

**Infectious Diseases Policy**

This policy confirms how the University manages the risks from infectious diseases and outlines the steps that the University will follow in the event of a potential outbreak.

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| Department | Health and Safety |
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**1. Introduction**

* 1. This policy sets out how the University manages the risks from infectious diseases and outlines the steps that the University will follow in the event of a potential outbreak on campus or where an outbreak is potentially linked to the University directly. It will also consider the response required in the situation where there is an increased prevalence of cases within the local community which has the potential to impact on the University’s community.
  2. Although major outbreaks are rare, the University must consider known disease risks and plan to manage and contain the spread of an infectious disease to reduce the risk posed to its staff, students, and visitors.
  3. The policy outlines what action is to be taken, by whom and the key lines of communication needed to ensure a timely, sensitive and professional response. The detail within this policy should not be restrictive, as each event will differ. Given the number of ways the University may be informed of an infectious disease case and the range of potential exposure, the scope of the University’s response and key staff involved may vary.
  4. The University will support the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to discharge their duty to manage infectious disease outbreaks, as well as ensuring the University meets its duty of care to students and staff. The University works in conjunction with and on the advice of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) when considering its response to a potential outbreak.
  5. This procedure forms part of the University’s emergency response arrangements and, where deemed appropriate or necessary, the University will consider the implementation of the Incident Management Plan to support an institution wide response.
  6. The University has a duty to incorporate general awareness raising of infectious and notifiable diseases as part of health promotion activities for staff and students at relevant times in the academic year. The University will continue to take a proactive approach to help reduce the incidence of some infectious diseases. In the event of any national or regional trends in relevant diseases, the University will take steps to ensure that appropriate information and advice is shared with its staff, students and visitors.
  7. This policy works in conjunction with the policy on [Respiratory Infections, including Covid 19](https://healthandsafety.on.worc.ac.uk/policies/) and alongside the specific management protocols for [meningitis](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/policies/Management-Protocol-for-Meningitis-Update-January-2018-UW-Web-Copy.pdf). These protocols can also be swiftly and easily adapted for other outbreaks.
  8. This policy also works alongside the University’s [Sickness Absence Policy](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/personnel/documents/Sickness_Management_Policy_January_2015.pdf) for staff and the [Student Attendance Policy](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/registryservices/documents/StudentAttendancePolicy.pdf).

1. **Management of a potential outbreak at the University**
   1. In all cases of a notifiable infectious disease (see Appendix 1), the University will liaise closely with UKHSA and follow their advice on the appropriate steps to be taken. The University may also seek further advice from UKHSA in the event of any other infectious disease where there is a potential outbreak identified. UKHSA will officially confirm to the University when an outbreak has occurred as defined by Government guidance.
   2. Student Services will be the main point of contact for UKHSA and update others in the University as appropriate and all UKHSA instructions will be followed. All notifiable diseases (even single cases or cases involving staff members) will be notified to the UKHSA by Student Services. If only staff members are involved, then a decision can be made by Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager if it would be more appropriate to become the primary contact in that instance. In all instances the University will engage with the UKHSA to ensure a proportionate response.
   3. Any individual who is aware of a suspected or confirmed case of notifiable infectious disease should inform:

Student Services (for students during office hours), - Email [firstpoint@worc.ac.uk](mailto:firstpoint@worc.ac.uk) Tel 01905 542551

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager (for staff during office hours). Email [safety@worc.ac.uk](mailto:safety@worc.ac.uk) Tel: 01905 543348

Security (out of hours) Email: [security@worc.ac.uk](mailto:security@worc.ac.uk) Tel: 01905 855000

This should be done as soon as possible including the following information where possible:

* Name of individual
* Condition of individual
* Staff or Student ID number or other information such as course/year of study or department for member of staff
* Contact details of individual
* Current location of individual
* Name and contact details of individual reporting the case (if different)  
  1. The Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager, Student Services or Security as relevant will contact the affected individual or individual who has made the report to obtain further details regarding the nature of the disease, present medical advice, and possible contacts.
  2. Information regarding a suspected or confirmed outbreak of an infectious disease, without disclosing identifiable individual details, will be shared with the [Business Continuity Officer](mailto:businesscontinuity@worc.ac.uk?subject=Suspected%20or%20Confirmed%20Communicable%20Disease%20Case), who will provide advice on whether the internal procedures relating to business continuity should be activated in accordance with the [Business Continuity Policy.](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/Business-Continuity-Policy-V1.pdf)
  3. The final decision will rest with UEB on whether a Local Business Continuity Plan, a Major Business Continuity Situation Response or the Critical Incident Plan is the appropriate response. If appropriate, the relevant Silver team will be assembled without delay. Membership for this group should include individuals from: Member of UEB to lead and coordinate, Student Services, Accommodation (if appropriate), Student Union representative (if appropriate), Union representative (if appropriate), HR, Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager, Senior Representative from affected department, Finance, Communications, Estates, Security.
  4. A decision to escalate to the University’s Critical Incident Plan will be made based on the following criteria:
* Type of disease
* Present medical advice from the NHS and UKHSA and considering World Health Organisation (WHO) advice where relevant
* Affected individual(s)
* Number of cases and potential for disease spread
* Where the individual has been or who they have been in contact with
* Other relevant information, concerns or uncertainties  
  1. The assembled team will consider appropriate management of the case or outbreak including but not limited to:
* Assessment of the present information and medical advice
* Containment of present case(s) considering medical advice
* Assigning responsibilities for contact tracing advice regarding residences, studies, societies, sports etc.
* Support for affected individuals/peers/family
* Communication as per medical guidance
* Potential for escalation in cases or deterioration in present case
* Considerations for business continuity
* Continuous review of present cases, lessons learned  
  1. UKHSA will determine required actions on a case-by-case basis and this team will support as appropriate with actions arising including some or all of the following:
* Treatment
* Isolation
* Cleaning
* Vaccination
* Communications
* Contact tracing – assisting UKHSA to identify potential contacts such as:
  + Individuals who share accommodation facilities (on or off campus)
  + Students on the same course, staff in same department or delegates at same event
  + Placement contacts if applicable
  + Contacts in the affected person’s place of employment
  + Social contacts
  1. Upon confirmation of an ‘Outbreak’ from UKHSA, direction will be taken from the leading authority. Actions beyond this point will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

1. **Management of an outbreak within the local community**
   1. In situations where there is an increased prevalence of an infectious disease which requires interventions within the local community (i.e. within Worcester and/or the surrounding areas), and which also impacts on University staff and students, the University will adhere to any local or national guidance issued.
   2. In the event that local or national guidance place restrictions on the University’s ability to operate normally, the University’s priority will be to continue to remain open for the provision of in-person education in the first instance, but with any non-educational facilities and activities adhering to any wider restrictions in place locally.
   3. UEB will identity whether a Local Business Continuity Plan, a Major Business Continuity Situation Response or the Critical Incident Plan is necessary to support the University’s response.
   4. The University will liaise with the local UKHSA for further advice on how to mitigate the impact on normal operations of the University whilst also responding to the local or national guidance.
2. **Communications during an Outbreak**
   1. Handling communications during an outbreak of an infectious disease requires clear, consistent, and accurate information and a member from the Communications Department will be assigned to the Response team to assist with internal and external communications.
   2. Internal and external statements must be drafted in close liaison with UKHSA to ensure accuracy and consistency of message, including any statements from the Students’ Union. All communication with the public media agencies and social media, regardless of format, should be channelled through the Communications Department, both in and out of office hours.
3. **Support for students and staff**
   1. Support to the University community will be offered in light of raised concerns regarding infectious diseases, especially if a significant event such as extensive hospital admission or deaths have occurred. Support may include but is not limited to: emotional and psychological support, Employee Assistance Programme, student wellbeing support at 1:1 or departmental level, health advice, and return to studies advice for affected individuals.
   2. A review of the case and lessons learned should be carried out by the Team leading the response with the Risk Management and Business Continuity Officer in line with the University’s Business Continuity Policy.
4. **Prevention**
   1. Although many infectious diseases are generally mild, there can be more serious consequences for at risk groups (e.g. those who are pregnant and those with compromised immune systems) as well as disruption to the business functions of the University.
   2. It is important for everyone to take some simple steps to help prevent the spread of disease on campus. Individuals at the University can take steps such as:

* Everyone is encouraged to keep all immunisations up to date as eligible
* Following basic hygiene rules such as washing hands frequently and keeping shared facilities clean
* Following good personal respiratory hygiene including coughing or sneezing into a tissue or elbow and disposing of that tissue immediately and properly
* Following good community respiratory hygiene practices such as encouraging ventilation by opening windows even for ten minutes each hour
* Minimising contact with others and staying home or away from campus when ill
* Registering with a local primary care surgery
* All students should be encouraged to look out for each other’s welfare and to inform a friend if they are exhibiting symptoms of an infectious disease so that prompt medical attention can be sought if the condition deteriorates by alerting appropriate medical services (GP/111/A&E) and then reporting to FirstPoint, Security or line management as appropriate  
  1. Additional preparedness for infectious diseases and the risk of pandemics includes the following:
* The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group remaining aware of national and international trends of health or disease and escalating any relevant diseases to the University Executive Board (UEB)
* Business Continuity Plans across the institution, including at local levels, consider the business implications of infectious diseases and associated outbreaks and how to mitigate for the impact on loss or reduction of business-as-usual functions
* Promotion of general awareness and health education activities for staff and students, particularly at relevant times in the academic cycle or at times of peak concern
* Training for relevant staff, including Accommodation, Student Services, PATs and Security, on the signs and symptoms for diseases of particular concern (e.g. meningitis).

**Appendix 1**

**List of Notifiable Diseases**

**The list below gives examples of Notifiable Diseases and was last updated in May 2023. The most up to date list can be found** [**here**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/notifiable-diseases-and-causative-organisms-how-to-report)**.**

**Diseases notifiable to local authority proper officers under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010:**

Acute encephalitis

Acute infectious hepatitis

Acute meningitis

Acute poliomyelitis

Anthrax

Botulism

Brucellosis

Cholera

COVID-19 – only to be reported by the University under the advice of the local authority

Diphtheria

Enteric fever (typhoid or paratyphoid fever)

Food poisoning

Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS)

Infectious bloody diarrhoea

Invasive group A streptococcal disease

Legionnaires’ disease

Leprosy

Malaria

Measles

Meningococcal septicaemia

Monkeypox

Mumps

Plague

Rabies

Rubella

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

Scarlet fever

Smallpox

Tetanus

Tuberculosis

Typhus

Viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF)

Whooping cough

Yellow fever