

# Universities and Colleges Sub Group - Update for the Outbreak Management Advisory Board

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## Summary

This paper provides an overview for the Outbreak Management Advisory Board on how Universities and Colleges have been working with the City Council to respond to the latest lockdown, and how we have been working jointly to support the further roll out of mass asymptomatic testing across the City.

## Detail

### 1. Immediate Lockdown Response

Since the initial lockdown announcements on 4 January, the Department for Education has published further guidance for [higher education](#) and [further education](#) settings. For the universities in York, the guidance limits face to face teaching to a small number of programmes (covering medicine, nursing and midwifery, social work, and teacher training). Students not on these programmes are advised to stay in their vacation accommodation if they have not already returned to York. Although some students may need to return in addition to these courses if - for example - students do not have access to appropriate alternative, facilities or study space, or who need to return for health or safety reasons.

For Further Education, most students will learn remotely, with in person places limited in line with schools to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers.

### 2. Support for Students

Another period of lockdown will, undoubtedly, have a significant effect on students across the city. All four colleges and universities have continued to invest considerable time and resources into the support available to students. For example, York College's Student Services function are available online, including live appointments for counselling and welfare services. Similar arrangements are also in place at [both universities](#) and at Askham Bryan College.

Support from the City Council in this area has also been particularly welcome and the Universities and Colleges subgroup wanted to record our thanks to the City Council for ensuring that working students are eligible for the [financial support](#) for members of the city community who have to isolate. We also know that periods of lockdown can have a significant effect on mental health. All institutions are offering support in this space for our students as part of our overall welfare efforts. The city wide support in this space has also been very well received, including the work CYC are doing with [QWell](#), targeting men's mental health.

### **3. Access and engagement with learning**

For some students, continuing to access and engage with learning remotely will be a challenge, particularly for those who have limited access to devices or a lack of study space at home. The institutions are working to put support in place for students facing these challenges. In addition, colleges and universities have large numbers of students studying practical courses, where skills acquisition and development will be hindered by a further period of closure, where access to specialist staff, labs and equipment will be reduced.

Specifically in colleges, there has also been a growth in the requests to provide onsite tuition for a larger number of young people of critical workers and those with education, health and care plans, arising from a broadened list of eligible young people from the Department for Education.

### **4. Asymptomatic Testing**

Both college settings now also have access to asymptomatic testing for staff and students, in readiness for the reopening of settings, expected around the February half term period. York St John University and the University of York will also both continue to run asymptomatic testing for their staff and students, targeted at anyone who is currently studying in York (both students on face to face programmes, and those students who have stayed in York over the holiday period). So far this year several thousand tests have already been conducted across both test sites at the University of York and York St John University.

Both universities are also delighted to now be working in partnership with CYC to open up both testing sites to the wider public. Together, we will have created capacity for several thousand LFD tests a day within the city, [targeted at all those who are unable to work from home](#). In support of local schools the test sites are also providing tests for secondary school pupils, creating space for schools to set up their own sites.