

Communicable and Notifiable Disease Policy

UPR HS14 version 01.0

Policies superseded by this document

This is the first version of this document.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

This is the first version of this document and it should be read in full.

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and robust guidance for the management and containment of communicable and notifiable diseases including Covid-19 and meningitis.

- 1.2 With a large student community living in University Halls and private rented accommodation locally, the risk of a serious disease or transmission of illness is considerable. Whilst major outbreaks of serious diseases are rare, the University must consider known disease risks and have in place contingencies and plans for new diseases coming to light to support the affected individuals, reduce transmission and protect staff, students, and visitors. In addition, the policy outlines the University's role in assisting the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), NHS, and Hertfordshire County Council in the discharge of their duties related to managing communicable disease and its potential outbreak, as well as ensuring the University meets duty of care obligations to all students and Staff.
- 1.3 There are several ways the University may become aware of a student or staff member suffering from a communicable disease. Consideration must be given to disease type, location of the student/staff member and any relevant recent contacts. As such the University needs to respond in a different way to every instance of communicable disease.
- 1.4 This policy will outline:
- i roles and responsibilities in relation to communicable diseases;
 - ii management of an outbreak and how the University can support those affected; and
 - ii how the University might communicate effectively to prevent any delay in response to such an incident.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy provides an overview of the responsibilities and actions required by a range of stakeholders affected by a communicable disease outbreak, including but not limited to:
- University staff;
 - Students;
 - Visitors;
 - Other duty holders on our campus;
 - Public;
 - Contractors.
- 2.2 Determining the scope of any response to a suspected outbreak of a communicable disease is not possible as each case must be managed according to available clinical and public health advice.
- 2.3 Any suspected outbreak of a notifiable communicable disease is considered a major incident and will be managed via the University's established Emergency Management Command structure.

3 Definitions

3.1 **Communicable Disease:**

Any disease that is transmissible by infection or contagion directly or through the agency of a vector.

3.2 **Notifiable Disease:**

A disease with significant public health implications, typically a highly infectious disease, for which the diagnosing clinician has a statutory responsibility to notify the correct body or person e.g., the local Consultant in Communicable Disease/the Proper officer of the Local Authority. Notifiable diseases are listed in Appendix I, UPR HS14¹.

3.3 **Invasive Disease:**

An invasive disease is one that that can invade and spread to parts of the body where bacteria are not normally present, such as the bloodstream, soft tissues like muscle or fat and the meninges

3.3 **Public Health:**

UKHSA and Health Protection Board provides a timely and appropriate response to an outbreak in line with public health legislation, policies procedures and protocols.

Public health departments have a major role in the management of meningococcal disease, ensuring that there are adequate disease prevention and surveillance programmes, and in the prevention of secondary spread through contact tracing. Usually, the lead is through the East of England Health Protection Team (SSHPT) supported, where appropriate, by the NHS and the public health department of Welwyn Hatfield Council.

3.4 **Possible case:** (public health action is taken for all probable cases, not just confirmed cases.)

Clinical diagnosis of meningitis or septicaemia or other invasive disease where the SSHPT/CPH, in consultation with the clinician and microbiologist, considers that diagnoses other than meningococcal disease are at least as likely.

3.5 **Probable case:**

Clinical diagnosis of meningitis or septicaemia or other invasive disease where the SSHPT/CPH, in consultation with the physician and microbiologist, considers that meningococcal infection is the most likely diagnosis.

3.6 **Confirmed case:** (Case requiring public health action)

Clinical diagnosis of meningitis, septicaemia or other invasive disease AND at least one other defined indicator.

¹ Appendix I, UPR HS14 'List of Notifiable Diseases'

3.7 **Cluster (Outbreak):**

An outbreak or incident may be defined as:

- an incident in which two or more people experiencing a similar illness are linked in time or place; or
- a greater than expected rate of infection compared with the usual background rate for the place and time where the outbreak has occurred.

4 **Legislative context**

4.1 There is a raft of legislation underpinning the University's response to the outbreak of communicable diseases, specifically those which are notifiable:

4.1.1 The [Health Protection \(Notification\) Regulations \(2010\)](#)²

These regulations facilitate prompt investigation of and response to public health risks by registered medical practitioners and laboratories.

4.1.2 [Public Health \(Control of Disease\) Act 1984](#)³

Under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 any person who knowingly exposes others to an infectious disease is guilty of an offence, either by being infected themselves or by exposing clients to risks from other clients.

4.1.3 [Coronavirus Act 2020](#)⁴

Specific legislation relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.2 It is because of the emphasis on these legal requirements that this policy outlines both how the University will support our staff and students but also the supportive role the University plays in the local Public Health services in the discharge of their responsibilities.

5 **Health and Safety implications**

Under the [Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974](#)⁵, the University has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that both staff and persons not in the University's employment (students, contractors, suppliers, visitors, neighbours, etc), but who may be affected by its operations, are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/659/contents/made>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/22>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/coronavirus>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents>

6 Policy Principles

- 6.1 The University aims to respond to a communicable disease immediately in an appropriate, effective, and efficient way which balances the need to comply with public health obligations against providing support and reassurance to those affected.
- 6.2 Any member of the University, be it staff, student, contractor, or visitor, who has been diagnosed with (or suspects a diagnosis of) a communicable disease that could be spread through routine contact must follow medical advice on appropriate isolation until they no longer have the communicable disease, or the communicable disease is no longer transmissible through 'routine' contact or as determined by a medical professional.
- 6.3 Any member of the University (staff, student or contractor) who knows that they have a communicable disease has an obligation to minimize physical contact with other members of the University community.
- 6.4 Prior to returning to studies/work, the University member is required to provide a return to work note in line with sickness reporting policy (UPR HR20⁶), Student Attendance Regulations (UPR SA06), or the Support to Study Policy (UPR EQ11).

7 Procedures

7.1 Before a case/outbreak

Preparedness for communicable diseases such as pandemic flu must consist of the following:

- i the University Medical Centre/Head of Student Wellbeing/Head of Occupational Health being aware of national and international trends relating to relevant diseases;
- ii business continuity plans across the institution considering the business implications of communicable diseases and associated outbreaks and how to mitigate for the impact on loss of or reduction to normal service;
- iii general awareness raising and health promotion activities for staff and students continuing at relevant times in the academic cycle and at times of peak concern (local/national escalation of communicable disease cases).

7.2 During a case/outbreak

- 7.2.1 Any member of staff or student being made aware of a University member suffering from any of the listed communicable diseases (see Appendix I, UPR HS14¹) will source and gather all possible information on the patient as detailed below and report this to Student Wellbeing (during office hours) or Security (out of hours) and without delay:

⁶ UPR HR20 'Managing Sickness Absence and Ill Health Policy and Procedure'

- Name of affected individual
- SRN/staff number
- Address
- Contact telephone
- Course of study, year of study
- Current location and condition of the student
- Name of individual reporting the case (if not the affected individual)
- Contact details of the reporter (if different)

(Note for guidance:

See also the 'When to Refer' guide for staff by the Dean of Students Office available on HertsHub at the following link:

<https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/Student-services/Shared%20Documents/Student%20Wellbeing/When%20to%20refer.pdf#search=When%20to%20refer.>)

- 7.2.2 The Head of Student Wellbeing, HR, Head of Security & Resilience or relevant manager will then contact the affected individual or reporter to gain full insight into the nature of the disease and present medical advice.
- 7.2.3 UH Medical Centre (onsite GP) must be informed of case(s).
- 7.2.4 A decision to escalate to Gold Command (see section 7.4.1) will be made based on the following:
- type of disease;
 - present medical advice;
 - affected individual(s);
 - where individual has been/who have they been in contact with;
 - UKHSA or the World health Organisation (WHO) advice; and
 - other relevant information/concerns or uncertainties.
- 7.2.5 Gold Command will consider appropriate management of the case/outbreak, including, but not limited to:
- assessment of the present information and medical advice;
 - containment of present case/outbreak considering medical advice;
 - assigning responsibilities for contact tracing advice re residences, studies, societies, sports;
 - support for affected student/staff/friends/peers/family;
 - communication as per medical guidance;
 - potential for escalation in cases or deterioration in present case;
 - consideration of business continuity if required; and
 - continuous review of present case(s), lessons learnt.

7.2.6 Actions arising from UKHSA or WHO involvement will determine the next steps regarding:

- treatment;
- contact tracing;
- isolation;
- vaccination;
- communications.

7.2.7 Upon confirmation of an 'outbreak' from UKHSA or WHO, direction will be taken from the leading authority. Actions beyond this point will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

7.3 After a case/outbreak

7.3.1 Support to the community will be offered in light of raised concerns regarding communicable diseases, especially if a significant event such as extensive hospital admission, surgery or death has occurred. Support may include, but is not limited to, emotional and psychological support, ie Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Student Wellbeing support at one to one or departmental level, Extenuating Circumstances support, health advice and return to studies advice for the affected individual(s).

(Note for guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://studentspace.org.uk/>

<https://www.meningitisnow.org/>)

7.3.2 Review of the case(s) will be held with the Business Recovery Group (BRG).

7.4 Key individuals in a suspected/confirmed case of communicable and notifiable diseases

7.4.1 Gold Command

- Gold Lead - Secretary & Registrar.

Gold Command is a group made up of the Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor's Executive team and specific subject experts.

7.4.2 Business Recovery Group (BRG)

- Secretary & Registrar
- Deputy Secretary & Registrar
- Director of Marketing & Communications
- Communications Manager
- Director of Occupational Health and Safety
- Dean of Students

- Head of Student Wellbeing
- Director of Estates
- Deputy Director of Estates (hard and soft services)
- Housing Manager/Student Life Manager/Director of Residential Services (if student in halls)
- Dean of affected School
- Representative from University Medical Centre
- Representative from WHC Environmental and Public Health
- Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience
- Director/Deputy Director, Learning & Teaching
- Head of Security & Resilience or Deputy
- Director of Human Resources
- Head of Occupational health
- Chief Information Officer (CIO)
- LCS Managers
- Student Union President
- Student Union CEO

8 Governance Requirements

8.1 Responsibility

8.1.1 Depending upon circumstances, the response to notification of a communicable disease may involve a wide range of colleagues from across the University. The Dean of Students Office, Health and Safety, Human Resources, Learning and Teaching and Innovation Centre, Library and Computing Services, UH Students Union (and the BRG Lead in the case of an outbreak or death) will be integral in forging a link between University and the relevant Health Authority.

8.1.2 Gold Command

The Secretary and Registrar will lead the response, calling a BRG meeting if necessary and coordinating the activities of other 'BR Group' attendees.

8.1.3 Dean of Students/Director of HR/Director of Occupational Health and Safety

The Dean of Students/Director of HR/Director of Occupational Health and Safety will:

- i act as the link between the NHS and University liaising with GP/Hospital/ UKHSA and the patient or relatives.
- ii provide coordination of contact tracing and any subsequent vaccination programmes and communications;
- iii provide a wellbeing focus;
- iv act as the link between the NHS and University;

- v mobilise support from the Dean of Students Office (including the University Chaplains, counsellors and MH/D advisors) and Student Wellbeing/EAP as required for staff/students impacted on by the communicable outbreak.

8.1.4 Director of Marketing & Communications

The Director of Marketing & Communications will:

- i coordinate all internal and external communications in consultation with the Gold/Business Recovery Group;
- ii liaise with communications teams of all stakeholders including the UKHSA, CCG and Welwyn Hatfield Council;
- iii assist the relevant area in the setting up of Public Helpline/dedicated FAQ'S and associated training to assist in responding to queries and offering advice related to the incident.

8.1.5 Director of Occupational Health and Safety

The Director of Occupational Health and Safety will act as an expert in health-related matters and advise the University on the appropriate response.

8.1.6 Head of Student Wellbeing

The Head of Student Wellbeing will, if applicable:

- i assist and advise on student issues such as contract tracing, support offered by Halls Team and residential life mentoring support and advice;
- ii offer support by providing the relevant pastoral care.

8.1.7 Housing Manager/Student Life Manager/Community Officer

The Housing Manager/Student Life Manager/Community Officer will:

- i provide details for contact tracing as well as access to residences (if an ill student resides/has visited University managed accommodation or off campus PAL accredited housing);
- ii seek advice on exclusion and isolation under guidance of health experts (Public Health England), organise/provide any room moves as appropriate and provide temporary emergency accommodation to relatives if necessary;
- iii provide information, advice and support to residents affected by the incident, and in line with UKHSA advice.

8.1.8 Dean or Associate Dean from affected School

In the case of a student related issue, the Dean or Associate Dean from the affected School will:

- i advise those affected about the extenuating circumstances process and other related academic issues; and
- ii assist the Wellbeing Directorate/ UKHSA with contact tracing;
- iii make a referral to Occupational Health if they are a Healthcare student, if needed.

8.1.9 Dean of School/ Head of Professional SBU

In the case of a staff member-related issue, the Dean of affected School/ Head of the affected Professional SBU will:

- i advise those affected of sickness reporting/referral to Occupational Health;
- ii inform the department as necessary, taking into account confidentiality and UKHSA guidance.

8.1.10 Head of Security and Resilience (if required)

The Head of Security and Resilience is likely to be first responder. During an extensive outbreak the security team will be key to timely and safe responses (including containment).

8.1.11 Director/Assistant Director of Human Resources

The Director/Assistant Director of Human Resources will provide staff contact details as necessary.

8.1.12 Head of Occupational Health

The Head of Occupational Health:

- i will assist with the institutional response, including mobilising teams;
- ii will consider offering relevant vaccines;
- iii may be required to provide advice and support if the student has been on a professional placement; and
- iv may be required to provide advice and support in the case of a staff member-related issue.

8.1.13 Director of Estates

The Director of Estates will locate a suitable venue for on-site vaccinations and/or testing and any other logistical requirements.

8.2 Implementation / Communication Plan

- 8.2.1 This policy will be stored alongside other wellbeing related policies and communicated to the wider University Community in line with the University Emergency Plan.
- 8.2.2 More detailed communication and training will be provided to relevant staff as part of the Business Continuity Plan and the Incident Response table-top exercises, led by the Head of Security and Resilience.

8.3 Exceptions to this policy

The University will not allow exceptions to its reporting and statutory health obligations in the event of a notifiable disease outbreak. Exceptions to the procedures outlined in this policy will only be allowed with the authorisation of the Silver Commander leading the incident response.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **1 August 2022**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.