

DHSC and PHE statement on coronavirus

We have been carefully monitoring the coronavirus situation in Wuhan and are ready to put in place proportionate, precautionary measures.

From today, enhanced monitoring will be in place from all direct flights from Wuhan to the UK. The enhanced monitoring package includes a number of measures to provide advice to travellers if they feel unwell.

For those travelling back directly from Wuhan, this includes a Port Health team who will meet each direct flight aircraft to provide advice and support to those that feel unwell. The team will include a principal port medical inspector, port health doctor, administrative support and team leader.

They will check for symptoms of coronavirus and provide information to all passengers about symptoms and what to do if they become ill. Mandarin and Cantonese language support will be available to Public Health England (PHE) and leaflets will be available to passengers.

There are 3 direct flights a week that arrive at Heathrow from Wuhan. The enhanced monitoring of direct flights will be kept under continuous review and expanded to other Chinese departure points if necessary.

Leaflets and information will be made available across all UK airports, advising travellers from China on what to do if they feel unwell.

The risk to the UK population has been assessed as low, based on the emerging evidence regarding case numbers, potential sources and human to human transmission. This has been raised from very low due to evidence on the likelihood of cases being imported into this country.

There are no confirmed cases of this new infection in the UK.

DHSC has issued clinical guidance for the detection and diagnosis of Wuhan novel coronavirus, and PHE has developed a diagnostic test, making the UK one of the first countries outside China to have a prototype specific laboratory test for this new disease.

The UK is well prepared for new diseases and our approach is kept under constant review. UK public health measures are world-leading and the NHS is well prepared to manage and treat new diseases.

Dr Nick Phin, Deputy Director, National Infection Service, PHE, said:

This is a new and rapidly evolving situation where information on cases and the virus is being gathered and assessed daily. Based on the available evidence, the current risk to the UK is considered low. We are working with the WHO and other international partners, have issued advice to the NHS and are keeping the situation under constant review.

If you are travelling to Wuhan, you should maintain good hand, respiratory and personal hygiene and should avoid visiting animal and bird markets or people who are ill with respiratory symptoms. Individuals should seek medical attention if they develop respiratory symptoms within 14 days of visiting Wuhan, either in China or on their return to the UK. They should phone ahead before attending any health services and mention their recent travel to the city.