



<b>Serious Viral Epidemic or Pandemic Policy</b>	
<b>Latest Review: February 2025</b>	<b>Next Review: February 2026</b>
<p><b>Compliance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health &amp; Social Care Act 2008</li> <li>• The Food Hygiene Regulations 2006</li> <li>• The Health &amp; Safety at Work Act 1975</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Associated Policies:</b></p> <p>Infection Control                      Health &amp; Safety                      COSSH                      First Aid                      PPE                      Waste Management                      Cleaning &amp; Laundry</p>	
<p><b>1. INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p>Some infections such as some strains of influenza, SARs or the Coronavirus are highly infectious viral illnesses that have the capacity to spread rapidly. When a new viral strain emerges, one of the following situations may occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A serious epidemic - where a disease infects a significantly greater number of people in the area than is usual, or</li> <li>• A pandemic – which is an epidemic of global proportions</li> </ul> <p>Such an illness will spread rapidly because people will not have any natural resistance to it. It is difficult to predict the scale, severity and impact of a serious epidemic or pandemic, but research suggests that in the case of a pandemic, it could affect the entire country and that up to half the population could develop the illness. There could also be more than one wave of the illness.</p> <p>During a serious viral epidemic or pandemic, Assist Trust’s overall aim will be to encourage staff [and volunteers] to carry on as normal if they are well, while taking additional precautions to protect them from exposure to infection and to lessen the risk of spread to others.</p> <p>In terms of business continuity, this means that we will seek to sustain our core business and services as far as is practicable and therefore we will continue to operate largely within the existing framework of policies and procedures. However, we</p>	

recognise that during such times some additional provisions will be required to support staff and volunteers.

## **2. During a Serious Epidemic or Pandemic**

During a recognised viral epidemic or pandemic, Assist Trust will implement the following provisions:

### **2.1 Communications:**

Regular communications, guidance, information and support will be made available from the Chief Executive and managers via email, telephone or during handover / meetings. Staff should monitor these sources closely to stay up to date with what is happening within the workplace, what action is being taken to ensure Assist Trust meets its obligations to staff, volunteers, members and other stakeholders and what action staff themselves should be taking.

### **2.2 Additional Hygiene Arrangements:**

In line with Government and Department of Health guidelines Assist Trust will provide, handwashing facilities, handwash soap, antibacterial sanitiser (when available) and tissues located throughout its premises and staff will be encouraged and reminded to use these regularly.

All surfaces, door handles, banister rails, telephones, computer keyboards etc. will be cleaned frequently and staff are encouraged to undertake this in their own work area on a daily basis.

All waste bins will be emptied daily.

Staff and volunteers will be encouraged and reminded to always use clean tissues or the crook of their elbow to cover their mouth / nose when they cough / sneeze (not to use their hands, a cloth handkerchief or to re-use tissues) and to wash / sanitise their hands regularly and specifically after coughing or sneezing.

### **2.3 Visitors**

In public-facing areas Assist Trust will provide antibacterial sanitiser (when available), disposable tissues and covered bins for public use, staff to encourage the public to use these items.

## **3. Staff or volunteers with symptoms / positive confirmation of illness**

Assist will respond to government guidance over the management of situations when staff, volunteers or members have symptoms of the viral illness during an outbreak / pandemic and will conduct organisational risk assessments in relation to all related measures and precautions.

Guidance will also be sought in regards to all aspects of running the organisation, specifically in relation to the following:

- Entitlement to sick pay during the outbreak
- Staff who have difficulty attending work (without symptoms themselves)
- Using Annual Leave
- Working flexibly in order to maintain business operations as normally as possible

#### **4.0 Post Epidemic/Pandemic Considerations**

After the first wave of such an illness Assist Trust acknowledges that staff will need time to completely recover their full fitness and performance levels. Managers will ensure that staff who had been asked to work extended hours, or were denied their planned leave are given annual leave or TOIL where at all possible. However, the possibility of subsequent waves has to be kept in mind and Assist Trust will discuss with staff the lessons learnt from the current epidemic / pandemic and continue with preparations required to cope with subsequent waves.

#### **Signed and Authorised by:**

Name:

Role:

Date:

Name:

Role:

Date: