

Bishop Nigel's column in CRUX September 2009

Our pandemic flu advisory group has done a good job, taking advice from the Department of Health, producing protocols (a carefully nuanced word) in readiness for the possible second wave. As I indicated in this column a couple of months ago, the intention had been to wait until the autumn before publishing them. However, the wholly unexpected prompt from the archbishops has led to their circulation earlier than intended.

The result has been, for some (but not all) congregations, a seeming mismatch between the apparently draconian guidelines and the reality on the ground – especially during the summer holidays when, as anticipated, the number of cases has reduced.

My hope and prayer is that such protocols will indeed turn out to have been over the top. But for the moment they remain in place. The Department indicates the move now from “containment to treatment”. But, given the apparent vulnerability of children, pregnant women, people with auto-immune related illnesses, and young adults (Manchester has a high concentration) it is wise, despite the frustrations, to be safe rather than sorry.

The nature of a second wave of flu remains unclear. Meanwhile I ask you to act on this directional advice thoughtfully, and in the best interests of public health.