

From: Diane Morton, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
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To: Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee – 21 January 2026

Subject: Exercise Pegasus – Summary of Exercise

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Summary: This report summarises the phases of Exercise Pegasus a four nations 'Tier 1' exercise to test the UK's preparedness for a future pandemic. The Kent and Medway Resilience Forum coordinated the local participation in the exercise. A full report will be published by the Government in 2026.

Recommendation(s): The Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** on the content of this report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Exercise Pegasus, the 'Tier 1' national (four nations) pandemic preparedness exercise led by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), concluded live participation in November 2025. The exercise has been designed to assess the progress since Covid-19 and test the UK's preparedness and capabilities arrangements to response to future pandemics.
- 1.2 Exercise Pegasus has been the largest simulation of a pandemic in UK history, involving every government department, the devolved governments, representation from arms-length bodies, Local Resilience Fora, and the engagement of businesses, academics, and external stakeholders.
- 1.3 In Kent and Medway, the Exercise was coordinated by the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum (KMRF) on behalf of participating system partners.

2 Definition of Pandemics

- 2.1 Pandemics are the emergence of a novel pathogen (virus, bacteria, fungi or other organisms that cause disease) that is spreading quickly around the world due to lack of population immunity.
- 2.2 Previous pandemics include:
 - 1918 - Spanish flu

- 1957 - Asian flu
- 1968 - Hong Kong flu
- 2009 - H1N1 swine flu
- 2020 - COVID-19

2.3 A pandemic remains the top risk of the UK's National Risk Register, and experts are clear that it is a case of 'when' and not 'if' the UK will experience another pandemic.

3. National Pandemic Response Plan

3.1 The Department of Health and Social Care are leading overall on the Pandemic Preparedness Programme, in partnership with the NHS, UKHSA, Cabinet Office, and other Arm's Length Bodies.

3.2 Work is underway to develop a national Pandemic Response Plan which will set out national roles and responsibilities, and how the health and social care system will respond to a pandemic occurring and for different routes of transmission. A date for the publication of a national Pandemic Response Plan has not been set yet.

4. Exercise Pegasus Core Objectives

4.1 Exercise decision making processes for measures to contain, control or mitigate the impact of a pandemic including how relevant priority lessons from previous civil emergency exercises and outbreaks of disease have been embedded.

4.2 Exploring the impact of inequalities, and their consideration within pandemic decision making.

4.3 Investigate likely impacts of government decision on the health and care system, local responders, communities, businesses, civil society and the general public.

4.4 Examine processes for the scaling up of relevant capabilities that would be needed as part of a cross-government pandemic response.

4.5 Investigate the effectiveness of coordination, including the exchange of information flows, between different tiers in the UK response.

4.6 Test the strategic response to disinformation and misinformation.

4.7 Enable and support local exercising of selected capabilities and response issues.

4.8 Identify and report on relevant areas of learning to impact future pandemic preparedness.

5. Stages of Exercise Pegasus and Scenarios

5.1 Across three phases, held in September, October and November, participants were challenged to respond across the key phases of a pandemic - emergence, containment and mitigation. A fourth phase (recovery) is planned for 2026.

- Phase 1 Emergence – cases detected globally and initial assessment of a few 'hot spots' within UK.
- Phase 2 Containment – disease continues to spread globally with several large 'hot spots' in the UK that impact social behaviour.
- Phase 3 Mitigation - there is widespread impact across the UK which causes significant impact on 'normal life' and public services.

5.2 Exercise Pegasus was based on a novel enterovirus originating from a fictional island. Enteroviruses are a group of viruses that usually cause mild illnesses but can lead to serious conditions such as meningitis or acute flaccid paralysis. Whilst the exercise used a single disease to drive the scenario, learning will be applicable across a range of diseases and modes of transmission. The government continues to plan and prepare for a range of pandemic and emerging infectious disease scenarios.

5.3 Local Resilience Fora, including the KMRF were requested to participate in the exercise through completion of a workbook for each of the exercise phases.

6. Next Steps

6.1 KCC Public Health are leading on the development of a KMRF Pandemic Response Framework. The Framework will supplement the KCC Emergency Response Framework.

6.2 The draft Framework will undergo a consultation process led by the KMRF in early 2026.

6.3 The UK Government will publish a report on Exercise Pegasus in 2026.

6.4 A date for the completion of the national Pandemic Response Plan is not yet known.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Exercise Pegasus, a national exercise to test the UK's preparedness for a future pandemic was run in the autumn of 2025. The Kent and Medway Resilience Forum coordinated the participation of local system partners. A full report by the UK Government will be published in 2026.

7.2 KCC Public Health are leading on the development of a KMRF Pandemic Response Framework that will supplement the KCC Emergency Response Framework.

8. Recommendation

8.1 The Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** the content of this report.

9. Report Author

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