

Public Health Wales Briefing: Update on Wuhan Novel Coronavirus (WN-CoV)

Date of briefing: 23 January 2020 [2020/03]

Intended audience:

- *PHW Health Protection Teams*
- *PHW CDSC consultants and senior scientists, for dissemination to teams as appropriate*
- *Microbiologists (Public Health Wales and other)*
- *Health Board Executive Directors of Public Health and Medical Directors for dissemination to Emergency departments and Acute medical departments.*
- *Executive Nurse Directors, Senior Nurses/ Leads of Infection Prevention and Control*
- *GPs in Wales*
- *Welsh Government*
- *Welsh Ambulance Service Trust*
- *Port Health Authorities*

1. Background and interpretation

This briefing note provides a further update on Wuhan Novel Coronavirus (WN-CoV) (previous briefing note was 10/01/2020 [2020/02]).

Cases of illness (mainly pneumonia) associated with a novel coronavirus have been identified in Wuhan, where the first cases were identified, but also in other parts of mainland China and the region (Taiwan, Thailand, Korea, Japan). To date there have been 571 confirmed cases in mainland China (including 17 deaths), and 12 outside mainland China. Reported case numbers are increasing over time.

Among the cases from China, there are reports of infected healthcare workers. This, along with the increase in case numbers and likely later dates of onset, implies human to human transmission. Key information on the infection, including the case fatality ratio, incubation period and reproductive number are not yet clear. ECDC has estimated that a plausible incubation period is between 2 and 7 days (up to 14).

Due to the enlarging geographic area affected, and evidence of human to human transmission, it is increasingly likely that suspected cases (those with an appropriate clinical picture and travel or contact exposure) will be identified in the UK, including Wales.

In addition, port health measures are being developed and implemented to identify cases as early as possible. **Minimising the time between onset of infection and appropriate isolation is important to prevent transmission.**

Guidance for primary care has been issued by Public Health England, along with updates to their web pages. A letter to NHS services in England has been sent on 23/01/2020 to outline the situation and approach, including a patient pathway.

The World Health Organisation is meeting this week to discuss whether the new infection constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Travel advice is under regular review.

This is an evolving situation and further updates will be provided. Guidance is likely to evolve as the situation changes.

2. Recommendations and actions

Implications and recommendations for health boards, clinical microbiology, virology and infectious diseases services

Please ensure that the information in this briefing note is distributed appropriately, including to Emergency Departments and acute medical services.

Health boards should ensure that **all staff** are aware of potential risks from imported cases of infectious diseases, in order to identify and isolate as appropriate in a timely manner. Travel histories should be taken at registration for all patients, particularly where there are symptoms of infection.

Health boards should ensure their preparedness for a possible case of WN-CoV, including provision, training and appropriate use of personal protective equipment, and isolation facilities. The current guidance is for assessment in an airborne isolation unit in hospital, followed by testing and a period of isolation (at home or in hospital) whilst awaiting the results.

Implications for Welsh Ambulance Service Trust

The ambulance service should ensure preparedness for transporting a suspected case of WN-CoV from the community, primary or secondary

care settings to an appropriate secondary care facility, including appropriate personal protective equipment in line with PHE guidance.

Implications for primary care

Patients who present with respiratory symptoms and have travelled to China or other affected areas in the 14 days prior to onset of symptoms should have a detailed travel and exposure history taken, asking for any travel to affected areas in China as well as the usual avian influenza risk factors.

The primary care guidance is based around early identification, isolation and then avoidance of contact until the case is either transported for further assessment, or found not to fit the case definition.

Where available, patients should be asked to wear a fluid-repellent surgical mask and then transferred to a single occupancy room. Patient contact should be avoided. Do not physically examine **or have direct contact with the patient unless appropriate PPE worn (seek specialist advice if concerned).**

Full guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>.

Recommendation for all health services

Any suspected cases of WN-CoV should be reported to the **Health Protection Team: AWARE** I&S **and local microbiology services.**

Implications and recommendations for Health Protection Teams

Health Protection teams may be contacted about patients with pneumonia who have travelled to China or other affected areas. They should advise the clinician to take a detailed travel and exposure history and to follow the recommendations above and in the published guidance.

A minimum dataset form has been recommended by PHE (see guidance link below). Records should be linked to the **Tarian incident 3808-**“Novel Coronavirus, Respiratory illness in Wuhan, China”.

Implications for Port Health authorities

Local authorities with port health responsibilities, in particular for Cardiff Airport, should review existing plans in the light of emerging guidance.

3. Further information

Public Health Wales website- Novel coronavirus infection (2019 n-CoV): China: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/novel-coronavirus-infection-2019-n-cov-china/>

PHE Wuhan novel coronavirus webpage:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>

UK travel advice, including link to NaTHNaC country-specific advice.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-and-avian-flu-advice-for-travel-to-china>

ECDC rapid risk assessment
<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/rapid-risk-assessment-cluster-pneumonia-cases-caused-novel-coronavirus-wuhan>

WHO pages on Novel Coronavirus
<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/novel-coronavirus>