Academic Guardians UK

Contingency Care Plan for Pandemic Occurences

This document is designed to present a policy and contingency plan for AGUK in response to any boarding students in our care being affected by exposure to any of the above whilst in the UK. Included in such incidences could be a reoccurrence of the H1N1 Virus of Swine Flu, or serious influenza outbreaks. The contingency plan is designed to give a suggested solution to a potential problem; to set out and explain the limitations of AGUK as an AEGIS accredited Guardianship Organisation.

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Policy owner	Updated	Review date
Andrew Kettle	August 2024	August 2025

Academic Guardians UK Ltd – Contingency Care Plan for Pandemic Occurences

Policy: Contingency Care Plan for Pandemic Occurrences

Summary: This document is designed to present a policy and contingency plan for AGUK in response to any boarding students in our care being affected by exposure to any of the above whilst in the UK. Included in such incidences could be a resurgence of Covid-19, or the reoccurnce of the H1N1 Virus of Swine Flu, or serious influenza outbreaks. The contingency plan is designed to give a suggested solution to a potential problem; to set out and explain the limitations of AGUK as an AEGIS accredited Guardianship Organisation.

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Policy Owner: Andrew Kettle (Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead) Update: August 2025

Next Review Date: August 2025

1. Contingency Care Plan for Pandemic Occurrences

   Pandemics can occur with little warning and whereas an agreement and understanding of responsibilities of schools and guardianship organisations has been established for many years, the situation caused by the Swine Flu pandemic showed that all parties face new problems and their solutions from time to time. This document discusses the following potential situations :

   - Term Time:
     - the possibility of a student(s) contracting a pandemic---type virus whilst at school where that school remains open
     - a school closing due to a pandemic type situation
   - Holiday Time:
     - a student(s) contracting a pandemic---type virus shortly before exeat, half term or a main holiday period giving rise to the need for care due to a restriction or prohibition to travel
     - a student contracting a pandemic---type virus whilst in the host family

2. Term Time – contracting a pandemic type virus in school during term time and the school remaining open

   Research shows that the majority of schools have a contingency plan to care for any overseas boarding student in their school who may contract a pandemic type virus during term time whilst the school remains open. Whilst preferring such a student to go home and be cared for by parents/educational guardians if well enough to travel, never the less they do not insist on the student being removed when contagious and unwell and indeed recognise this is not always possible. In consultation with these schools, the Department of Health and the BSA believe this policy to be correct, realistic and in line with the National Minimum boarding standards.

   However, there are some schools who state in their guidelines that should an overseas student contract a contagious or infectious illness then they expect the parents/educational guardian to remove that student immediately, with no apparent flexibility or understanding that this may not be feasible and could contravene the advice given by the Department of Health at that time.

   Whilst respecting that schools have the right to publish their individual policies relating to a pandemic situation, AGUK as a guardianship organisations may not always be able to fulfil such policy requirements.

2.1 AGUK Responsibilites

Part of a guardianship organisation's responsibility is to provide a safe environment for a student to stay during exeats, half terms, some longer holidays or when students arrive early or depart late at the beginning and end of terms and also on the occasion where a student is suspended or expelled. It is widely known that homestay host families are contracted by guardianship organisations to fulfil this role. However, their care services are not enforceable and it is not in the contract between a guardianship organisation and homestay host family that the latter should take in a student who is contagious – and indeed in many cases it would not be fair to ask them to do so.

2.2 Homestay Host Families

AGUK doe have a small number of families who would be able to help in the case of a pandemic – but these are very much in the minority and any decision would be dependent on the situation at the time. It would be considered wrong to ask a homestay host family with underlying health issues, young children or elderly relatives to take a student in such a situation.

Homestay Host families are the main standard source of accommodation for students cared for by AGUK. AGUK does not have medical facilities or isolation units – and nor does the NHS provide facilities for the general public. It is therefore clear that as a guardianship organisation, we may not be able to arrange accommodation for a student who has contracted a pandemic type virus and remove them immediately from school.

Experience to date shows that the general attitude of overseas parents is that they would expect a school to take care of their child should he/she fall ill during term time. In some cases AGUK has been asked by parents not to remove a sick child from school. As a contract exists between the guardianship organisation and the parent, therefore a child cannot be removed from school without parental permission. A signed authority or medical release would be required from the parent in the case of such a withdrawal from school to protect AGUK's liability should the student become seriously ill or worse.

2.3 Contractul Obligations

In summary, it is therefore understood that should AGUK be asked by a school to rehouse a sick student if well enough to travel and having parental permission, then AGUK will try and accommodate the request. However schools must accept that if AGUK is unable to carry out the request then the school must care for the student on school premises.

2.4 Where a school closes during term time due to a pandemic outbreak

It is accepted that if a school closes, the guardianship organisation will collect any healthy child and accommodate them in the normal way.

AGUK accepts that any students suffering from a pandemic outbreak are our responsibility when the school is closed. However, if we are unable to place them in a host family, a contingency plan to take them under the our care will become effective (See Appendix 1). Schools are asked to understand that parental permission and medical advice will be required by the guardianship organisation before students are moved if they are unwell so as not to put the child's health at risk nor jeopardise any agreement with the parents.

3. Holiday Time

AGUK accepts that any students contracting a pandemic type virus who cannot travel home or go to a host family during exeats/half terms/ longer holidays, are our responsibility.

We also accept that should a student fall ill whilst at a homestay host family they are under our care and remain so until the student is well enough to return to school even if this extends beyond the holiday period into term time.

4. Summary

In summary, AGUK wish to reassure schools that if a school closes and students are unable to travel, an emergency contingency plan will be in place to enable the guardianship organisation to take the student under our care until such time that they are fit enough to either return back home or to school.

AGUK would like schools to take these term time limitations into account and ask them to accept responsibility for the care of their students at such times.

Appendix 1 – Contingency Care Plan

AGUK accepts that any students suffering from a pandemic outbreak are our responsibility when the school is closed. However, if we are unable to place them in a host family, a contingency plan to take them under our care will become effective (See Appendix 1). Schools are asked to understand that parental permission and medical advice will be required by the guardianship organisation before students are moved if they are unwell so as not to put the child's health at risk nor jeopardise any agreement with the parents.

In the absence of local homestay hosts AGUK where travel is possible, may have to relocate the students to areas where homestay hosts are available, which may not necesseraly mean in their local school vicinity.

AGUK has identified several homestay hosts that can accommodate several students so may have to closely consider the feasibility of placing more than 3 students in each homestay, so far as the students will not have to share a room with a person of the opposite sex or where there may be significant age differences.

Where the needs may be greater than AGUK can accommodate, it will seek avice from AEGIS the accreditation body, the British Council, The Independent Schools Council (ISC), The Boarding Schools Association (BSA) and the Department of Health to assits with discussing alternative measures which can be implemented, without compromising or placing students in potential harm.

Appendix 2 (Good Practice)

Minimise the risk of spread of flu and recognising the symptoms of flu

Simple steps to minimise the risk of spread of contagion:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the risks of spreading the virus from your hands to your face or to other people.
- Wear a face mask when traveling on public transport or in congested areas.Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, use a tissue whenever possible and wash your hands immediately afterwards.
- Dispose of used tissues promptly and carefully - bag and bin them.
- Clean hard surfaces and door handles with detergent daily
- Don't share unwashed cups or cutlery
- Avoid non-essential travel and crowds at times of higher risk
- If you have been to an area where contagion is prevalent, avoid contact with people if possible until the incubation period for the infection has passed.

If you feel unwell, with a cough, aching limbs or joints, headaches and a temperature of 38 degrees centigrade, you should;

- stay in your room and rest and
- take cold or flu remedies to relieve the symptoms
- take specific anti-viral medication, if that is available to you
- Anti-viral medication, must only be employed under medical supervision, and in line with the instructions supplied with the medication, very soon after an individual has begun to exhibit symptoms.

If you have the following warning signs you should phone your doctor immediately;

- getting worse after seeming to get better
- no improvement and temperature not coming down after 4 days, severe or increasing breathlessness or difficulties breathing drowsiness or confusion
- coughing up blood

The importance of hand washing

It is important to keep your hands clean because we all unconsciously touch our mouths, noses and ears many times each day, which allows the ready transfer of cold and flu viruses from unclean hands.

When washing your hands, wet them with clean, comfortably hot water and apply soap and work up lather by rubbing your hands together briskly. Do this for at least 20 seconds. Avoid bars of soap, use sanitizer dispensers where possible.

Dry your hands using paper towels or a warm air dryer if possible.

Pandemic flu planning checklist for individuals and families to plan for a pandemic:

Stock a supply of water and food. It may be difficult to get to a supermarket or shop or they may be out of stock of essential items. Have any non-prescription drugs and health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, vitamins etc.

Have a supply of specific government approved anti-viral medication to hand, if that is available to you

Let your students know the arrangements AGUK and schools are making for a pandemic, especially those unable to travel home

To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

Teach children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, wear face masks when directed to do so, to dispose of tissues carefully and to wash hands frequently with antibacterial soap and water.

Keep children away from those who are ill as much as possible and to stay away from school or work if they or you are ill.

Foodstuffs to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

Keep in mind that utilities such as water, gas and electric may be affected during a pandemic too, so stocks of foodstuffs should be non-perishable, not require refrigeration, should be easy to prepare and require little or no water so you can conserve water for drinking.

Examples of food and non- perishables	*Examples of medical, health & emergency supplies*
Ready to eat canned meats & fruits	Prescribed medicines
Protein or fruit bars	Liquid soap & alcohol based hand washes
Dry cereal, e.g. rice, pasta etc	Pain relievers & anti-inflammatories
Nuts & dried fruit	Thermometer
Crackers & biscuits	Anti-diarrhoeal medication
Canned juices	Vitamins
Plenty of bottled water (min 1 litre /hd/dy)	Torch & batteries
Cans or jars of babyfood	Portable radio
Pet food	Can opener
	Rubbish sacks
	Tissue paper, toilet paper
	Disposable nappies