

UK deploys more public health experts to DRC for Ebola outbreak response

The [UK Public Health Rapid Support Team \(UK-PHRST\)](#) is deploying more public health specialists to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as the country's Ebola outbreak reaches the one-year mark.

Those being sent to support the DRC government's existing efforts include a data scientist, an epidemiologist (an expert in tracking outbreaks) and an infection and prevention control expert, who will work with local scientists.

The deployment is at the request of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), following the recent decision to declare the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

The UK-PHRST has worked closely with the DRC government, WHO and other partners to scale up its response since August 2018, when the current outbreak started. Since that time, there have also been confirmed cases in neighbouring Uganda.

The team's work is vital to help track the spread of disease, and inform the best approaches to tackling it.

The UK-PHRST can rapidly deploy public health experts within a 48 hour window, to strengthen a country's response to outbreaks, which helps to stop the spread of disease and save lives.

Since it was established in 2016, the UK-PHRST has responded to 10 global outbreaks, including Lassa fever in Nigeria, diphtheria in the displaced Rohingya population in Bangladesh, and pneumonic and bubonic plague in Madagascar.

Professor Daniel Bausch, Director of the UK-PHRST said:

"The Congolese people continue to show great resilience in the face of this outbreak.

"However, this is the worst Ebola outbreak in its history and its effects are devastating, with hundreds of lives lost.

"We are assisting the DRC government to help them build on their response, and will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide all the technical support we can."

Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for International Development said:

"Ebola has already taken far too many lives in the DRC. Shockingly it has wiped out entire families and, a year after this outbreak started, it is showing no sign of slowing down.

“The UK has led the way in tackling this killer disease and we can be proud of our support to create a life-saving Ebola vaccine which has inoculated 180,000 people so far. Today’s announcement that more UK health experts will be deployed to the DRC shows our strong, ongoing commitment to contain the outbreak.

“Diseases like Ebola have no respect for borders. This could spread beyond DRC. It is essential the rest of the international community steps up to help. If we don’t act now, many thousands more lives could be lost.”

The UK-PHRST is a collaborative effort led by Public Health England (PHE) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), funded by UK Aid from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

It continually monitors infectious diseases and other hazards globally, identifying situations where specialist expertise could prevent these threats from turning into global outbreaks.

The team also conducts innovative research to improve epidemic preparedness and response, and supports countries to build national capacity to respond to outbreaks.

The public health risk to the UK regarding the current Ebola outbreak remains negligible to very low.