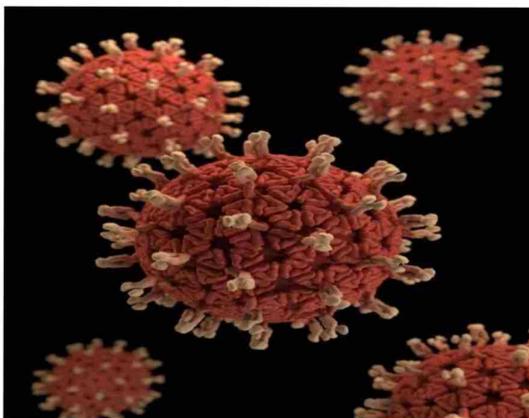




Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Summary Note on Exercise Nimbus Novel Coronavirus Preparation 12 February 2020



Exercise Nimbus – Novel Coronavirus preparedness

12 February 2020 - Summary Note

Introduction

As at 10 February 2020, the UK had 8 positive cases of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCov), which was first identified in Wuhan City, China; the World Health Organization declared a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30 Jan 20; and UK Chief Medical Officers have raised the risk to the public from LOW to MODERATE. UK CMOs have agreed that the existing pandemic influenza plans should be the basis of the UK's preparedness and this has initiated a series of preparedness activities, including exercising ministers and senior decision makers on the potential impact and decisions that may be required in coming weeks or months.

Aim and objectives

Aim: To rehearse Ministerial-level decision making for the UK's pandemic preparedness and response within the context of the current novel Coronavirus outbreak.

Objectives:

1. To expose the potential scale and range of impacts arising during a pandemic and relate this to the current novel Coronavirus outbreak.
2. To identify the likely type and range of decisions that would need to be made by Ministers at key points during a pandemic.
3. To rehearse the structure, process and protocols for supporting critical, strategic decision making in the response to a novel Coronavirus outbreak in the UK.

Exercise format:

The fictional exercise was presented in three segments: a short introductory scene setting, to establish the purpose and process for the exercise¹; a simulated COBR meeting in which participants will work through the context, choices and consequences for a small number of difficult decisions arising from a fictional Reasonable Worst-Case (RWC) scenario; a wrap up of key elements/issues the exercise highlights and points for further action.

The exercise focused on decision making in 3 key areas:

1. Caring for the sick: in hospital and the community
2. Death Management
3. Staff absence rates and its impact on essential services

The exercise was run as a pseudo COBR meeting with the chair leading discussion (guided by the Facilitator). There were artificialities in the conduct of the exercise to ensure all key areas were discussed and are conducted within the time available.

Outline scenario

The exercise was set approximately 6 weeks after first transmission of cases identified in the UK and the scenario was based on a 'moderate' novel coronavirus with a Case Fatality Rate of approximately 2%. Setting this at the six-week point ensured that the exercise was focused on a number of critical decision points that are unlikely to be reached before that point, but cannot safely be delayed any later.

The exercise was set in context with a start-state scenario outlining the series of (simulated) events leading up to week 6, including underpinning assumptions and decisions that would already been taken by this point. Care will be needed to ensure that these are framed in such a way that participants understand these are presented as decisions taken for the purposes of the exercise setting only, with no implication that they are policy positions or conclusions reached at this point. A Commonly Recognised Information Picture (CRIP) will be developed to contextualise and introduce the events and risks requiring critical decisions to be taken.

Exercise participants

Total 55 including 10 to 15 Ministers, Devolved Administrations, plus senior decision makers from relevant OGDs in COBR (F)

Actions

Cabinet Office circulated findings internally and implemented the appropriate actions.