All MPs
House of Commons

03 March 2020

Dear colleague,

Today the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have published an action plan that sets out how we have responded so far, and intend to respond going forward to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, available at: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

The plan sets out how we will deal with this incident; the actions currently underway; and an action plan for dealing with this outbreak going forward.

Our response to COVID-19 is guided by the best scientific advice, the international situation, the advice of organisations such as the WHO, data modelling based on the best available evidence and the recommendations of our expert bodies across the UK.

Currently, we are in the Contain phase of the plan, which is where have been since we first learnt about COVID-19 at the end of 2019. The Contain phase is about detecting and isolating the early cases – now 51 people in the UK – tracing their close contacts and preventing the disease from taking hold in the UK for as long as we reasonably can. This has also given the NHS time to ramp up its preparations.

The response is critically dependent on the course the disease takes. As the plan makes clear, we are ready to take the effective action required to protect people. But it is important to note that everyone can do their bit today by using and binning tissues and properly washing their hands more often for 20 seconds each time.

I am enormously grateful to the hard working and dedicated public officials here and overseas who have made such incredible efforts to contain this outbreak. We will do everything we can to help make these global efforts succeed, and I hope we can rely on your support to implement this plan.

For more details and answers to questions you may have, I will be holding a briefing session with the Chief Medical Officer today at 4.15-5pm in Room CR14 in the House of Commons.

Yours ever,

MATT HANCOCK