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NHS Scotland staff

6 March 2020

Dear Colleague,

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

As I write this, you will be aware that Scotland has seen 11 confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19). We understand that these patients are currently well and are receiving appropriate care.

My thoughts are with the people who have been diagnosed, and with their families. It is important to mention that local Health Protection Teams have already begun contact tracing, the process of gathering details of the places they have visited and the people they have been in close contact with.

I won't minimise the challenge COVID-19 will present for us, but Scotland is well equipped to deal with infections of this kind. The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland have a proven track record for responding to disease outbreaks and follow tried and tested procedures. These follow the highest safety standards possible, for the protection of our staff, our patients and the public.

Led by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Catherine Calderwood, our clinicians and Health Protection Scotland continue to work closely with their UK counter parts to ensure a consistent and joined up approach. This includes a UK wide Coronavirus action plan:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>

The plan sets out how we have planned for an outbreak, the actions we have taken so far, what we are planning to do next; and the role we can all play in supporting the response. Our response will be phased, if and when the focus in Scotland moves from the 'contain' to the 'delay' and potentially through to the 'mitigate' stage of the plan.

To this end a UK wide public information campaign has already reinforced the importance of hand-washing, for 20 seconds or more with water and soap, to prevent the spread of the virus and using tissues when we cough or sneeze.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Early detection measures are vital in helping to prevent the spread of the virus, that is why we have a number of hospitals and GP surgeries in Scotland conducting tests on some patients presenting with flu like symptoms. This is peak season for respiratory and flu-like illness and there will be people presenting with symptoms of acute respiratory illness, but these cases are highly unlikely to be COVID-19. That said, we do expect that the numbers of COVID-19 cases will rise rapidly in the coming days.

Your employer will keep you informed of the situation through their usual communication channels. Up-to-date information on the situation in Scotland is being published by Scottish Government daily, at 14:00 at: www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scottish-test-numbers

You can also find information on how to avoid catching these types of infections on [NHS Inform](#) .There is also a dedicated advice line on 0800 028 2816 for anyone in Scotland who has concerns, but is not displaying symptoms

I know that all of you across our health and social care system will work together in this rapidly evolving situation. Your continued hard work and dedication is so valuable and I am grateful to you and thank you very much for all you do.

Kind Regards,



JEANE FREEMAN