

Press release: Ebola outbreak: UK Public Health Rapid Support Team deploys to DRC

On 8 May 2018, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Government declared a new outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), the country's ninth outbreak. The latest situation report can be found on the [WHO website](#).

The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (UK-PHRST) has the capability to rapidly deploy public health experts at 48 hours' notice in order to strengthen the in-country response, curtail the spread of disease, and ultimately save lives.

The deployment is in response to a call from the World Health Organisation's Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). The GOARN team, which the members of the UK-PHRST will be part of, is working closely with the government of the DRC to rapidly scale up its operations in response to the current outbreak.

The 3 UK-PHRST team members deploying include 2 experts in tracking outbreaks (epidemiologists) and a data scientist. The team is expected to remain in the DRC for around 6 weeks, during which time they will help track the spread of the outbreak, and will also support in establishing robust data systems that will help align crucial information gathering. The UK-PHRST also has expertise in various other key areas for Ebola response, such as laboratory diagnostics, that can be deployed should they be needed.

The public health risk to the UK regarding the current Ebola outbreak is very low.

As the UK-PHRST's deployment progresses, it will continue to provide support and share expertise with partners in DRC to strengthen the health system beyond the immediate response.

Professor Daniel Bausch, Director of the UK-PHRST said:

Unfortunately Ebola has again re-emerged in the DRC.

We are all aware of the potential devastation Ebola can cause, so it's essential that we respond rapidly to stop the outbreak in its tracks.

Fortunately, we are seeing a rapid response both in the DRC and from international partners, and the UK-PHRST is proud to be part of that, providing specialist support that can benefit the country, not only for this outbreak but for the long-term.

The UK-PHRST, funded by the UK Aid, is a partnership between Public Health England (PHE) and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. The team also works with the University of Oxford and King's College London as academic partners. It continually monitors infectious diseases and other hazards globally, identifying situations where the deployment of specialist expertise could prevent these threats from turning into a global outbreak.

Public Health Minister Steve Brine MP, said:

The Ebola virus is absolutely devastating and it is critical to get it under control as quickly as possible to halt the spread.

Our expert UK Public Health Rapid Support Team will be on the ground to help the people and government in DRC to respond and recover and grow their ability to protect against disease into the future.

The UK was central to international efforts to bring this deadly virus under control in 2014, and it is only right that we continue to show global leadership.

Background

For information on the latest number of cases, please visit the [WHO website](#).

UK-PHRST

UK-PHRST consists of public health experts, scientists, academics and clinicians ready to respond to urgent requests from countries around the world within 48 hours to support them in preventing local disease outbreaks from becoming global epidemics.

Informed by surveillance data, the UK-PHRST deploys on behalf of UK government in response to requests from low- and middle-income countries, as well as with the WHO and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN).

The UK-PHRST has previously deployed members to outbreaks in Ethiopia (acute watery diarrhoea), Nigeria (meningitis), Sierra Leone (water-borne disease/cholera risk), Madagascar (plague), Bangladesh (diphtheria) and Nigeria (Lassa fever).

The core team consists of:

- epidemiologists (experts in tracking and understanding disease transmission)
- microbiologists (diagnosing the cause of an outbreak)
- clinical researchers (developing the best patient management practices)
- social scientists (community engagement during outbreaks)
- data scientists (managing data and modelling outbreak trajectories)

- infection prevention and control experts (advising on preventing transmission)
- logisticians

The UK-PHRST consortium of research institutions includes the University of Oxford and King's College London as academic partners.

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. www.gov.uk/phe

About the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is a world-leading centre for research, postgraduate studies and continuing education in public and global health. LSHTM has a strong international presence with more than 1,300 staff and 4,000 students, and an annual research income of more than £124 million. LSHTM is one of the highest-rated research institutions in the UK, is partnered with two MRC University Units in The Gambia and Uganda and was named University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards 2016. Our mission is to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide; working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education and translation of knowledge into policy and practice. www.lshtm.ac.uk

About Oxford University's Medical Sciences Division

The Division is one of the largest biomedical research centres in Europe, with over 2,500 people involved in research and more than 2,800 students. The University is rated the best in the world for medicine, and it is home to the UK's top-ranked medical school. From the genetic and molecular basis of disease to the latest advances in neuroscience, Oxford is at the forefront of medical research. It has one of the largest clinical trial portfolios in the UK and great expertise in taking discoveries from the lab into the clinic. Partnerships with the local NHS Trusts enable patients to benefit from close links between medical research and healthcare delivery. A great strength of Oxford medicine is its long-standing network of clinical research units in Asia and Africa, enabling world-leading research on the most pressing global health challenges such as malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS and flu. Oxford is also renowned for its large-scale studies which examine the role of factors such as smoking, alcohol and diet on cancer, heart disease and other conditions. www.medsci.ox.ac.uk

About King's College London

King's College London is one of the top 25 universities in the world (2016/17 QS World University Rankings) and among the oldest in England. King's has more than 26,500 students (of whom nearly 10,400 are graduate students) from

some 150 countries worldwide, and nearly 6,900 staff. The university is in the second phase of a £1 billion redevelopment programme which is transforming its estate.

King's has an outstanding reputation for world-class teaching and cutting-edge research. In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) King's was ranked 6th nationally in the 'power' ranking, which takes into account both the quality and quantity of research activity and 7th for quality according to Times Higher Education rankings. Eighty-four percent of research at King's was deemed 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent' (3* and 4*). The university is in the top 7 UK universities for research earnings and has an overall annual income of more than £600 million. www.kcl.ac.uk

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