



To: Safer & Stronger Thematic Board

On: 5th March 2015

Report by: Director of Community Resources

Ebola Virus Disease – Preparedness and Training – Glasgow Airport

1. Summary

- 1.1 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is a severe acute illness with a high mortality rate. The current outbreak of Ebola in West Africa is the largest known outbreak of this disease and was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organisation in August 2014.
- 1.2 As Port Health Authority for Glasgow Airport, Renfrewshire Council, in conjunction with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, has a statutory role in dealing with port health incidents in terms of the International Health Regulations 2005, the Public Health (Scotland) Act 2008 and the Public Health (Aircraft) (Scotland) Regulations 1971. In addition, Renfrewshire Council has a statutory requirement to provide for disinfection of premises or things to prevent the spread of infection in the community.
- 1.3 Together with various partner agencies, officers from Community Resources have in recent months participated in a number of events to provide training and test preparedness for the scenario whereby a passenger arrives on a flight into Glasgow Airport with suspected symptoms of Ebola Virus Disease. These training exercises have resulted in a high degree of awareness and preparedness across all relevant agencies that may need to respond to an incident of this type.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Safer & Stronger Thematic Board notes the content of the report



3. Background

- 3.1** Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a severe, often fatal illness in humans. The current outbreak of Ebola in West Africa is the largest known outbreak of this disease and was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organisation in August 2014. Ebola is caused by infection with a virus which is spread by direct contact with blood and bodily fluids from infected people who are symptomatic. It remains unlikely, but not impossible, that travellers infected in affected countries could arrive in the UK while incubating the disease and develop or display symptoms on their arrival. People infected with Ebola are infectious only after they have developed symptoms. These include fever, headache, diarrhoea and vomiting. Once symptomatic, all bodily fluids are considered infectious, with blood, faeces and vomit being the most infectious. The Ebola virus is not airborne and can only spread through direct contact with a bodily fluid.
- 3.2** At an early stage during the ongoing Ebola outbreak, Renfrewshire Council – Community Resources, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and Glasgow Airport agreed to test the Glasgow Airport Port Health Procedure Plan. A table top exercise was held at Glasgow Airport on 31 October to test the plan and the process of identification and safe removal of a suspected Ebola case. Following this exercise, a training event was held at the airport to step through the plan in a live location based on a scenario where there is a realistic probability of Ebola being involved.
- 3.3** This event took place on the evening of 2 December 2014. Those participating in the event included airport representatives (Duty Airport Manager, Engineer) airline representatives (including a handling agent and air crew) Scottish Ambulance Service, Police, UK Border Force, NHS GGC - Consultant in Public Health Medicine (CPHM) and Renfrewshire Council in its role as Port Health Authority. A follow up debrief meeting was held at the airport on 18 December, attended by representatives of Glasgow Airport, NHS GGC, Scottish Ambulance Service and the Police to discuss the event. The exercise and debrief confirmed that the Plan was robust and no significant amendments were required.
- 3.4** A key part of the exercise was for the Scottish Ambulance Service to rehearse accessing the aircraft in full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) appropriate for treating and handling a patient with Ebola, removing the patient from the aircraft to an ambulance and transferring them to an appropriate medical facility.
- 3.5** Renfrewshire Council's main role in our Port Health capacity is to support the Consultant in Public Health Medicine in gathering details of other passengers on the flight, providing information and advice to them, airport and airline staff and to ensure appropriate disinfection of the aircraft. In advance of the exercise we sought advice from the Scottish Government decontamination service on the procedure for cleaning in the event of contamination by bodily fluids from a confirmed Ebola case. As a result we were able to give clear advice on this during the exercise.



- 3.6 In a UK context, entry screening of those arriving from affected countries continues at Heathrow, Birmingham, Gatwick, and Manchester airports, and Eurostar St Pancras Station. There are currently no direct flights from the affected countries to the UK. In Scotland, posters have been put up to alert incoming travellers of the symptoms of Ebola virus disease in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Prestwick and Aberdeen airports and in seaports in Scotland with international traffic.
- 3.7 Volunteer healthcare workers, aid workers, military personnel and those working in the oil and gas industry and mining industry who work in Liberia, Guinea or Sierra Leone are registered with the Public Health England (PHE) programme to risk assess and monitor returnees. Health Protection Scotland is informed when a registered traveller returns to Scotland from one of the affected countries and passes this information to the relevant NHS Board. All those who have cared for Ebola patients in the affected countries are actively monitored throughout the 21 day incubation period.
- 3.8 A port health incident was not declared for Glasgow Airport in the case of the nurse returning home via Glasgow Airport after undertaking voluntary work in West Africa. She was cleared to travel on to Glasgow from Heathrow after following the entry screening process and became unwell overnight - following her arrival back home. However for some agencies involved – particularly the Health Service and Scottish Ambulance Service the airport training exercise will have been relevant.

Oliver Reid
Interim Head of Public Protection
Renfrewshire Council
0141 618 7352 – oliver.reid@renfrewshire.gov.uk