

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Ebola Virus Disease: Current Risk Assessment in Prisons

There is currently an outbreak of Ebola virus disease occurring in West Africa with widespread transmission continuing in: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is the largest ever known outbreak of this disease, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in August 2014. Cases have also occurred in Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain, the UK and the US.

There remains an expectation that a handful of further cases may occur in the UK in the coming months. Thus, although the risk of imported cases remains low, it is possible that further persons infected in Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone could arrive in the UK while incubating the disease (the incubation period is 2-21 days) and develop symptoms after their return.

While a fever in persons coming from Ebola transmission areas is more likely to be caused by a common infection, such as malaria or typhoid fever, healthcare staff in prisons should remain vigilant for those who have come from areas affected by this outbreak and subsequently become unwell.

Screening for symptoms of the disease has been introduced at airports in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone for exiting passengers. For incoming passengers from affected areas screening has been introduced at the main airports in England, the Eurostar terminal at St Pancras and seaports in response to shipping movements. Remote (over the phone) screening arrangements are in place for people arriving from Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone at other ports of entry in England.

The risk of people being incarcerated in prisons in England and Wales having arrived from Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone in the preceding 21 days is very low. However, those who have may need to undergo a brief risk assessment to determine if they might be at risk of Ebola infection.

The following algorithm has been developed to assist prison healthcare staff carrying out the initial health assessment of detainees.

* For further information about the Ebola outbreak please visit the PHE website at https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/ebola-virus-government-response

More specific information about the Ebola virus outbreak is also available:

 all clinical management guidance is published on www.gov.uk and is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ebola-virus-disease-clinical-management-and-guidance

 national primary care assessment guidance algorithms are available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-virus-disease-managing patients-who-require-assessment-in-primary-care

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Current Ebola risk assessment in prisons

Algorithm to inform the initial assessment of detainees arriving at a prison from West Africa

If no, continue as Has this person arrived from Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone or have they spent any time in these countries within the past 21 days? normal If yes, ask these questions If no, continue as normal. Contact Is the person currently unwell with a Before their departure, has this local HPT* to fever ≥37.5°c or a history of fever in past ensure inclusion person: 24 hours? onto PHE come into contact with blood or surveillance system body fluids from a person known/ AND/ Other possible symptoms of Ebola suspected to have Ebola? OR include: chills, weakness, muscle aches, cared for anyone with a severe If not currently headache, sore throat, vomiting, illness, or who has died of an unwell, ensure diarrhoea, rash, bruising, or bleeding unknown cause? review by prison attended any funerals or had any doctor within 24 hours as normal. contact with any dead bodies? attended any other large Transmission of gatherings of people? Ebola is not a risk if visited any traditional healers or asymptomatic. been admitted to hospital? Reassess if hunted or consumed bush meat? becomes unwell within the 21 day period

If yes, ensure urgent review by prison doctor. The prison doctor should follow the primary care guidance at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-virus-disease-managing-patients-who-require-assessment-in-primary-care

The prison doctor should contact the infection specialist (infectious disease/virologist/microbiologist consultant) at the nearest hospital to discuss clinical assessment of the case. The hospital infectious disease specialist can obtain clinical advice to support the Ebola risk assessment through the Imported Fever Service (0844 7788990).

The local PHE health protection team (HPT) should be contacted immediately after clinical assessment has been completed to discuss required public health action. You can find your local HPT by using the following website:

http://legacytools.hpa.org.uk/AboutTheHPA/WhatTheAgencyDoes/LocalServices/PostcodeSearch/?lk=phenoet