

Universities and Colleges Sub Group - Update on Mass Asymptomatic Testing

Summary

This paper provides an overview for the Outbreak Management Advisory Board on the end of term mass testing of students ahead of their departure from York and an update on testing plans for the return of students in January.

Detail

Over the past week at two testing sites (one at the University of York and one at York St John University) some 7,100 Covid tests have been carried out for staff and Higher Education students from both Universities and Askham Bryan College. These sites have been set up at incredibly short notice by teams from across both Universities. Feedback from both staff and students has been positive with good numbers of students leaving York for the holiday period volunteering to be tested.

To date our positivity rate across both sites is around 0.01% (or approximately 14 cases per 100,000) demonstrating - we believe - the positive way students have acted during the past term, taking their responsibilities toward covid measures seriously. Students or staff who test positive are asked to take a confirmatory PCR test by the NHS to reduce the risk of false positives from the lateral flow devices.

The Government has also recently announced plans for mass testing to resume in January to support a staggered return of students to Universities, planning is already underway for the expected four-five week testing period from the start of January to early February next year. Both Universities are also working closely with the City Council's public health team on plans to roll out lateral flow rapid testing sharing good practice.

The Universities and Colleges Outbreak Management Sub Group is also working closely with City Council colleagues to ensure rapid mass testing at Universities is closely aligned to wider Covid testing across the city, including existing NHS capabilities and testing capabilities that can be deployed by the City Council.