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**To: Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Date: 10 November 2014**

**From:**

**West Midlands East Health Protection Team, Public Health England  
NHS England Arden, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Area Team  
Coventry City Council**

**Subject: Ebola Virus – International, National and Local Situation and Response Update**

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## **1 Purpose**

To update board members on the current international, national and local situation and the response arrangements in place.

## **2 Recommendations**

Board members are asked to support Public Health England and NHS England when requested to ensure that front-line staff are aware of and able to follow current Public Health England national guidance regarding response to suspected Ebola cases. All guidance can be found at:

Board members are asked to actively promote opportunities for front-line/other staff to support the international response through UK-med <http://uk-med.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/>

## **3 Information/Background**

### *Current situation*

To date there have been over 10,000 cases and almost 5000 deaths associated with the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which continues in three countries: Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Small numbers of cases have also been reported in Nigeria, Senegal (both now declared Ebola free), Spain, the USA, and more recently in Mali.

The risk of any traveller to West Africa contracting Ebola is very low without direct contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person. The risk of travellers returning to the UK whilst incubating the disease is also low, but it is thought we may see several cases over the next few months, whilst the ongoing outbreak is managed in West Africa. Healthcare and humanitarian aid workers are at particular risk. However, the UK has a well-established and tested system to deal with any known or suspected imported case of this disease, and an outbreak is very unlikely. Therefore, the threat to the population of Coventry is low.

### *The virus*

The Ebola virus causes a serious infectious disease, and was first identified in Africa in the mid-1970s. It can be transmitted by direct contact with body secretions of somebody who is infected, but it is not generally transmitted by coughing/sneezing or through routine social contact. People are only infectious when they have symptoms. For further details about the infection and the symptoms it can cause, please see <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ebola-virus/Pages/Ebola-virus.aspx>

### *Current international response*

The international community is mounting a response in support of the three main affected countries, although significant further support is needed. The US is leading on the response in Liberia, France is leading on the response in Guinea and the UK is leading on the response in Sierra Leone. The prime minister secured an £800m funding pledge from European leaders at the European Council meetings in Brussels on 24<sup>th</sup> October. The response consists of:

- Setting up and staffing Emergency Treatment Centres for the management of cases
- Setting up community care centres (lower level support to avoid families caring for unwell patients themselves)
- Exit screening – identifying anyone leaving the three main affected countries who may be symptomatic, or who has been in contact with Ebola cases (and quarantining those who have been in contact for 21 days). However this strategy needs international support to ensure it is robust.

### *The UK response to the international emergency*

The UK government has pledged support for affected countries consisting of:

- Deployment of NHS and Public Health England staff volunteers
- Support for 700 treatment beds and the set-up of community care units and burial units
- 750 military personnel to support setting up of Emergency Treatment Centres and the training of front-line staff, plus provision of logistical support to teams on the ground
- Provision of emergency supplies – food aid, medical kit, clean blankets and chlorine for sanitising

### *UK preparations for Ebola cases in the UK.*

On the advice of the Chief Medical Officer, Jeremy Hunt announced on 13th October 2014 a number of measures that have now been introduced in the UK. The most notable of these is the screening of passengers (via questionnaire and recording of temperatures) returning from the three main affected countries at Heathrow and Gatwick airports, and on the Eurostar. This will subsequently also be undertaken at Manchester and Birmingham airports. Those individuals identified as at risk (i.e. with history of contact with Ebola patients/whose symptom profile is of concern) will be managed appropriately. Please note that there are no direct flights to the UK from the affected countries and exit screening is also being performed. All returning passengers will be given information about what to do if they develop symptoms at a later date.

Birmingham airport are working with Public Health England to establish screening arrangements for those from the at risk areas. Screening at Birmingham airport is likely to commence on Friday

31/10/14 and will follow the national algorithm. Consultants in Communicable Disease Control for the West Midlands East unit are the designated Port Medical Officers and the airport has an established port health plan owned by Public Health England and overseen by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

The local health system is on alert for any cases which may emerge, and GPs, hospitals and the ambulance services are all ensuring plans are in place to manage any cases if they arise. All GPs, pharmacists and A & E departments have been provided with awareness posters. The Department for Education has also written to all head-teachers, providing them with a link to the guidance which has been put together for all education, childcare and young person's settings. Partners will be responding reactively to any requests for information from colleagues in other institutional settings. Multi-agency partners are also making and testing plans to support the health-led response.

A system response was mounted to an incident which occurred on Saturday 11th October at the City of Coventry Health Centre, which was shown not to be related to Ebola, and lessons are being taken forward from this. A national exercise of plans has also taken place. Furthermore, on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October a desktop exercise led by Public Health England and NHS England was held, which involved the testing of health system arrangements in Coventry and Warwickshire for the response to suspected cases of Ebola. The event itself was attended by the two lead agencies, plus acute and community trust colleagues, CCGs, primary care and local authority representatives. The exercise highlighted a number of areas in which further clarity was required, particularly in relation to actions expected to be undertaken by primary care staff should suspected cases present. The identified issues are being followed up.

It should be noted that the principles of incident response are outlined in the multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding regarding Emergency Preparedness and Service Delivery in the event of an Outbreak or Public Health Incident, which has previously been signed off by all relevant partners (Appendix 1). A specific local incident plan for the lead agencies has also been developed for the West Midlands by Public Health England in consultation with the Directors of Public Health (Appendix 2).

Further details can be found on the Public Health England webpage:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/ebola-government-response>

All clinical guidance documents can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ebola-virus-disease-clinical-management-and-guidance>

Public information can be found on the NHS Choices website:  
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ebola-virus/pages/ebola-virus.aspx>

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Memorandum of Understanding for Emergency Preparedness and Service Delivery in the event of a Public Health Incident or Outbreak in Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire**



Memorandum of  
Understanding for Err

### **Appendix 2: West Midlands Guidance for the coordination and management of the health sector response to Ebola Virus Disease**



Action Card for  
IncidentManagement