

Dear

## **ATISN 17066 – Pandemic Planning**

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information received on 19 January 2023 which will be dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) (FOIA). You have since provided clarification of parts of the request on 9 February.

You have requested the following:

- 1. Please provide a copy of the SARS / MERS coronavirus plan most recently performed by the Welsh Government?*
- 2. What is the method used by those planning pandemic exercises to determine which organisations are placed on the Welsh Government risk register?*
- 3. What is the method used by the Welsh Government to prioritise their risk register?*
- 4. Were the Welsh Government and NHS Wales active participants in Exercise Alice (2016)?*
- 5. When did the Welsh Government receive the Exercise Alice report?*
- 6. Please send electronic copies of the first document, email and/or presentation available to Welsh Government teams, affirming/describing a risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission via the airborne (i.e. via inhalation/aerosols) route secondary to normal physiological processes such as shouting, coughing, sneezing, speech and/or breathing.*
- 7. When did Public Health Wales first receive and review Tim Spector’s June 2020 preprint data regarding the full range of symptoms (and their onset timing) following SARS-CoV-2 infection <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.06.12.20129056v1>?*
- 8. Please send electronic copies of any documents, presentations and/or emails describing/detailing Public Health Wales’s consideration of these data resulting following its receipt.*
- 9. Please provide electronic copies of any documents, emails and/or presentations describing ‘standard operating procedure’ for data sharing the national systems/processes/policies employed to assure optimal sharing/communication of workplace safety data between NHS Wales health boards between Jan 1st 2020 and June 1st 2021*

## **Our Response**

### **Question 1**

The most appropriate document to link to is [Wales’ long-term COVID-19 transition from pandemic to endemic | GOV.WALES](#) as the most recent WG-wide plan. There are links to previous plans in the introduction to the long-term plan, which provides a comprehensive picture of our published plans since 2020.

### **Question 2**

The Welsh Government adheres to the “Main Principles” for risk management in government set out in HM Treasury’s *The Orange Book; Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts (2019, updated 2020)*. The Welsh Government Risk Register outlines those

risks which are so critical to the organisation and those of a corporate nature whose impact would be felt across the whole organisation, it does not detail individual organisations.

### **Question 3**

The Welsh Government manages risks in accordance with HM Treasury's '*The Orange Book; Management of Risk– Principles and Concepts (2019, updated 2020)*'

### **Question 4**

This was an England only exercise but devolved administrations were invited to attend to observe only.

### **Question 5**

Welsh Government received a hard copy of the Exercise Alice Report in 2016 but we have no record of the specific date it was received.

### **Question 6**

Routes of SARS-CoV-2 transmission was discussed extensively by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE). The Welsh Government Chief Scientific Adviser-Health began attending SAGE-COVID from 11 February 2020.

The records of SAGE meeting discussions are available here ([Government publishes SAGE minutes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)). SAGE papers fed into Welsh Government technical and scientific advice ([Technical Advisory Cell | GOV.WALES](#)). As SARS-CoV2 was a newly described human virus there were many uncertainties about all aspects of the disease, including routes of transmission. SAGE subgroups such as NERVTAG (New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group) and EMG (Environmental Modelling Group) considered the available evidence to help underpin our understanding of the virus and disease transmission and in turn inform policies. The National Core Studies Programme ([National Core Studies programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) was also an important vehicle to help develop the evidence around routes of transmission for the disease, however there was a great many scientific studies both nationally and internationally that contributed to the evidence base.

### **Questions 7 & 8**

We do not hold this information. It may be available from Public Health Wales: - [Contact Us - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

### **Question 9**

**PLEASE NOTE - We have interpreted this question is asking for standard operating procedures related to healthcare environments to protect staff and patients including infection and prevention control.**

Welsh Government issued national guidance during the pandemic including the '[Operational guide for the safe return of healthcare environments to routine arrangements following the initial Covid-19 response](#)', and 'A Principles Framework to assist the NHS in Wales to return urgent and planned services in hospital settings during COVID-19'. A copy of this document is attached together with the covering letter issued by the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer.

Throughout the pandemic the UK COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidance has been the main source of COVID-19 related IPC guidance. The UK IPC Guidance (COVID-19) was archived at end of May 2022. The UK COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidance was first published in January 2020 and was regularly reviewed and updated throughout the pandemic. All versions of the guidance are archived in the National Archives and can be accessed via the link [UK Government Web Archive \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Major changes to the guidance were communicated via e-mail from PHW, circulated to key personnel across health and social care in Wales and also highlighted in Welsh Government meetings and communications. Updates to the guidance appeared on the same IPC Guidance link [COVID-19: infection prevention and control \(IPC\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Welsh Government does not hold information on data that may have been shared between health boards.

### **Next steps**

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,  
Welsh Government,  
Cathays Park,  
Cardiff,  
CF10 3NQ  
or Email: [Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales](mailto:Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales)

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House,  
Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire,  
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely