**Covid Operations Group Update**

On Tuesday the Prime Minister set out the government plan for managing Covid during the autumn and winter period. Given this announcement it’s important to reiterate the work we are doing to keep our communities safe.

With more than 80% of over 16’s double jabbed, and Covid antibodies present in around 90% of the adult population, vaccines are working, and serious illness and deaths are significantly lower. We continue to strongly encourage everyone to get vaccinated and are working with local health partners to provide on-site vaccination centres. Next week, on the 23rd and 24th September, students, staff, and the public can drop into Sensor City between 12.00 – 8.00pm to receive a vaccine.

We continue to follow government advice to encourage everyone to take two lateral flow tests per week. We have freely accessible testing kits distributed around the campus, and everyone can take these home to use as part of our aim to make vaccine take up and regular testing as easy as possible.

Our Covid Operations Group, chaired by Phil Vickerman, is regularly reviewing sets of interrelated data to inform decision making. It is difficult to set out an absolute set of parameters that lead to specific actions, however we will be monitoring local and national Covid data, as well as working closely with our local health protection agencies.

We continue to be ready to act and respond and we are asking everyone to wash your hands, use the sanitiser stations around campus, wear a face covering, and stay at home if you feel unwell. We are updating the university outbreak plan which will be signed off by Liverpool’s Director of Public Health and this will be made available to everyone on our microsite.

The Prime Minister said they will keep further measures as part of a plan B in reserve. For example, keeping the option of mandating face coverings, or advising people again to work from home if government requires this.

We do however expect government to keep educational establishments open wherever possible and safe to do so.

To continue to be transparent with our decision-making and to re-emphasise the university position the following points are set out:

**What criteria/thresholds would trigger the introduction of social distancing?**

There are no longer restrictions on the approach to teaching and learning, and there is no requirement for social distancing or other measures, and universities can shape courses without restrictions to face-to-face provision.

We continue to review our institutional risk assessment and will implement sensible and proportionate control measures that follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

At this time there is no requirement to re-introduce social distancing, although will keep this under review along with the control measures over and above the government guidance we are operating on campus.

**How will we be notified of positive cases of Covid-19 or outbreaks?**

Our outbreak management plan sets out contingencies to deal with any identified positive cases of COVID-19 or outbreaks. Flow charts will be made available (see below) across the university that clearly set out what to do in the case of a suspected or known case.

We ask you to continue to use the NHS Track and Trace app which will alert you to close contacts. In addition, our university Covid Support Team are available 7 days a week when notified by you of suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19. The team will then notify individuals accordingly and take any necessary action to keep people safe.

**Has the university considered introducing a minimum standard specification for face coverings?**

Everyone must wear face coverings when in communal spaces, or in offices, classrooms, or lecture theatres (except when seated, although you may be requested to do so on occasion). It is important that everyone in our community does this to keep us all safe. If you have concerns about people not wearing them, please report this to your line manager or follow the protocols on the website or displayed around the estate.

In the context of Covid-19, a face covering is something which securely covers the nose and mouth. There are many types of face coverings available including cloth face coverings and disposable face coverings. Face coverings are not classified as PPE which is used in a limited number of settings such as medical and industrial settings.

**What are we doing to respond to government ventilation guidance in university spaces?**

We are following government and professional body guidance regarding ventilation of naturally ventilated spaces. We have assessed every space on campus to ensure this guidance is being met.

In ***mechanically ventilated rooms*** we are complying with guidance that flow rates are increased, only 100% fresh outside air is circulated, and the systems run for one hour before and after teaching times.

In ***rooms with no mechanical ventilation system*s,** we will rely on the opening of external windows (natural ventilation). Government guidance advises that opening external windows can improve natural ventilation. The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) guidance recommends windows and vents should be used more than normal, and where possible windows should be open at least 15 minutes prior to room occupation.

Our Campus Services colleagues will therefore be opening windows each morning. Whilst opening windows is natural behaviour in warm weather, it will be important to balance the need to minimise the risk of airborne infection against the need for occupants to be comfortable in cooler conditions. CIBSE advise that in cooler weather even a small opening can deliver significant ventilation flows, and this can minimise risk to occupants of the space.

CIBSE advise that CO2 monitors can be helpful in assessing ventilation provision. The university are installing CO2 monitors in spaces where there is no mechanical ventilation. CO2 is present in exhaled breath, and therefore its concentration represents the fraction of air that has been exhaled by individuals in the space. It is a proxy for occupancy and/or a ventilation rate, but it is not a direct proxy for infection risk.

Measurements of elevated CO2 levels in indoor air are an effective method of

identifying poor ventilation in multi-occupant spaces. However, in low occupancy or large volume spaces, a low level of CO2 in the room cannot necessarily be used as an indicator that ventilation is sufficient to mitigate transmission risks.

Where CO2 monitors are in operation, a clear communications plan will be in place in rooms established to explain what the sensors are, what they are measuring, what the different colour warnings mean, and what actions should be taken if the signal readings change.

Given latest government and industry guidance the combination of encouraging people to ventilate rooms by letting fresh air in, giving people data within the room to manage the balance between internal air quality and thermal comfort is the recommendation.

There are a further group of rooms that have no mechanical ventilation but have air conditioning to address overheating issues. Air conditioning in these rooms has been turned off as they recirculate the air in the room. To provide an appropriate internal temperature for the rooms air purifiers are used in those rooms along with CO2 monitors.

Please continue to check the microsite for the latest updates and university position as we move through the summer with our plans for our new and returning students.

**Cleaning and fogging**

For your safety, we are carrying out enhanced regular cleaning routines in all our buildings. Our staff are thoroughly cleaning things like door handles, handrails and buttons for lifts and doors.

We are continually monitoring these cleaning routines, and if you think additional cleaning is required in one of our buildings, please alert a member of staff at the reception desk or ring our helpdesk on 0151 231 5555 and choose option three.

In the event of a confirmed positive case the University Covid Support Team, and the Estates and Facilities Management team should be notified, and a plan to ‘fog’ relevant areas will be actioned. This involves using electrostatic sprayers to cover any surfaces with a high level, broad-spectrum disinfectant cleaner (TECCARE Control). This is effective against enveloped viruses and is tested against the EN14476 standard.

Spaces/areas will need to be vacated to allow safe use of the product and will generally be available for reoccupation on the same day. A contact time of between 5 and 20 minutes is required per surface. Estimated completion times for reoccupation will be identified on a case-by-case basis.

# Process Flowchart: Staff Member Develops Symptoms of COVID-19

# \**Close Contact is defined as:*

* *Having face to face contact with someone (less than 1 metre away) without any form of mitigation – e.g. such as a protective screen.*
* *Spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of someone.*
* *Having skin-to-skin physical contact (such as a handshake)*
* *Travelling in a car or other small vehicle with someone (even on a short journey).*

## Document references

***Ref 1:***[Stay at home: guidance for households](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection)

***Ref 2:***[Help the NHS alert your close contacts](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/test-results/help-the-nhs-alert-your-close-contacts-if-you-test-positive/)

***Ref 3:*** [Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person)

# Process Flowchart: Student Develops Symptoms of COVID-19

#