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**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

## **Coronavirus - Latest Update Information, Advice & Guidance as at 26 February 2020:**

Latest information on the outbreak of Coronavirus in China and other countries, including the current situation in the UK as issued by UK Government agencies on 26 February 2020, namely the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and the UK's Chief Medical Officers.

### **Situation in the UK**

#### **Number of cases**

As of 26 February, a total of 7,132 people have been tested in the UK, of which 7,119 were confirmed negative and only 13 positive.

#### **Risk level**

Based on the World Health Organisation's (WHO) declaration that this is a public health emergency of international concern, the UK Chief Medical Officers (England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland) assess the risk as 'moderate' - raised from low. This permits the Government to plan for all eventualities. The UK continues working in collaboration with other countries and the World Health Organisation to monitor the situation in China and around the world.

### **Travellers Returning To The UK**

Based on the scientific advice of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), the UK Chief Medical Officers have updated their advice for anyone who has travelled to the UK from specific areas as set out in the following paragraphs.

The UK is carrying out enhanced monitoring of direct flights from certain specific areas. Passengers will be told how to report any symptoms they develop during the flight, at the time of arrival, or after leaving the airport. These areas have been identified because of the volume of air travel from affected areas, understanding of other travel routes and number of reported cases. This list is being kept under review.

**Travellers are advised that if they have returned from the following list of specific areas since 19 February, they should stay indoors and avoid contact with other people, call NHS 111 and inform them of recent travel to the listed area. In Scotland phone the GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours. If in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200**

**7885. This advice should be followed even if they do not have symptoms of the virus:-**

- Iran
- Italy - specific locked down areas as designated by the Government of Italy (in Lombardy: Codogno, Castiglione d'Adda, Casalpusterlengo, Fombio, Maleo, Somaglia, Bertonico, Terranova dei Passerini, Castelgerundo and San Fiorano. in Veneto: Vo' Euganeo).
- South Korea - specific care zones as designated by the Government of the Republic of South Korea (Daegu, Cheongdo).
- China - Hubei province (returned in the past 14 days).

**Travellers who have returned from the following list of areas since 19 February and develop symptoms of the virus, however mild, should stay indoors and avoid contact with other people, call NHS 111 and inform them of recent travel to the listed area. In Scotland phone the GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours. If in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885. People do not need to follow this advice if they have no symptoms of the virus:-**

- Northern Italy (anywhere north of Pisa, Florence and Rimini)
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Myanmar

**Travellers who have returned from other parts of China and the following list of specified areas in the last 14 days and develop symptoms of the virus (cough or fever or shortness of breath etc.), however mild, should stay indoors and avoid contact with other people, call NHS 111 and inform them of recent travel to the listed area. In Scotland phone the GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours. If in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885. People do not need to follow this advice if they have no symptoms of the virus:-**

- China
- Thailand
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Hong Kong
- Taiwan
- Singapore
- Malaysia
- Macau

### **Health Protection Regulations**

On 10 February, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced strengthened powers to protect public health. The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 has been put in place to reduce the risk of further human-to-human transmission in this country by keeping individuals in isolation where public health professionals believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus.

### **Information about the Coronavirus**

A Coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, Coronaviruses are common across the world. Typical symptoms of Coronavirus include fever and a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Generally, Coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. Novel

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new strain of Coronavirus which was first identified in Wuhan City, China.

### **Summary of action taken by the UK Government**

The Government has introduced advanced monitoring at airports with direct flights from China. A team of public health experts has been established in Heathrow to support anyone travelling in from China who feels unwell. These hubs will bring in rotational teams of 7 clinicians, working in shifts, who will be on hand to support patients on arrival. This is in addition to medical staff who are already permanently in place at all UK airports and the advice issued to all UK airports for people travelling to and from China. The Government has issued clinical guidance for the detection and diagnosis of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), and infection prevention and control. The Chief Medical Officer, Medical Director at PHE and Medical Director at NHSE/I have issued advice via a CAS (Central Alerting System) alert to frontline staff to increase awareness of the situation and any actions to take. Most people who develop symptoms will get them after leaving the airport and so the priority is providing UK residents and travellers with the latest information to make sure they know what to do if they experience symptoms, and the NHS and PHE have an established plan to respond to someone who becomes unwell. China has also introduced port-of-exit screening so people already exhibiting symptoms are not allowed to leave the country.

### **Diagnosis and Analysis**

Based on current evidence, Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) presents with flu-like symptoms including a fever, a cough, or difficulty breathing. The current evidence is that most cases appear to be mild. Those who have died in Wuhan appear to have had pre-existing health conditions.

The UK is now one of the first countries outside China to have a prototype specific laboratory test for this new disease. Healthcare professionals who are contacted by a patient with symptoms following travel to Wuhan have been advised to submit samples to PHE for testing. Individuals should be treated in isolation.

After the experience of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, PHE developed a series of diagnostic tests to detect any member of the family of Coronaviruses. These have been used for several years, and were able to detect the first UK case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012.

With the first reported publication of the genome sequence of a 2019 Novel Coronavirus, PHE was able to rapidly develop further specific tests for this virus, working with WHO and a global network of laboratories.

When a clinician suspects Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), they take samples from the nose, throat and deeper respiratory samples, package and send them safely to PHE Colindale. PHE can provide a laboratory result from this specific virus on the same working day.

PHE also has the capability to sequence the viral genome and compare this to published sequences from China, if a case occurs. This will provide valuable information on any mutations in the virus over time and allow an improved understanding of how it spreads.

### **UK Government Advice Website (Gov.UK)**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>

### **Royal Mail Group - Coronavirus – A Reminder of the Latest Advice - Issued Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February.**

See copy attached.

Previous LTBs issued on this subject matter; LTB033/20, LTB043/20, LTB054/20, LTB063/20, LTB071/20 and LTB080/20.

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**

## Royal Mail Group

### Coronavirus – A Reminder of the Latest Advice

We take the wellbeing of our employees extremely seriously, we continue to follow the situation closely to keep our guidance for our people up to date and reduce any potential impact on individuals, our customers and our communities. We are monitoring information published by the World Health Organisation and Public Health England. If there are any changes or updates to how this guidance affects our policy and procedures we will issue updates through the intranet and directly to the Safety, Health and Environment Business Partners.

As with all mail handling and all other roles, good hand and personal hygiene should be maintained to minimise the risk of any infection of colds and flu, which are very common at this time of year. Hands should always be washed before eating and any gloves worn for mail handling should be washed frequently. Disposable gloves can be made available to anyone on request through their line manager and as with our winter health campaigns are a recommended additional precaution.

As part of good hygiene and 'housekeeping' please remind your teams of the availability of antiseptic wipes for handheld shared items such as PDAs, finger scanners and also multi-use keyboards ensuring you have an adequate supply of wipes.

### Travel advice

The UK Chief Medical Officers are advising anyone who has travelled to the UK from mainland China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia or Macau in the last 14 days and is experiencing cough or fever or shortness of breath, to stay indoors and call NHS 111, even if symptoms are mild.

If you have returned from these specific areas since February 19th, you should call NHS111 and stay indoors and avoid contact with other people even if you do not have symptoms:

- Iran
- Specific lockdown areas in Northern Italy as designated by the Government of Italy
- Special care zones in South Korea as designated by the Government of the Republic of South Korea
- Hubei province (returned in the past 14 days)

If you have returned from these areas since February 19th and develop symptoms, however mild, you should stay indoors at home and avoid contact with other people immediately and call NHS111. You do not need to follow this advice if you have no symptoms.

- Northern Italy (defined by a line above, and not including, Pisa, Florence and Rimini),
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Laos
- Myanmar

If you or any of your team members have returned from the affected areas listed above, they should speak to their line manager **before** returning to work. Based on the latest information from Public Health England our Safety, Health & Environment Business Partners will advise managers accordingly.

If an employee has attended work after returning from one of the above areas but has subsequently been advised to self-isolate as a precautionary measure after calling NHS111, other colleagues in the workplace should continue with business as usual, maintaining good hand and personal hygiene and using antibacterial wipes where necessary. The risk to others remains low, however should anyone have concerns they should contact NHS111.

In the interests of employee health we strongly recommend that colleagues on personal visits do not travel to China and also review the latest travel advice from Public Health England before any travel likely to take them to designated areas of higher risk.

Please speak to your line manager if you have any questions or concerns.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely and will act on Public Health England advice which is updated daily and in the meantime continue to share regular updates and information.

The [Flu poster](#) can be used to raise the profile of good hygiene in your unit.

Please click the link to the WTLL on Coronavirus recently issued [here](#).

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**Safety Health and Environment Engagement Manager**  
**Royal Mail Group Safety, Health and Environment**

**Issued Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February.**