



Supporting Document 1. COVID-19: Information and Guidance

Introduction

Background

The disease COVID-19 is caused by a new strain of coronavirus which was first identified in Wuhan City, China in December 2019. Symptoms range from mild to moderate respiratory illness to pneumonia or severe acute respiratory infection requiring hospital care. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 12 March 2020.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Common symptoms include:

- New continuous cough

or

- Fever

or

Loss of/ change in sense of smell or taste

Elderly, very young people and people with underlying health conditions or who are immunocompromised may present with atypical or non-specific symptoms.

Spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The evidence to date continues to point towards transmission mainly occurring via contact from symptomatic cases. This can occur through respiratory droplets, by direct contact with infected persons, or by contact via contaminated objects and surfaces. Shedding of SARS-CoV-2 is highest early in the course of the disease, particularly within the first 3 days from onset of symptoms. There is also some evidence that transmission to others may be possible prior to symptom onset (pre-symptomatic phase) or in individuals that develop infection but don't develop symptoms (asymptomatic infection) however the evidence around this is still emerging and is very limited. The risk of transmission is highest when there is close contact with an infected person who is symptomatic and this risk increases the longer the contact lasts.¹