Department of Health & Social Care

Public Health England

NHS

CEM/CMO/2020/036 **07 November 2020**

To:
All Regional NHS teams
All EPRR teams
All NHS Trusts Chief Executives, Medical Directors, Nursing Directors and Directors of Infection Prevention and Control
All CCG Chief Executives, Medical Directors, Nursing Directors and
All Primary Care Providers
All independent hospitals and treatment centres

Immediate Actions in response to mink-variant SARS-CoV-2 virus in Denmark

Immediate Actions for the NHS:

- Individuals should not be seeking routine outpatient, ambulatory or primary care, elective treatment while in their 14 days of isolation after return from Denmark. Primary and secondary care organisations should assess that an individual has returned from Denmark and delay elective and non-urgent treatment until after the 14 days of isolation.
- Any individual with a travel history from Denmark in the preceding 14 days who requires emergency assessment or admission to hospital should be managed in strict isolation in a single room with en-suite bathroom facilities.
- Standard COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn.
- These individuals should be tested on admission and every 5 days while in hospital. Standard PCR assays used in Denmark detected these individuals. Current PCR assays in use should continue to be used for testing.
- If they test positive, transfer to a specialised infectious diseases centre should occur for further management by immediately contacting NHSE Regional EPRR/First on call who will arrange the transfer to the commissioned units.
- If an individual who has returned from Denmark is identified with COVID-19 in the community, then Public Health England will contact NHS England EPRR on call to arrange inpatient care in a specialised infectious diseases centre
- Positive samples in individuals who have returned from Denmark in the previous 14 days should immediately be sent to Public Health England, Colindale for whole genome sequencing.

SARS-CoV-2 is known to cause clinical disease in various domestic and wild animals, in particular, mink. Widescale outbreaks have been reported in farms where they are raised for their fur in the Netherlands, Spain, the United States, Sweden, Italy and Denmark. The UK has not had mink breeding farms since the early 2000s. However, there are small numbers of mink in the UK. These are considered feral and usually avoid any contact with people.

Five clusters, comprising 214 people, of different mink-variant SARS-CoV-2 viruses have been identified in Denmark, primarily in the North Jutland region. On 4 October 2020, Danish authorities reported that sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 isolates from affected mink farms had identified seven unique mutations within these mink-variant viruses. The virus variant with four changes in the spike protein in cluster 5, has been found on five mink farms and in 12 humans in the surrounding community. All cases to date were reported in August and September 2020 in individuals from North Jutland. Based on initial investigations, virus from this cluster demonstrated less sensitivity for

neutralising antibodies when tested against antibodies collected from people with previous SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Denmark was removed from the UK travel corridors list at 4am on Friday 6 November. Any travellers from Denmark returning to the UK will now be required to self-isolate for 14 days according to the national guidance and legislation https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/self-isolating-when-you-arrive

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