

# **Staffing contingency plan for pandemic preparedness**

**July 2009**

**Prepared by Human Resources**

## **During a pandemic**

- Log all leave for each shift
- Practice hand hygiene and social distancing
- Contact the HR team if you have question about this booklet

## Waikato DHB employee pandemic preparedness

Winter is traditionally a busy time for us with an influx of patients and higher numbers of staff off sick than in the summer. This year we are planning for more than the usual numbers of staff to be away either: sick themselves or to care for sick dependents. We are also expecting staff to be away if schools close.

### HR service strategy

The HR service strategy to support management of this unusual situation is to:

- Collect, collate and provide real time information to the organisation about absenteeism to enable the organisation to implement staffing escalation plans.
- Create additional staff accessible in clinical areas for operational managers to access retired staff, and advise casual staff they may receive requests to increase hours.
- Implement escalation plans for staffing from the community based on trended absenteeism / disease patterns.
- Provide information for staff about their own health and safety, leave, and flexible work options.
- Provide employee information to operational managers to assist with any reassignment of duties to cover absences.
- Continue to maintain core HR services during a pandemic.
- Lead a vaccination programme when a vaccine is available.

### Booklet

This booklet contains as much information as managers and staff will need to manage the pandemic that is available at this time. We will publish updates to the booklet as required. The components of the booklet are replicated on the Waikato DHB intranet. This booklet is in sections for all staff, managers, and team leaders together with another section for managers and team leaders.

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### Feedback

We encourage you to read the information in this booklet and contact any member of the HR team if you have any further questions or require clarification.

## Section 1: For all staff / managers / team leaders

### Contacts

Service	Contact
Human Resources	Ext: 8949
Health and Safety	Ext: 8608
RMO unit	Ext: 8699, 23109, 23128
Infection Control	Ext: 23136, 23284, 23411, 23040, 23044
Payroll helpdesk	Ext: 7647
Information Services service desk	Ext: 7899
Waikato Hospital enquiries	Ext: 8666
Waikato Hospital duty managers	Ext: 8139, 27003, 021 504 638
Operations manager on-call	Duty manager or WH switchboard
Population Health	Ext: 2061

Rural and Community Services	
Matariki	07 871 7479
Rhoda Read	07 889 7039
Thames Hospital	07 868 6550
Tokoroa Hospital	07 886 7239
Te Kuiti Hospital	07 878 7333
Taumarunui Hospital	07 896 0020
Community Services Vialou St	Ext: 2800

Add '2' to the front of any four-digit number if you are calling from a cell phone.

Healthline	0800 611 116
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Useful website:

<http://www.waikatodhb.govt.nz/page/pageid/2145845231>

## Frequently asked questions – July 2009

We developed these FAQs to answer questions arising in the current scenario, which is that there will:

- be increased absenteeism across the workforce of up to 30 per cent
- a significant closure of schools; and
- hopefully be a vaccine available in December / January 2010.

We recommend you familiarise yourself with these FAQs in advance, and contact HR on ext. 8949 should you have any other questions or require clarification.

### 1. Staff information

#### What is influenza?

Influenza (the flu) is a highly infectious illness caused by a virus. It is much more serious than a common cold and will leave you ill for up to 10 days.

#### What is the difference between influenza and a cold?

Influenza symptoms	Cold symptoms
Sudden onset of illness  Moderate to severe illness lasting 7-10 days	Mild illness
Fever (usually high)	Mild fever
Headache (may be severe)	Mild headache (congested sinuses)
Dry cough may become moist	Sometimes a cough
Muscles aches	Muscle pain uncommon
Shivering	A runny nose
Bed rest necessary  Can suffer severe complications (pneumonia)	

#### Can I still get the seasonal influenza vaccine?

If you have not had a vaccine, you are encouraged to call Health and Safety on (07) 839 8608, to make an appointment. Vaccines are available until 30 September 2009.

#### Will the seasonal influenza vaccine protect me against the new H1N1 virus?

The usual yearly influenza vaccine will not protect you against a new pandemic, but it will help stop you getting ill with other influenza viruses. Because these viruses change all the time, you need a vaccination every year.

**Will I be prescribed Tamiflu?**

Treat signs and symptoms of influenza in the usual way and only see your GP if required. Only people who have severe symptoms or have chronic conditions will be prescribed Tamiflu by their general practitioner.

**When there is a vaccine available for H1N1 will the DHB provide it for staff?**

Yes, we will mount a special vaccination programme for staff – focusing on those working in clinical areas in the first instance.

**When should I wear a mask in the community?**

Practice / encourage separation of people (one-metre space).

If a patient/person is coughing then encourage the patient/person to wear a mask.

If you are required to complete a procedure (e.g. take a swab), and there is a risk of coming into contact with secretions / saliva, you are required to wear a mask along with your other recommended personal protective equipment (PPE).

**When should I wear a mask in the hospital?**

A patient admitted with suspected or confirmed H1N1 will go into 'droplet isolation precautions'.

Adhering to droplet precautions includes wearing a surgical mask when coming within one metre of the patient. When there is risk of secretion / saliva contamination, other PPE such as gloves and aprons should be worn.

The patient will either go into a single room or be with other patients with the same diagnosis. Adherence to hand hygiene is vital.

**Can I still travel overseas?**

The situation regarding overseas travel is constantly changing. For up-to-date information, please access <http://www.waikatodhb.govt.nz/page/pageid/2145845231>

**2. Leave****Will the DHB undertake daily recording of absenteeism?**

It is extremely important that all staff who have flu or flu-like symptoms contact their manager or team leader in the usual way to report their absence and give as much notice as possible. This is required so that we can enact staffing escalation plans to continue to run services.

We ask if the reason for your absence is due to flu or flu-like symptoms as we need to keep statistics about the impact of the pandemic on staff absenteeism rates.

The Ministry of Health needs the information and it will be critical to our funding should we be unable to meet our contractual obligations due to increased absence of staff due to flu or flu-like symptoms, or because staff need to be absent to look after children if schools close.

A process to record daily absenteeism is on page 18.

Staff who become unwell during their duty must report to their manager or team leader before they leave work. Please note that DHB vehicles are for use on DHB business only.

**What happens if schools close and I need to stay home to look after my kids?**

You will need to contact your manager as soon as possible, and advise of the situation.

In this situation, Waikato DHB will allow you to take annual leave in the first instance or leave without pay in the alternative. Your manager may be able to offer you shorter hours or night work/weekend work (if you work on a roster) to alleviate the impact of such an occurrence, though this may not always be possible.

We encourage staff to put in place contingency plans for such a possibility. Such plans may include as utilising grandparents, neighbours, or sharing care amongst other work colleagues. See 'Own contingency plan' on page 14.

**What happens if I need to stay home to care for my family who are sick?**

Domestic leave covers this and the days are deducted from your sick leave balance as per usual.

**What happens if I run out of sick and / or domestic leave?**

There are three possibilities depending on the individual's circumstances: discretionary sick leave in accordance with Waikato DHB's policy, utilisation of annual leave (by agreement) or leave without pay.

Please note that these options are not in order of action, but will be applied on a case-by-case basis.

**Will I be required to produce a medical certificate?**

Waikato DHB has a flexible approach in regard the production of medical certificates. Any such request will be consistent with the Holidays Act 2003 and the relevant employment agreement.

Generally, detailed medical certificates will be required for absences of more than a week, or in support of any application for discretionary sick leave; however, an employee may be required to produce a certificate in other circumstances where appropriate.

**Can I take annual leave during a pandemic?**

At this stage, staff may still apply for annual leave, though this will be reviewed on a regular basis. Staff should realise we will consider such leave applications carefully in light of the uncertainty of staff availability.

If the situation reaches a critical point, we may have to cancel already approved leave however, this will be one of the 'last resort' options.

Due to the possibility of travel disruption, not only through your employment but also through the wider pandemic situation, we would encourage staff to review all matters before making large financial commitments about international travel.

**Do I have to come to work during a pandemic?**

Yes. Our organisation is required to provide essential services for our community during this period. As such, our staff will have to be available to work. It is a reasonable expectation that you attend work where we take practicable steps to ensure your health and safety while at work.

If you have concerns about your health and safety, raise these with your manager / team leader and explain the reasons for your concern.

If after discussion, you are concerned that measures taken are insufficient to manage the risk of infection, you can refuse to work if you believe it is likely to place you in an immediate and significant risk of incurring serious harm.

The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, obliges you to work with your employer to resolve the matter and allows you only to continue to refuse to work if you have reasonable grounds to consider it dangerous.

If you choose to stop being available to work without discussing this with your employer, you are putting your employment at risk and disciplinary action may need to be taken.

If you have any immediate concerns, please discuss these with your manager / team leader in the first instance.

**Can I take bereavement leave during a pandemic?**

Yes, authorisation for bereavement leave during this period is as per Waikato DHB's Leave Policy and your relevant employment agreement.

**What happens if I am on jury service?**

Waikato DHB will be liaising with the Department of Courts to have jury service waived for clinical staff in the first instance. However, we recognise that if you have received such a summons, you are obliged to attend unless the Department of Courts waives it.

**Can my employer require me to stay home?**

Yes. Waikato DHB has obligations to ensure that its staff are working in a safe environment. In addition, the Holidays Act 2003 provides that an employer may require an employee to demonstrate, normally by production of a medical clearance, that they are fit to return to work.

**If I am not required at work will I still get paid?**

We will not make the decision lightly to require employees to stay at home. A pandemic scenario is likely to impact on our services and normal business. At this stage, we do not know what those impacts are likely to be however, one can anticipate that reasons for such a decision would include:

- closure of part of our business for a period of time during the pandemic; or
- when the employer cannot provide a safe and healthy work environment for employees.

Unless you have 14 days notice to take annual leave or have reached an agreement with your manager, you will be paid if directed away from the workplace for reasons other than personal or family sickness.

**Can I be required to take annual leave during a pandemic?**

Waikato DHB may direct an employee to take annual leave by providing 14 days notice of such direction. However, we will endeavour to consult with the affected employees in the first instance.

### **3. Reassignment / scope of practice**

#### **What happens if I am asked to work in a different place than usual?**

In the first instance, we will seek agreement. Depending on the location, Waikato DHB may reasonably require staff to operate from a different location than normal.

Due to the strong likelihood that events will start to move at a rapid pace and in turn require a rapid response, Waikato DHB may be required to re-issue already posted rosters. In doing so, we will endeavour to provide employees with as much notice as possible, but cannot guarantee that we can maintain the timeframes stipulated in the collective agreements.

#### **What happens if I am asked to do a different job?**

In the first instance, we will seek agreement. Depending on the nature of duties, Waikato DHB may reasonably require staff to undertake duties that are consistent with your existing position.

#### **Can I work outside my scope during a pandemic?**

Section 8 (3) (a) Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 provides that in the event of an emergency a registered health professional may practice outside their scope.

A pandemic situation may be sufficient to create such an emergency type situation however; the mere fact of a pandemic is not likely to be sufficient on its own. If such a situation does develop in the opinion of Waikato DHB, we will advise accordingly.

#### **If I have restrictions on my scope of practice, will these be lifted during a pandemic?**

We would encourage you to speak with the appropriate regulatory authority in the first instance.

Section 8 (3) (a) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 provides that in the event of an emergency that a registered health professional may practice outside their scope including any restrictions. Should the situation escalate to the extent that Waikato DHB considers an emergency, we will advise accordingly.

### **4. Individual Employment Agreement (IEA) staff**

#### **If I am on an IEA and have been asked to work outside my normal hours of work, will I be paid for the extra time – or anything extra if it is over night?**

Reasonable overtime is an expectation of individuals on IEAs and is recognised as part of the remuneration paid.

When extra ordinary hours are worked as result of the pandemic, Waikato DHB will recompense such hours at ordinary rates of pay.

## **5. Extraordinary circumstances**

### **Will training and education programmes be stopped?**

No, normal training and education will continue. You will be advised of any cancellation as normal.

### **Will I be able to sleep over at work if I cannot get home during the pandemic, and who pays?**

Unless directed you will not be sleeping onsite during the pandemic.

All staff will be expected to go home at the end of their day / shift as normal. If we direct you to stay and that requires you to sleep over, we will make the appropriate arrangements for you.

### **What will happen if payroll staff are sick?**

We will operate as per the contingency plan. As a last resort we will auto-pay based on the previous fortnight's salary / wages. Recoveries or short payments will be adjusted later.

### **Can I work from home?**

Working from home may be an option for some staff for all, or part, of their role provided they have a computer and depending on the level of access required to the DHB's systems.

Staff can access their emails from the internet but need to have access to specific IS hardware to access the rest. The current environment will not support any more users. Information Services is continuing to work on this and staff will be advised if the situation changes.

Guidelines for staff who can work from home are available on page 12.

### **Will the DHB be bringing in volunteers / retired staff to bolster up the numbers of available staff?**

As the need arises, we will review and bring in volunteers / retired staff selectively to cater to specific needs.

## **Guidelines for working from home**

### **Purpose**

To provide guidance to managers and staff relating to roles or components of roles that can be carried out from home when:

- a) a manager requests it; or
- b) a staff member requests it.

### **Scope**

This guideline is for use during short notice, short-term instances when working from home may be necessary for business continuity. The 'Flexible Work Arrangements' process covers longer notice, longer term instances where flexible work arrangements may be requested by law.

### **Decision making**

Decisions to approve working from home are with level five managers. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature of the role or function, the need of the service to retain production, and the circumstances of the employee in relation to the team. Approval can be revoked at any time.

### **Health and safety**

Most of the work that can be done from home is administrative, paper based or done on the computer. Employees are responsible for ensuring the area where they are working is appropriate and must complete their own hazard assessment (using [http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD\\_EXT\\_CSMP/groups/external\\_ip/documents/publications/promotion/pi00228.pdf](http://www.acc.co.nz/PRD_EXT_CSMP/groups/external_ip/documents/publications/promotion/pi00228.pdf) as a guide) and undertake the Health and Safety VDU checklist.

### **Insurance**

The DHB will not accept liability for any loss or damage to an individual's own equipment or property when employees are working from home.

### **ACC**

Where a staff member is working from home and is injured an investigation will occur in the usual way.

### **Security**

Employees must ensure that:

- There are appropriate safeguards in place in relation to confidentiality of any material being worked on – verbal, hard copy or disk.
- Information is transported, stored, and disposed of securely.
- Personal computers are regularly scanned for viruses and take all practicable steps to prevent viruses entering the DHB's computer system.

### **Process**

Employers requesting employees to work from home:

- a) Employer to discuss the reason for their request with the staff member.
- b) Staff member considers request and can refuse if they wish.
- c) Where agreement is reached, the current terms and conditions of employment remain in force.
- d) The employer may need to provide equipment / connectivity for the employee.
- e) The employer to arrange access to the DHB's systems if required or provide the employee with the means to transport electronic information.

- f) When the working from home arrangement ceases, the employee must return all DHB property.

Employees requesting to work from home:

- a) Employee discusses request to work from home with manager.
- b) Manager considers what work the employee can reasonably do.
- c) Manager considers what tools from the DHB may be required and if they are available, or alternatively if the employee has their own.
- d) Review whether temporary reduction in working is appropriate. That is, if looking after a sick dependant, it is realistic to expect eight hours of work per day.
- e) Employee and employer arrange access to the DHB's systems if required or to provide the employee with equipment if necessary.
- f) Where agreement is reached, the current terms and conditions of employment remain in force, unless otherwise agreed.
- g) When the working from home arrangement ceases, the employee must return any DHB property.

## Staff member's own contingency plan

Employee name \_\_\_\_\_

Employee ID number \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish, you may like use this form to guide the development of your own personal contingency plan.

Waikato DHB and the registered health professionals who work for it, have a statutory and moral obligation to provide continuing health services during any emergency or other crisis situation. Such terms encapsulates a pandemic situation.

It is apparent that the current H1N1 'swine flu' pandemic has the potential to create significant operating issues for Waikato DHB and its staff. The personal domestic situation of our employees has the potential to have a significant adverse impact for our staff that will have flow-on effects to the operational capabilities of Health Waikato.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help your managers and team leaders plan for a situation where large numbers of staff may be away to ensure that Health Waikato can continue to provide the necessary patient care.

The questionnaire also aims to get staff thinking of issues that could hinder their ability to continuing working and planning.

A. School or day care centre closures

A.1 Do you have a child under the age of 14 or other dependent that will require care if their school or day care centre is closed?

A.2 In such an eventuality, would you be expected to be the primary care giver?

A.3 Do you have an alternative care provider that could be utilised?

A.4 If yes, are there restrictions on what hours / days the alternative care provider can cover for you?

A.5 Is there any back-up cover to your first choice provider?

A.6 If you are unable to obtain cover for weekdays, it is expected you will make yourself available for either PM, night, or weekend work. What would be your preference, please rank in order from 1-4.

Weekday PM shift

Weekday night shift

Weekend day/afternoon shift

Weekend night shift

A.7 Is there any support that Waikato DHB can offer you to assist with being able to remain at work?

A.8 If Waikato DHB could provide short-term backup childcare, would you be interested in taking up this option?

A.9 If you were required to stay home to look after young children, would you be able to babysit another colleague's child in order that they could continue to go to work?

B. Additional duties

B.1 Are you able to work additional hours / overtime?

B.2 If yes, please tick if this includes:

- After finishing rostered duty
- Entire shift

B.3 Can you make yourself available to work in another Health Waikato hospital

B.4 What support would be necessary for you to do so (i.e. accommodation and meals)?

B.5 Would you volunteer to work in a Community Based Assessment Centre (CBAC)?

C. Sick or incapacitated dependent

C.1 Please note the dependence is ascertained prior to illness, and not after.

C.2 How many dependents do you have?

C.3 If any of your dependents got sick during, would you be expected to provide care for the person?

C.4 Is there someone else who could provide care outside normal working hours (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm) such as a spouse, to enable you to continue at work?

C.5 If so, what duties could you make yourself available for:

Weekday PM shift

Weekend day / afternoon shift

Weekday night shift

Weekend night shift

D. General

What other issues do you have that may impede upon your ability to work during the H1N1 pandemic?

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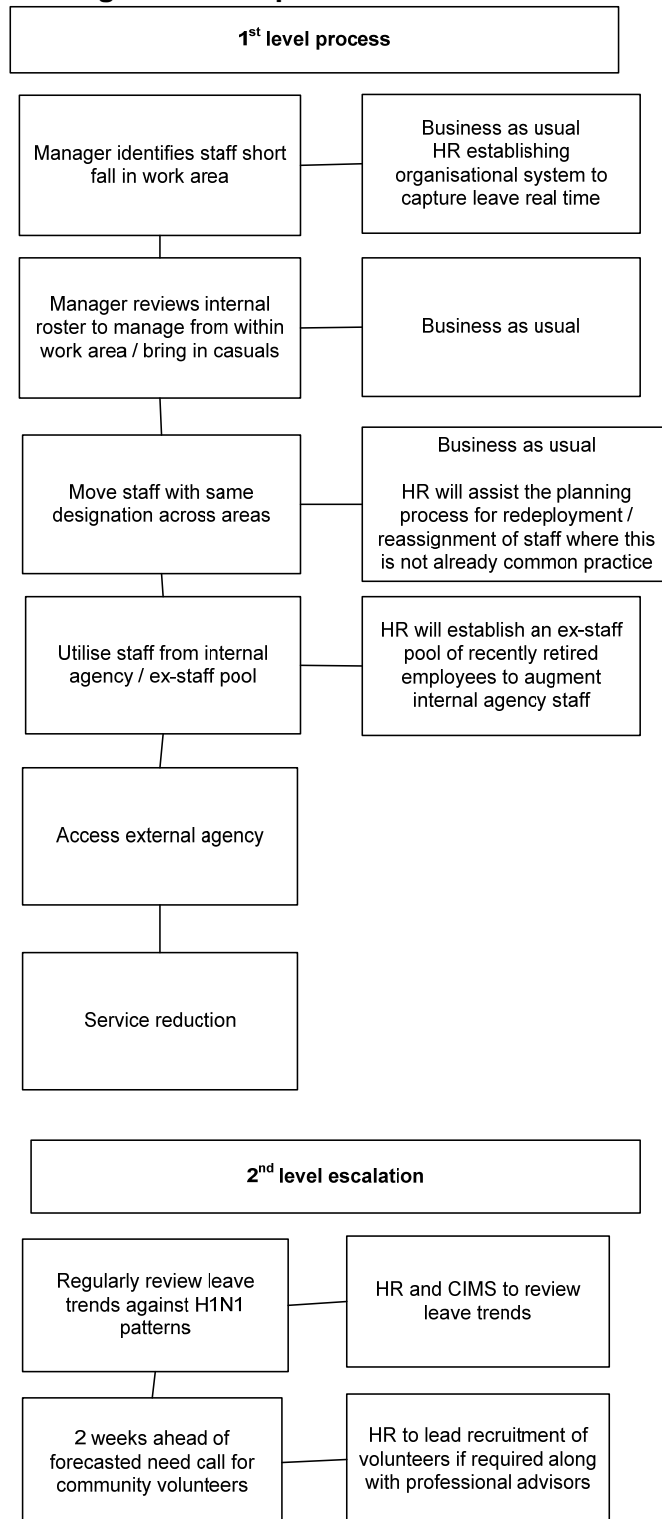
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## Section 2: For managers / team leaders

### Staffing escalation plan

The following flow chart captures the standard process for managing increasing absenteeism and the additional staffing provisions that HR will facilitate should the need arise.

### Staffing escalation plan



## **Recruitment agencies**

## Leave recording

Over the next six months, the DHB is anticipating an unprecedented increase in unplanned leave. Acting early on information will be the key to managing this.

At a national level, the Ministry of Health will be undertaking a daily census of leave related to influenza. This information is contributing to national planning and the epidemiological study of the effects of the pandemic.

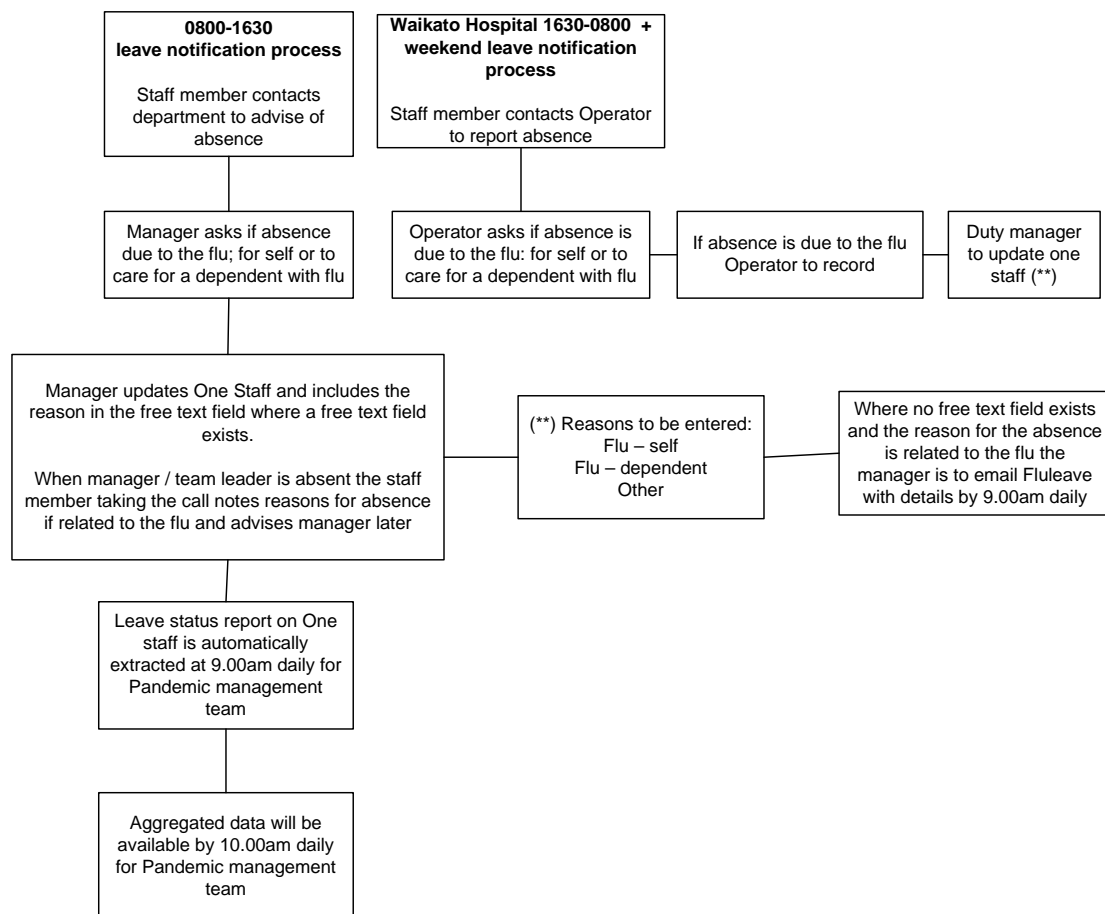
At a local level, the pandemic management team will be using all leave information to plan the deployment of staff to maintain services and any potential reduction.

It is essential therefore, that leave information is accurately recorded **each day** using the process described below, which will come into effect as of **6 July 2009**.

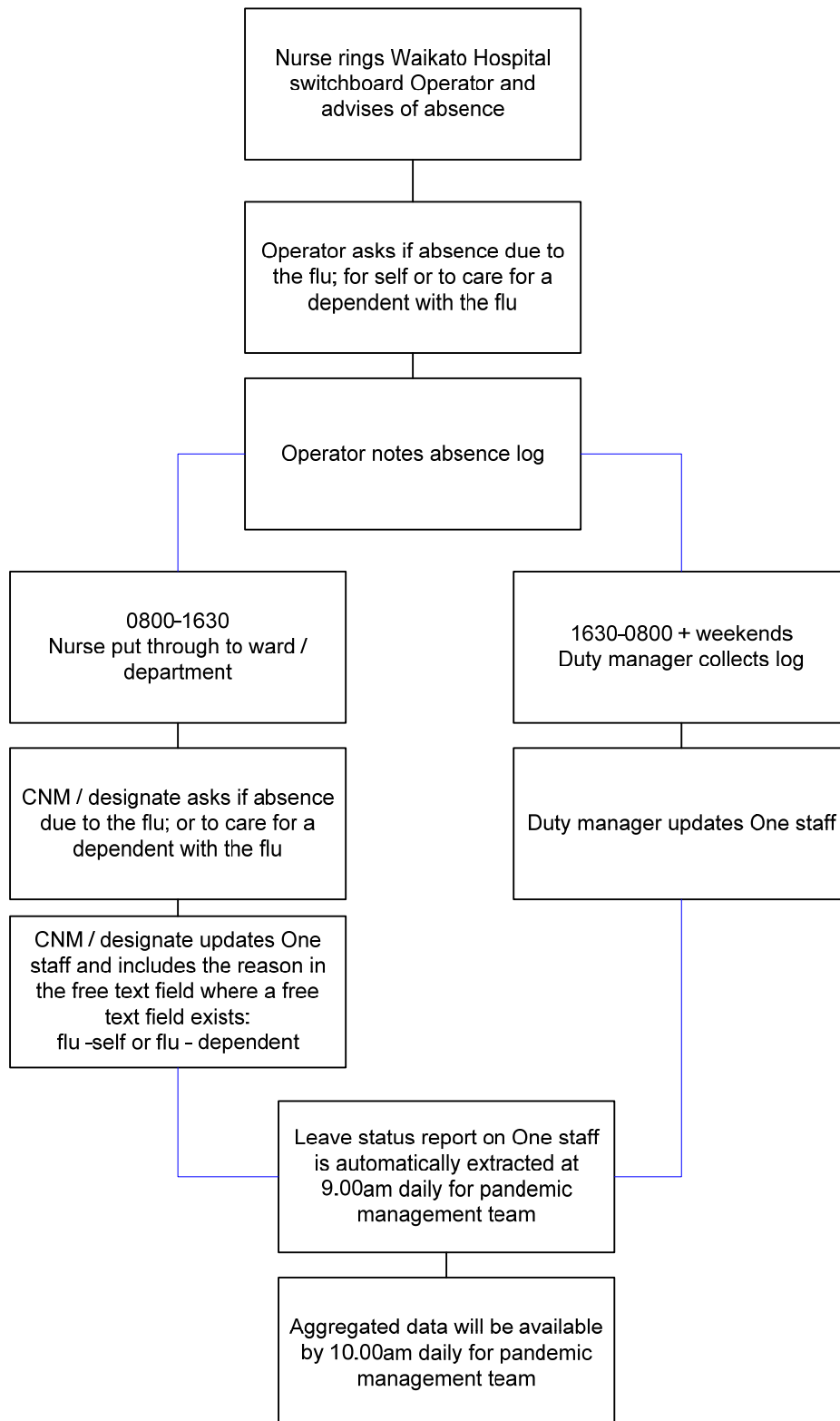
The pandemic management team will use this information to deploy staff across facilities and the organisation depending on the situation.

**'One Staff' users – Waikato Hospital campus and Henry Rongomau Bennett Centre, KIMS, Payroll, Accounts Payable, HR and Population Health**

**Excludes medical staff and nursing (see flow charts on following pages)**

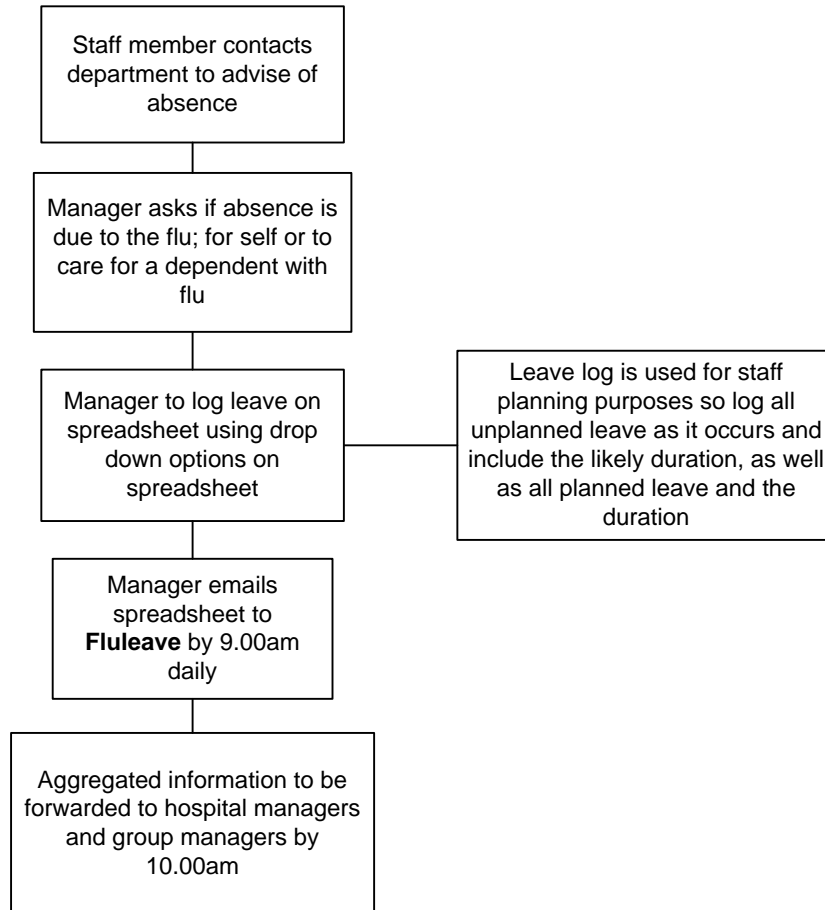


## Waikato Hospital nursing leave recording process



**Non-‘One Staff’ users (Community Mental Health, consultants, Rural and Community Services, Property and Infrastructure, Finance, Purchasing, Planning and Funding, Te Puna Oranga)**

**Excludes RMOs (see next page for process).**



Please note the following.

1. The spreadsheet does not interface with payroll so managers need to continue to complete fortnightly timesheets.
2. Spreadsheets are to be emailed to **Fluleave** each day even if no leave is taken.

## Waikato Hospital RMO leave recording process

