

working night and day with the World Health Organisation and the international community and are monitoring the situation closely. Our approach has been guided by the chief medical officer, Professor Chris Whitty.

As I set out in my statement on Thursday, coronavirus presents with flu-like symptoms including fever, a cough and difficulty breathing, and the current evidence is that most cases appear to be mild. However, this is a new disease, and the global scientific community is still learning about it. I have therefore directed Public Health England to take a belt-and-braces approach, including tracing people who have been in Wuhan in the past 14 days. Coronaviruses do not usually spread if people do not have symptoms. However, we cannot be 100% certain.

From today, as concerns have been raised about limited pre-symptom transmission, we are asking anyone in the UK who has returned from Wuhan in the last 14 days to self-isolate—to stay indoors and avoid contact with other people—and to contact NHS 111. If you are in Northern Ireland, you should phone your GP. If you develop respiratory symptoms within 14 days of travel from the area and are now in the UK, call your GP or ring 111, informing them of your symptoms and your recent travel to the city. Do not leave home until you have been given advice by a clinician.

Public Health England officials continue to trace people who have arrived in the UK from Wuhan. Having eliminated those who we know have since left the country, we are seeking to locate 1,460 people. The Foreign Office is rapidly advancing measures to bring UK nationals back from Hubei province. I have asked my officials to ensure that there are appropriate measures in place upon arrival to look after them and to protect the public. If you are in Hubei province and wish to leave, please get in contact with the Foreign Office; there are details on the gov.uk website.

The UK is one of the first countries in the world to have developed an accurate test for this coronavirus, and PHE is undertaking continuous refinement of that test. PHE has this morning confirmed to me that it can scale up, so we are in a position to deal with cases in this country if necessary. I want to stress that the NHS remains well prepared. The NHS has expert teams in every ambulance service and at a number of specialist hospital units with highly trained staff and equipment, ready to receive and care for patients with any highly infectious disease, including this one. The NHS practises and prepares its response to disease outbreaks and follows tried and tested procedures, following the highest safety standards possible for the protection of NHS staff, patients and the public. Specific guidance on handling Wuhan coronavirus has been shared with NHS staff.

