

No. 102/2020

4 March 2020

Our Ref: E1/20

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

## **UK Government Launch Coronavirus Action Plan:**

The UK government has published its official 'Coronavirus Action Plan' following an announcement by the Prime Minister at an official launch at Downing Street on Tuesday 3 March. The action plan provides information on the government's plans to contain the spread of Coronavirus and what action could be taken if the virus does spread. The document provides the public with information on:

- The government's plans to contain the spread of the virus
- How action will develop as the virus spreads
- What people can do to protect themselves and their families

The plan also includes information on the government's 4-stage strategy to:

1. Contain
2. Delay
3. Research
4. Mitigate

It sets out advice for how the public should respond in each stage, including what to expect if the outbreak becomes a pandemic.

Actions if the virus spreads to pandemic levels could include:

- Police, fire and rescue services carrying out business continuity plans in response to staff shortages
- Support for businesses facing short-term cash flow issues because of the virus to minimise impact on the economy
- Emergency registration of health professionals who have recently retired
- Introducing emergency indemnity coverage for health care workers to provide care or diagnostic services and relaxation of rules around staff to pupil ratios in education and childcare settings
- Every government department to have a ministerial lead on the virus to help oversee government response to Coronavirus

The UK is currently focusing on containing the spread – the first stage of the plan.

The next stage of the plan involves delaying the outbreak until warmer months to avoid overlapping with seasonal flu and other winter pressures on the NHS. A public information campaign will be introduced to support this. The campaign will include advice for the public on preventing the spread through proper handwashing.

The government may also ask businesses to consider more home working and discourage unnecessary travel as part of a 'social distancing' strategy to delay the peak of the outbreak.

If UK scientific experts advise that the virus has begun to circulate more widely in this country and can no longer be delayed, the government will carry out plans to mitigate the threat to people, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable.

The plans were signed off at the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) this week and ministerial COBR meetings will be stepped up if the virus escalates.

The government, through the PM announcement and launch stated as follows: 'All the plans are backed by research and so far the government has so far invested over £40 million in research to find a vaccine. The public's concerns about the global spread of this virus were fully understood, and it's likely to become more significant in the coming weeks. Keeping the country safe is the overriding priority and the 'Action Plan' is an indication of the commitment to do everything possible – based on the advice of world-leading scientific experts – to prepare for all eventualities. They are committed to make sure the NHS gets all the support it needs to continue their response to the virus so far. The government concluded that they have always said this outbreak could worsen before it gets better. However, the 'Action Plan', backed by world-leading infectious disease experts, sets out what actions the public can expect from the government now and if the virus does progress. Protecting the most vulnerable is the absolute priority.'

Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Chris Whitty stated at the launch: 'Everyone has a role to play in combatting the Coronavirus threat and he urged everyone to take stock of the simple methods that offer the best protection. It's simple advice but it's the single most important thing we can all do. Simple as it sounds, the single most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves right now is wash their hands properly and regularly, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. He concluded that people should always follow the most current public health and travel advice as it develops.

### **The 'Action Plan'**

This 'Action-Plan' document sets out what the UK as a whole has done – and plans to do – to tackle the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, based on the nation's experience dealing with other infectious diseases and our influenza pandemic preparedness work.

The exact response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) will be tailored to the nature, scale and location of the threat in the UK, as the understanding of this develops.

The document sets out:

- What we know about the virus and the disease it causes
- How we have planned for an infectious disease outbreak such as the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- The actions taken so far in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

- What we are planning to do next, depending on the course the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak takes
- The role the public can play in supporting this response, now and in the future

The current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, which began in December 2019, presents a significant challenge for the entire world. The UK government and devolved administrations, including the health and social care system, have planned extensively over the years for an event like this. The government advised that the UK is therefore well prepared to respond in a way that offers substantial protection to the public.

See attached copy of the UK Government 'Coronavirus Action Plan' published 3 March 2020.

Yours sincerely



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