Q4. What will happen if the school we are due to inspect is closed because of the flu pandemic?

A. Estyn will advise contractors of the school closure and ask them to contact the school/LEA as soon as possible to arrange alternative dates for the inspection.

Q5. What if members of the team I wish to deploy on inspection are unwell and cannot be used?

A. As a contractor, you have a contractual responsibility to carry out the inspection and we would expect you to find suitable replacements for the inspection team and inform Estyn of the revised inspection team. However, if this is not possible then we would expect you to inform Estyn immediately and contact the school/LEA to agree alternative dates for the inspection.
Inspectors

Q6. I have a contract as an Additional Inspector. What happens if the inspection I am due to take part in is cancelled?

A. In accordance with section 23 of your contract, Estyn has the right to terminate the contract under certain circumstances.

Section 23.5 states ‘Should the services not be required at the time of the inspection due to circumstances beyond the control of Estyn, then the Contract will be terminated and Estyn will not be liable for any payment to the Contractor.’

Q7. I am a Foundation Phase Inspector. What happens if I’m ill on the day of inspection or the setting is closed due to the flu pandemic?

A. You have a contractual responsibility to carry out the inspection. We would expect you to renegotiate with the setting and agree suitable revised dates for the inspection as soon as possible. You should inform Estyn of the revised inspection dates.

Q8. I work in a provider that has a number of absent learners due to the flu pandemic. Will I be able to go ahead as the peer assessor on an inspection?

A. You should attend the inspection unless you are not well enough to do so. You should make sure you are familiar with the symptoms of the flu pandemic and if you develop symptoms, stay at home and inform Estyn (02920 446446) and, if appropriate, inform the Contractor/Registered Inspector of your unavailability.

Further information

Further information including health advice can be found at the Welsh Assembly Government website at www.wales.gov.uk, the NHS Direct Wales website www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk, the National Public Health Service for Wales website at www.nphs.wales.nhs.uk and the Health Protection Agency website at www.hpa.org.uk.

You can also call the Swine Flu Information line on 0800 1 513 513 for recorded information, or NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 for health advice.

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