

"Heathrow prepares for disruption as Ebola screening starts

Ebola screening will start at Heathrow Airport today, with Gatwick Airport and Eurostar terminals following next week.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said passengers from at-risk countries will have their temperature taken, complete a risk questionnaire and have contact details recorded. The Chief Medical Officer said the risk to the UK is low, but expects a 'handful' of cases. However, the screening is expected to cause disruption to all passengers.

Dr Ron Behrens, from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said the benefit of airport screening would be "very small", while there would be disruption to "large numbers of people".

"It appears not to be a scientific decision but a political one," he said to the Telegraph.

Screening at Heathrow Terminal 1 will begin today before being extended to other terminals. The Department of Health estimates that 85% of all arrivals to the UK from affected countries will come through Heathrow.

Border Force officers will identify passengers to be screened. Nurses and consultants from Public Health England will carry out the testing.

Passengers deemed at high-risk due to contact with Ebola patients, but with no symptoms, will be contacted daily by Public Health England.

'Highly visible information' will be in place at all entry points to the UK, Mr Hunt insisted.

A Heathrow spokesperson said: "The welfare of our passengers and colleagues is always our main priority and we are working with Government to support the implementation of the screening measures as announced by the Health Secretary today.

We would like to reassure passengers that the Government assesses the risk of a traveller contracting Ebola to be low. We would encourage anybody with individual questions or concerns to refer to guidance from Public Health England and the Foreign Office."

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