

## Information Sheet for Community and Voluntary Groups and Organisations

### COVID-19 (Formerly known as Coronavirus)

You will have heard about the new Coronavirus, now called COVID-19, in the media over recent weeks. Below are some facts about the current situation for your information and to help you and your group organisation.

#### Latest Testing Information

As of 5 March, a total of 18,083 people have been tested in the UK, of which 17,968 were confirmed negative. 115 were confirmed as positive; that's a positive rate of 0.64%. In the North West of England 17 cases have been confirmed as positive.

#### Information about the virus

A coronavirus is a type of virus like a cold and flu. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020. COVID-19 presents with flu-like symptoms including a fever, a cough, or difficulty breathing. The current evidence is that most cases appear to be mild.

Generally, these viruses can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. There is no evidence that children are more affected than other age groups – very few cases have been reported in children.

#### Risk Level

On the 30<sup>th</sup> January, in light of the increasing number of cases in China and using existing and widely tested models, the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers consider it prudent for our governments to escalate planning and preparation in case of a more widespread outbreak.

For that reason, they advised an increase of the UK risk level from low to moderate. This does not mean they think the risk to individuals in the UK has changed at this stage, but that government should plan for all eventualities.

## What can you do to protect yourself, volunteers and users of your premises?

Just like flu and other communicable disease everyone can take simple hygiene measures to protect themselves and others:

1. **Catch it, Bin it, Kill it** : Sneeze into disposable tissues “Catch it”, dispose of them “Bin it” and then wash hands with warm soap and water or use hand sanitiser gel if it is not possible to wash (“kill it”). Catch it, Bin it, Kill it leaflet:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/catch-bin-kill.pdf>

2. **Wash your hands regularly with soap and water** or hand gel if soap and water is not available, as a second-best option. **This cannot be stressed too strongly** as how important this simple step is. Washing your hands for 20 seconds with liquid soap and water is so effective in breaking the chain of infection. This link will take you to a video clip and instructions for how to wash your hands, please share it with staff, volunteers and users of your premises.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>

Please ensure your premises **do not use domestic hand towels** for people to dry their hands on, these can become heavily contaminated over the course of a day. Please use either, hand dryers, disposable paper towels or material hand towel on a roller dispenser.

3. Avoid touching your face unless you’ve just washed your hands
4. Ensure surfaces which get droplets on them from coughs and sneezes are cleaned with ordinary detergents regularly if people are showing symptoms of colds and flu (e.g. handles, worktops) (see cleaning advice below.)

At this stage there is **no need** for any further measures beyond what your normally hygiene/cleaning routine.

## Do we need to stop meeting or close our building?

A coronavirus is a type of virus like a cold and flu. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world.

At this moment the advice from government and the 4 Chief Medical Officers is **NO**, you can continue to meet and don’t need to close your building.

## What should we do about staff or volunteers who are returning from travel abroad?

## Returned from travel to China Wuhan and Hubei Province and other specified areas:

If they have returned since 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 from:

- Iran
- Specific lockdown areas in Northern Italy as designated by the Government of Italy
- Special care zones in South Korea as designated by the Government of the Republic of South Korea
- Or returned from Hubei province in the past 14 days

They should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the area

**They should follow this advice even if they do not have symptoms of the virus.**

## Travelers from other parts of China and other specified areas:

This advice applies to travelers who have returned to the UK from the following areas:

- China
- Thailand
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Hong Kong
- Taiwan
- Singapore
- Malaysia
- Macau

If they have returned to the UK from any of these areas in the last 14 days and develop symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath, they should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the country

**They should follow this advice even if their symptoms are minor.**

If they have returned from these areas:

- Northern Italy (defined by a line above, and not including, Pisa, Florence and Rimini).
- Vietnam
- Cambodia

- Laos
- Myanmar

since February 19<sup>th</sup> 2020 and develop symptoms, they should:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the country

**They do not need to follow this advice if they have no symptoms.**

### **What this means in practice**

People are being to take simple, common-sense steps to avoid close contact with other people as much as possible, like they would with other flu viruses.

Further information on self-isolation is available via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation-for-patients-undergoing-testing/advice-sheet-home-isolation>

### **What is being done locally to ensure Wigan Borough and the GM Region are prepared?**

All Greater Manchester councils / organisations have robust infection control arrangements in place and strong partnership arrangements across the health and social care system.

We have good systems in place in GM for the early detection, safe management and investigations of possible coronavirus cases.

We are all working closely with Public Health England, the NHS and all our health and social care partners to prevent further spread of the virus.

There are National, Regional and Local Outbreak Plans to deal with High Consequence Infectious Disease and Pandemic Outbreaks, should they occur; and these Plans are being used to prepare Wigan Borough and the GM Region.

Greater Manchester Resilience Forum is the body that is overseeing the preparedness of the region and at a local level Wigan Borough Resilience Forum is bringing partners together to coordinate the work.

The Councils Director of Public Health is taking part in two weekly telephone conferences with the Chief Medical Officer. So, we have our finger on the pulse of what the current situation is and what work is being done. And can reassure you that a lot of work is being done from National to Borough levels to ensure we are as prepared as we can be.

We have dealt with such outbreaks before. The SARS outbreak of 2002-03 and the 2009 N1H1 Influenza Pandemic, which originated from Mexico; so, while COVID-19 might be a new virus we have successfully dealt with outbreaks of this kind before.

## **What happens when someone is tested positive for COVID-19?**

We ensure that someone with coronavirus doesn't put others at risk by treating their symptoms, just like for a cold or flu, but in isolation and carefully investigating who they had close contact with through contact tracing. The tracing and managing of contacts who have had significant exposure to confirmed cases of the coronavirus COVID-19 is being co-ordinated by Public Health England.

## **I have a question about COVID-19 where can I get advice from?**

The government have set up the following website, which is updated at 14:00 hrs each day, giving information to the public.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

## **Where can I get local advice from and speak to someone?**

If you need further support or advice, please contact the Councils Health Protection and Civil Contingencies Team:

[healthprotectionandcivilcontingenciesteam@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:healthprotectionandcivilcontingenciesteam@wigan.gov.uk)

or call them on 01942 404240.

**We hope the above information is of assistance and provides reassurance to you and your group and organisation.**