

NHS North West London
Emergency Planning E-Learning Programme



North West London

Module 2 On-call Directors

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About this Module



Who is it for?

This module can be used by on-call staff who are joining the NHS North West London on-call rota or as a refresher as and when required. It would also be of benefit to any staff who may work as part of a major incident team including volunteer administrators.



What does it cover?

This module contains an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the on-call Director and information to help staff manage minor and major incidents.



How long will it take?

The module should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.



Is there a test?

There are questions on some of the pages in this module - the answers will appear when the mouse button is clicked. There is no quiz at the end of this module.

Introduction

The on-call Director for NHS North West London is the main point of contact for the organisation out of normal office hours and is therefore responsible for co-ordinating the response to a wide range of queries and incidents. Calls to the on-call Director may be anything from resolving a problem with a member of staff or premises to co-ordinating the Trust's response to a major incident.

This training module for on-call Directors will take you through the roles and responsibilities of being on call and also provide some information to help you respond to minor and major incidents.

Please use this module as a refresher before your on-call week or if you are new to the NHS North West London on-call rota.



ACTION

When you see the **ACTION** button, this is something for you to do or get. The module will refer to various documents which staff may use when they are on-call. Make sure you have the latest version available as these are updated regularly.

Single Point of Contact

During the day, if someone has an issue they will usually contact the relevant department – e.g. Estates, Finance, Public Health. Out of hours, **the on-call Director is the single point of contact** for staff and local organisations that need to contact NHS North West London in an emergency. However the on-call Director is the 24/7 contact for major incidents. Every healthcare organisation has an on-call rota to act as a single point of contact out of hours.

Incident Reporting Procedure

On-call staff may deal with a wide range of queries as well as minor and major incidents. As during normal office hours, staff should report any issues using the **Serious or Potentially Serious Incident Procedure** and inform the Chief Executive(s) where necessary.



ACTION

The **Serious or Potentially Serious Incident Procedure** is documented in the on-call handbook. Read through this procedure if you are unfamiliar with it. What kind of incident would need reporting under this procedure?

Key Roles and Responsibilities

The on-call Directors key roles and responsibilities are to:

- Act as a single point of contact for NHS North West London
- Ensure that they are contactable at all times and have access to the on-call handbook and major incident and business continuity plan
- Respond to out of hours queries and incidents on behalf of the organisation
- Act as Incident Director and form a major incident team if necessary

NHS North West London is responsible for three key areas in a major incident:

- Providing primary healthcare for the residents and visitors to North West London including psychological support where necessary
- Assisting Acute Trusts to release patients from hospital
- Provision of prescription medicine to reception centres or displaced individuals (see next page)

Through the NWLCP01 pager which can alert the Director by email, telephone and text. See the PageOne website for more details.



QUESTION

How many different ways can you contact the on-call Director?

ANSWER

Reception Centres

If an incident causes individuals to be evacuated or not able to continue their journey, the local authority (council) may set up a reception centre.

NHS North West London is responsible for ensuring that any displaced individuals can access prescription medicines. This involves sending someone to assess the individual, prescribe the medication and, where necessary, filling the prescription and delivering the prescription medicine back to the individual.

In the event of a major incident, the local authority may also set up other areas for individuals involved in the incident so they can be interviewed by the Police and places for Friends and Relatives.

Following the July 7th 2005 attacks Humanitarian Assistance Centres were set up which included information on how to access health and mental health services.

Remember reception centres may be open over a few hours or a few days so the prescription medicine procedure may need to be repeated. Contact the local authority on-call Duty Manager or Emergency Planning Officer to get information on reception centres and agree arrangements for the provision of **prescription medicines**.



ACTION

Find the procedure for prescription medicines in hours and out of hours is in the on-call handbook.

Assessing an incident

The Incident Checklist on the first page of Section 2 in the on-call handbook is designed to help on-call Directors assess the potential impact of any incident.

When the initial call is received, the following list might be useful in clarifying what the call is about:

- What has happened or what is the query about?
- Who has been affected by the incident (e.g. Staff or local residents)
- Where is the incident (postcode / address)?
- What time did it happen?
- What action has already been taken?
- Are you asking NHS North West London to respond to specific issues?
- Who else has been informed?
- How can we get back in contact with you?
- Are there any actions you need me to take immediately?

ACTION

Review the Incident Response Flowchart. This is designed to help on-call Directors think about the potential impact of an incident. The response will vary depending on the nature of the incident and the time it happens.



QUESTION

If you were informed by a member of staff about a gas explosion in Hounslow, who would you contact for further information?

ANSWER

Local Authority Emergency Planning Officers are often the best place to start as they will know what area has been affected and whether local residents have been evacuated.

Major Incident Terminology

NHS organisations use standard message terms when declaring a major incident:

Major Incident Standby – prepare for a potential major incident response, e.g. Check availability of staff and resources which may need to be mobilised to respond to the incident if the situation escalates.

Major Incident Declared – an immediate response is required. If moving from Standby to Declared, you would have already assessed the potential response required and considered which services may be impacted. During any incident response it is important to continually reassess the situation and actions to be taken.

Major Incident Cancelled – This is used when a potential major incident has failed to materialise.

Major Incident Stand Down – once the immediate incident response is over and the recovery phase can begin, the major incident should be formally stood down and all personnel involved in the incident response informed of the recovery strategy.



Disruption and Business Continuity

The definition of a major incident is anything that cannot be dealt with using normal services and resources. The majority of incidents can be dealt with by creating some flexibility in existing services.

Business Continuity measures are needed when normal services are disrupted (e.g. Loss of staff or premises) so that essential and critical services can be maintained. Again, most periods of disruption can be managed by working flexibly and diverting staff to where they are most needed.

If severe weather conditions (cold or heat) were notified to the on-call Director over the weekend, they would need to consider what actions staff should take including:

- Should Business Continuity measures be put in place?
- What additional services will need to be put in place (incident response) within North West London for local residents?
- What external transport and local services may be disrupted and cause disruption to NHS North West London?
- What health information or advice needs to be given to the public




ACTION

Think about the last severe weather incident. What measures could have been put in place to minimise the impact on staff and services within NHS North West London? How will communication messages be given to local residents about the changes to services?

Keeping informed and recording information

It is important that information about incidents or queries that have happened out of hours are passed on to the relevant department or staff so that they are aware of any recurring problems. As mentioned before, Serious Incidents need to be reported using the Trust's procedures and a record kept of any actions taken by the on-call Director.

During a major incident it is essential that accurate records are kept by all staff involved as they may be needed for the debrief and incident report. They may also be used to justify suspension or failure to meet SHA targets; or in the event of any legal proceedings. **On-call Directors and staff involved in an incident response should send completed incident forms to the Emergency Planning Officer so that any actions can be followed up and for audit purposes.**



On-call Director report 21 March
Jim Smith called on Saturday due to the recurring problem with the subcontractor

ACTION

Remember to report incidents regularly to the Emergency Planning Officer so that they can identify any recurring problems, amend plans and procedures or put additional measures in place to minimise the impact of the incident. The on-call Directors handbook contains an on-call Incident Report Form for this purpose.

Communication

Communication to staff, local organisations and the general public is always the most important issue during an incident and usually the one area which is always mentioned as an area for improvement during an incident debrief. **It is always better to keep people informed when they don't need to know than not to keep people informed when they do.** The on-call Communications staff should work with the on-call Director to manage internal and external communications messages.

Consider what you would need to tell these five groups during an incident:

- ✿ **Staff** (including colleagues, subcontractors and commissioned services)
- ✿ **Stakeholders** (local responding organisations, neighbouring Trusts)
- ✿ **Strategic Health Authority** (and any other statutory reporting bodies)
- ✿ **General Public** (public health information, general advice)
- ✿ **Media** (local, national and international TV, newspapers and radio)



ACTION

Many incidents require general or specialist public health advice to be given out. NHS North West London' Public Health team will work with the Health Protection Agency and Communications Team to draw up the relevant information for local use.

Keeping in Contact

Being able to communicate with staff and other organisations **is the most important part of being on-call**. The on-call handbook is designed to provide all the relevant contact telephone numbers which you may need when on-call.

Some incidents, such as July 7th, caused disruption to the mobile network. Text messages and emails use a lower bandwidth than voice calls so are more likely to get through during periods of disruption. Most local authorities will have a command centre at or near the Town Hall. Make sure you carry ID if you are going to attend another organisation's incident room.

There is a satellite telephone in the major incident room at Sovereign Court. If you have not used the Satellite Phone before, ask for some training from the Emergency Planning Lead as you will need to be aware of the places to get the best satellite signal as well as how to make and receive calls.



Major Incident Room

A major incident room is a place where the response to an incident can be co-ordinated. You don't have to declare a major incident to establish the room. It may just be a place for people involved in the response to come together to discuss what actions need to be taken. You may find it easier to use your own office and administration support to co-ordinate the response and keep the major incident room for meetings.

There are three major incident rooms listed in the on-call handbook: **Sovereign Court, Marylebone Road and The Heights.**

You can set up a major incident room anywhere, in your living room or have a virtual incident room. Wherever it is set up, make sure local responding organisations and staff know who and how to contact the incident team.

How to set up a telephone conference is also in the on-call handbook.



ACTION

Make sure you know how to get into and set up the Major Incident Room in and out of hours – find the details in the on-call handbook.

Incident Team

The **on-call Director does not need to declare a major incident to establish a team of people** to help respond to an incident. Dealing with an incident on your own is difficult and often counter-productive. Use the major incident plan action cards to help identify team members.

A **full major incident team** would consist of:

- **Incident Director** (usually the on-call Director)
- **Chief Incident Officer** (someone to help the on-call Director establish the incident team)
- **Incident Team members** (representatives from each Sub cluster or Directorate if needed)
- **Public Health** (to co-ordinate expert public health advice in relation to the incident)
- **Communications** (staff from the Communications Team to organise media response etc)
- **Administration** (Supervisor and various admin staff to support team members)
- **Helpline Co-ordinator and Operator** (consider using NHS Direct, PALS or other call centre facility)
- **Volunteer Staff Co-ordinator** (to organise staff redeployment, help with transport etc)
- **PCT representatives** (to go to neighbouring organisations incident rooms if necessary)

ACTION

Think about who you would call to support you during an incident. What would happen if you started getting a lot of telephone calls at once – who could you ask to help you?



Response

Use the on-call handbook and the major incident & business continuity plan to help you manage the response to any incidents while you are on-call. You do not have to have declared a major incident to use the information in the plan.

Try to resolve the situation or make sure that any queries are passed on to the appropriate service or organisation. Make sure that you notify on-call managers from other organisations of any action taken which may impact their organisation or services.

The Communications on-call Manager should be informed of any incidents which may result in media interest. There is information on how to do this and also contact the NHS London SHA communications team in the on-call handbook.

Some incidents which occur frequently, such as alarm activation due to windows being left open, or inappropriate calls due to members of staff not familiar with the on-call Director role should be referred back to the Emergency Planning Officer so that preventative procedures can be put in place if necessary.



REMEMBER

At the end of your on-call week to complete the on-call Incident Report Form or send an email advising that there were no calls to the Emergency Planning Lead.

Recovery

When an incident has been dealt with or is in the recovery process, it is important that you remember to let people know the outcome and whether any further action is required.

It is often easy to forget that you have called someone to ask them about a query or incident and then not call them back to let them know what has been agreed or resolved.

If you have managed a complex or major incident, a 'hot' debrief is recommended to make sure that there are no outstanding actions and to agree if a formal debrief is needed. It is important that any lessons learnt from the incident are documented so that they can be used to develop better procedures and systems for the future.

Contact the Emergency Planning Officer to assist you in arranging a formal debrief procedure and agree how the incident report and lessons learnt will be actioned.



Key Points

- ✓ The on-call Director is the single point of contact for NHS North West London out of normal office hours
- ✓ NHS North West London has three key roles and responsibilities during a major incident: provision of primary care services; assisting Acute Trusts; and prescription medicines
- ✓ The Major Incident and Business Continuity Plan and On-call Directors Handbook are designed to help manage the response to a variety of incidents
- ✓ The Major Incident Room(s) can be used by an Incident Team to co-ordinate the incident response
- ✓ Keeping records and submitting reports of incidents to the Emergency Planning Officer allows for further planning to minimise the impact of future incidents
- ✓ Any incident should be assessed regularly to make sure that the appropriate actions are being taken
- ✓ Good communication is the key to managing an incident, both for staff and the public
- ✓ The recovery process is as important as the initial response to an incident
- ✓ Carrying out debrief procedures will help to identify lessons learnt and improve the response to future incidents.

Summary

The on-call Director's handbook and Major Incident Plan contain useful information to help deal with a range of incidents. Make sure you are familiar with these documents before you go on-call.

Think about what would happen if you needed to form an incident team to manage a complex or major incident. Do you have enough information to be able to contact staff? Can you set up a virtual incident team using the telephone conference facility?

Don't be afraid to ask questions or clarify information, often the solution is found in finding the cause of the call to the on-call Director or providing reassurance to staff that they are carrying out the right actions.



Goodbye!

Thank you for completing this module. Please feel free to repeat it at anytime, especially as a refresher before your week on-call.

If you have any comments, requests for amendments or further information, please contact NHS North West London Emergency Planning Lead.

Please end the Module by closing the browser window.

