

# Adult Social Care & Community Scrutiny Committee

## 10 March 2020

### Covid-19 Briefing

#### National situation and plan

As of 9 March at 2pm there have been nearly 25,000 people tested in the UK for Covid-19, of which 319 were confirmed positive. Four of those individuals who tested positive have died. It is expected that more cases will be detected in the coming days, with some early evidence of spread of the virus being seen nationally.

The government published its coronavirus action plan on 3 March 2020 and details of this can be found [here](#). It details three specific stages of action (contain, delay and mitigate) underpinned by research throughout. The strategy to contain the spread of the virus has been to test individuals who have returned from areas of potential exposure, and identifying individual confirmed cases. From this, it is then possible to identify all people who have had close contact with a confirmed case in the UK and ask these people to take appropriate action, such as self-isolation. This has been somewhat successful in that we had only relatively few cases until recent weeks, but the government is now considering how we begin to move to the “delay” phase of the plan. This means that there is a recognition that spread of the virus will now occur, but the aim will be to slow this down so that our services can deal with the increased demand it will generate.

Delay strategies will include consideration of measures such as social distancing (e.g. greater home working, school closures, reducing large scale gatherings) and will be based on the best available evidence, balanced against the impact on society. We expect there to be more information released this week on such decisions.

#### Local confirmed cases

As of 4pm 9 March 2020, there have been three confirmed cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Gloucestershire. Specific details of individuals are not being given out to respect patient confidentiality, however, some general information is known and can be shared.

The first two cases were linked; the individuals became unwell following a holiday to Northern Italy. All those who have had close contact with either of the two cases have been identified, contacted and provided with all necessary advice. One of the cases worked at a primary school in Tetbury and self-isolated when they developed symptoms on return. The school where they worked was closed on Monday 2nd and Tuesday 3rd March whilst it was deep cleaned and reopened on Wednesday 4th March 2020. One case remained at home. One was admitted to hospital in Liverpool. 4 symptomatic contacts of these cases were identified and found to be negative for Coronavirus. Other asymptomatic contacts self-isolated as appropriate.

There has been understandable anxiety within the Tetbury community and, as part of addressing this, as the school returns to business as usual; a local drop in session in the school hall was arranged. The Local County Councillor, Director of Education and Director of Public Health attended to support the school, answer questions from staff and parents.

The third case was confirmed on 7 March 2020; this person lives in the Cheltenham area and had travelled out of the area to a conference and it thought they contracted COVID-19 there.

We are aware that there are likely to be further cases in the coming days and the numbers will be announced on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. The Director of Public Health will continue to lead the local communications.

## Local novel coronavirus (COVID-19) preparedness and action

Locally, we have tried and tested plans in place which mean that we are prepared to deal with a whole range of issues. This is an evolving situation and all agencies are working together to make sure everything possible is being done to minimise the risk of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading in the county.

Gloucestershire County Council actions include:

- Ensuring that our plans for a pandemic event are up to date and ready to be activated. This has included attending an exercise on 26 February 2020 to test current arrangements.
- Liaising with Public Health England and NHS England to ensure they are supported in their response and assured of our local plans as well as providing advice and support to the public who contact GCC.
- Ensuring general hygiene messages and up to date information has been communicated to all GCC staff, social care settings and schools. We have also ensured partners are doing the same for their organisations and stakeholders
- Ensuring business continuity plans are in place
- Supporting the establishment and operational activity of a 7 day a week multiagency Incident Command Centre (ICC).
- The Director of Public Health is now chairing weekly Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) meetings for all Local Resilience Forum stakeholders
- Established strategic and tactical working groups to oversee GCC's response to the situation.

In addition, Health Partners have:

- Established a drive through testing facility in Brockworth where people can be tested safely and quickly without leaving their vehicle and coming into contact with the general public.
- Set up "pods" at the hospital sites in Gloucester and Cheltenham where people who are unwell and need clinician assessment can be tested for the virus safely.
- Set up a Home Testing Team for people who are unable to get to the hospital or drive through testing site.
- Implemented pathways for treating and supporting patients with novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection under a number of scenarios. These have been stress tested through simulation exercises and were activated for the three confirmed local cases.

## General Information and Prevention Advice

Novel coronavirus (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. National advice remains that the best action we can all take is to ensure we continue to have good personal and hand hygiene, which includes:

- Giving your hands a good wash with soap and water (but hand sanitisers can be a good substitute).
- Maintaining personal hygiene when coughing or sneezing is also important – use a tissue rather your hands and then throw it away.

Anyone who is concerned about their health symptoms is advised to follow the advice about what to do on the Government's website at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public> . People are asked **NOT** to turn up at their GP surgery or other health services (e.g. hospital), but rather to call NHS 111 .

If people have trips planned, they should follow the Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice.

Sarah Scott  
Director of Public Health  
9 March 2020