12 February 2020

Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has confirmed that no cases of COVID-19 have been diagnosed in Northern Ireland. 21 tests have been completed and all results have come back negative (as at 2pm on 12 February 2020).

The update comes as the health service in Northern Ireland continues to put in place comprehensive arrangements for dealing with this global public health issue.

Dr Gerry Waldron, Head of Health Protection at the PHA, said: "The Public Health Agency is working with partners across the UK including Public Health England, as well as the Department of Health and health trusts in Northern Ireland, and the health service in the Republic of Ireland, on the ongoing global novel coronavirus response.

"As part of this, the health service here is monitoring for any potential cases of COVID-19.

"Belfast Trust's Regional Viral Laboratory is now one of 12 UK centres testing for novel coronavirus. Until this week, all samples taken from people suspected of having the virus in Northern Ireland were sent to England for testing, but the new local facility will speed up results.

"A helpline has also been established for anyone in Northern Ireland who has travelled to China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Macau in the past 14 days. The helpline number is 0300 200 7885 and is available 24/7.

"To help reduce any potential spread of coronavirus, we are urging people to follow the steps that we recommend for similar illnesses such as cold and flu – catch it, bin it, kill it. Always carry tissues to catch your cough or sneeze, dispose of the tissue as soon as possible after using it, and clean your hands as soon as you can as germs can spread to every surface you touch."