

# PHE reaches crucial step in fully sequencing novel coronavirus

Scientists at Public Health England (PHE) are supporting the scientific community as it traces the source of the virus, how it has developed and interventions to help treat it.

The UK was one of the first countries outside China to have an assured testing capability for the novel coronavirus. PHE has since rapidly developed further specific tests in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a global network of laboratories.

The publication of the sequence by PHE provides valuable information on any mutations in the virus over time and allows an improved understanding of how the virus spreads.

The new sequencing in the UK cases illustrates that so far the virus has not evolved to better infect humans since the sequence was first published by China.

Matt Hancock, Health Secretary said:

I'm proud UK scientists are at the forefront of the global research effort – this is a vital step forward in the international fight against novel coronavirus.

By sequencing this virus's genome we can better understand the roots of this disease, predict its behaviour, and learn how tackle it. We are excited to share this knowledge across the scientific community and will continue to work closely with partners around the world.

Prof Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director at Public Health England, said:

This is a crucial step in helping us understand this virus. Genome sequencing means that we can see where it came from, how it's developing and determine the interventions that aid treatment.

These data play an integral part in helping the scientific community in tackling this global problem.