

## COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Preparedness in Croydon

As at 06 March 2020

### 1.1. Current Situation

- This is a rapidly evolving situation due to the nature of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). There are limitations and uncertainty in what is currently known about the virus.
- The Government has judged for over a decade since the first [National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies](#), that one of the highest current risks to the UK is the possible emergence of an influenza pandemic – that is, the rapid worldwide spread of influenza ('flu') caused by a novel virus strain to which people would have no immunity, resulting in more serious illness than caused by seasonal influenza. In a pandemic, the new virus will spread quickly and potentially cause more serious illness in a large proportion of the population, due to the lack of immunity.
- Pandemic influenza preparedness arrangements are well established across the system, and so these planning assumptions have been used as a basis to inform planning until further information is known about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Given the uncertainty about the scale, severity and pattern of development of any outbreak, three key principles underpin pandemic preparedness and response activity:
  - Precautionary: the response to any new virus should take into account the risk that it could be severe in nature. Plans must therefore be in place for a coronavirus outbreak with the potential to cause severe symptoms in individuals and widespread disruption to society.
  - Proportionality: the response to a coronavirus outbreak should be no more and no less than that necessary in relation to the known risks. Plans therefore need to be in place not only for high impact pandemics, but also for milder scenarios, with the ability to adapt them as new evidence emerges.
  - Flexibility: there will need to be local flexibility and agility in the timing of transition from one phase of response to another to take account of local patterns of spread of infection, within a consistent UK-wide approach to the response to a novel coronavirus outbreak.
- Croydon Council has a Pandemic Response Plan that was due to be updated later this year, however this review has been brought forward and the plan is currently out for consultation with key internal stakeholders until 5<sup>th</sup> March. The existing version of this plan was tested during Exercise Pandemic in November 2017, evidenced by the post exercise report.
- The Croydon Resilience Forum have a Multi-Agency Pandemic Response Plan, which was also due to be updated later this year, but this review has been

brought forward and the plan is currently being reviewed by key stakeholders. The existing version of this plan was tested during Exercise Fever in October 2017, evidenced by the post exercise report.

- Representatives of relevant, key teams within Croydon Council and Croydon Resilience Forum are meeting and conversing on a regular basis to ensure our response is proportionate, and that robust plans are in place for escalation should that be required.
- At Croydon Council this includes twice weekly coordination meetings to share current information from public health England and work through any emerging issues.
- The London Resilience Forum is currently determining a response structure in which local authorities will play a role in information sharing and exception reporting. This is expected to evolve and become more established over the next few weeks.
- Pandemic infectious disease presents a unique scenario in terms of prolonged pressures through a reduced workforce and potentially increased workload for some responders. Organisations are therefore expected to have business continuity plans to ensure that critical services and outputs continue to be delivered throughout a pandemic. Croydon Council annually reviews its business continuity preparedness, and has service reporting mechanisms should this be required to monitor the impact to council service delivery.

#### 1.2. **What should people be doing now to protect themselves?**

- All communications should reflect the most up to date situation report available at: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)
- The UK Chief Medical Officers have raised the risk to the public from low to moderate. But the risk to individuals remains low.
- The symptoms of coronavirus are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu, and public messaging is focused on normal respiratory illness advice (e.g. catch it, bin it, kill it).

#### 1.3. **Key messages on what to do if you think you've been in contact with someone with suspected coronavirus**

- Do not go to a GP surgery or hospital. Call 111, stay indoors and avoid close contact with other people.

#### 1.4. **If there is a case in Croydon**

- Public Health England (PHE) is the lead government organisation for ensuring all the necessary follow up and contact tracing is carried out from any confirmed cases that are identified in this country.
- In the event of an incident, the relevant health protection team from PHE will contact local authority public health teams regarding confirmed cases in their borough and will provide management of the associated contact tracing/ infection control measures.
- The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is the lead organisation for announcing confirmed cases.

- Every day at 2pm, DHSC publish the total number of negative and positive tests performed in the UK here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>
- If there are rumours around a case in your local area, please refer enquirers to the above link, and explain the process for confirmed cases in the UK.

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Hari Mollett  
Resilience Officer (Pandemic Lead)  
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