

## COVID-19 OUTBREAK RESPONSE PLAN

[LAST UPDATED 11/09/2020]

### **Background**

Futureworks is a small, privately-owned higher education provider based in Manchester with a student population of approximately 400, serviced by 65 staff. From the start of the pandemic, Futureworks has sought to do everything possible to protect its stakeholders and has therefore taken a cautious approach at every stage.

In July, Futureworks published a comprehensive [Return to Work Plan](#) which set out the measures in place to protect staff and students returning to the campus over the summer. This plan includes a comprehensive [Risk Assessment](#) and detailed [Risk Register](#) which was prepared by Futureworks COVID-19 Risk Management Team.

Futureworks operates a relatively straightforward higher education model: it delivers nine undergraduate first-degree programmes, does not receive international students and does not own or operate any student halls of residence. As staff and students return to campus, Futureworks has taken every precaution to ensure their safety and, for the new academic year, all lesson delivery is being undertaken utilising a hybrid approach of remote/distance learning combined with face to face delivery of small “bubbles” of students.

### **Communication**

An initial communication campaign will be launched by Student Services in advance of this plan being published. This will build on existing communications, which include resources available to staff and students via the VLE, and a FAQ on the Futureworks website for staff, students and incoming students.

All aspects of communication within Futureworks will be under the purview of the Principal and coordinated by the Vice Principal and the Student Services Team.

### **Managing cases of COVID-19 amongst the staff/student community**

Futureworks will perform the following procedure in response to any reported infection of one of its members of staff or students:

1. Individuals showing symptoms will be asked to call NHS 111 and to book a COVID-19 test at the earliest opportunity. Individuals will be sent home (if they develop the symptoms whilst on the premises) and asked to self-isolate. Individuals showing symptoms will be required to inform Futureworks immediately of the results of a test, and to follow any guidance provided by medical experts.
2. The Risk Management Team will liaise with Public Health England (PHE) and will contact the regional PHE health protection team, providing details of anyone showing symptoms as well as anyone who might have come into contact with them for NHS Test and Trace purposes. Futureworks will cooperate with NHS Test and Trace to ensure a comprehensive timeline of person-to-person contact is fully established. It is anticipated that The Health Protection

Team at PHE will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who else has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

3. Those staff and students who have been confirmed to have been in close contact (within the last 7 days) with an individual who is demonstrating symptoms, including those who are in the same “student bubble” will be advised that someone in their group has demonstrated COVID-19 symptoms and will be required to vacate the campus immediately and asked to call NHS 111 to arrange to be tested also. Close contact is defined as:
  - a. **direct close contacts** - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin),
  - b. **proximity contacts** - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual, including travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person.

Should an individual test negative, and if they feel well and no longer have COVID-19 symptoms they will be likely be advised (by the NHS) to stop self-isolating. If they are demonstrating other symptoms, however, it is possible that they may still have another virus, such as a cold or flu, in which case Futureworks will advise that the individual continues to avoid contact with other students until they are fully recovered.

If an individual tests positive, they will be advised to follow the PHE guidance and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to campus only when they are symptomless (except for loss of sense of smell/taste).

The Student Services Team will liaise with the PHE Health Protection Team to ascertain a definitive list of who must be sent home. To support this, Futureworks will keep a proportionate record of staff and students in each group, as well as any close contact that takes place between individuals (though this should be minimal, given Futureworks’ existing COVID-19 mitigation procedures).

In the event that Futureworks receives confirmation of two or more positive tests within 14 days, or if there is a marked increase in sickness-related absence where COVID-19 symptoms are being reported, Futureworks will liaise with the local Health Protection Team who will advise if additional action is required.

It is anticipated that in a worst-case scenario, Health Protection Teams may recommend that a larger number of other students self-isolate as a precautionary measure (including whole classes). It is not anticipated however that (short of a national lockdown) there would be any circumstances under which entire year groups or indeed the entire student population would be required to self-isolate or remain away from campus.

Classes will continue for student groups and any student(s) who are self-isolating will have the ability to join most classes on-line, should they feel capable of doing so.

The Government’s Local Action Committee, working with the DfE and Public Health England, have determined a series of “tiers of restriction” relating to teaching provision. See Appendix 1. Should the Local Action Committee require Futureworks to take any action in response to a localised outbreak, we have set out what any such action will look like in each Tier. These are set out below.

- *Tier 1 (default position): Higher Education provision delivered in accordance with its Teaching & Learning Strategy for AY20/21, providing a combination of blended learning with face to face tuition, in keeping with its COVID-Secure Risk Assessment.*
- *Tier 2 (fallback position): Reduction in face to face delivery where appropriate, but otherwise as Tier 1.*
- *Tier 3 (where stricter measures are needed): Online-only lesson delivery, practical sessions (e.g. studio work) conducted solely on an individual basis.*
- *Tier 4 (last resort): Campus buildings open for essential staff only to ensure maintenance and upkeep of physical and technological infrastructure. All teaching and learning activity to be conducted by academic staff remotely.*

In the event of a local or national 'lockdown' Futureworks will fully comply with the advice, guidance and regulations then in place. If the campus can remain open we will do so.

This document is subject to revision in response to official guidance and public policy.

**[APPENDIX 1 – Extract from “Higher education: reopening buildings and campuses” by the Department for Education, published 10/09/2020] [[LINK](#)]**

HE providers should have a plan in place that assumes there is likely to be an increase in the number of cases, or an outbreak associated with their setting, and they may have to adapt elements of their provision at very short notice.

Plans should cover a number of scenarios including:

- increased prevalence of infection locally that requires interventions on the whole community, including students and staff
- a large-scale outbreak that may result in substantial restrictions implemented at a local level that impact on the activities of the university
- a localised outbreak in student accommodation
- a localised outbreak involving a particular student or staff member, faculty or department

Providers should work with the Director of Public Health in their local authority in order to control or manage any outbreak in an integrated fashion. HE providers should agree outbreak plans with their Directors of Public Health and share the plan with DfE.

If a provider is experiencing a rise in infection rates, or there is an increase in infection rates in the local community, a provider should work with their local Health Protection Teams and the Director of Public Health to determine the most effective measures that will help reduce transmission.

In certain instances, decision-making will be referred to the national level, and an area will be designated an area of intervention. The government's Local Action Committee command structure may recommend some level of restriction to HE provision in such areas. In such a situation, restrictions will be implemented in a phased manner - the key aim being to retain face-to-face provision where it is possible to do so safely. These 'tiers of restriction' relating to teaching provision are outlined below.

Regardless of the tier of restriction currently in place for teaching provision, all providers, students and staff should comply with guidance issued on wider restrictions. National Institute for Health Protection (NIPH) will issue and regularly update guidance on how any additional restrictions imposed will apply to students moving between university and home. Unless told otherwise, in the event of additional restrictions being imposed locally during term, students should remain in their current accommodation and not return to the family home, which would increase the risk of transmitting the infection.

Explanation of tiers:

- Tier 1 (default position): HE providers are expected to provide blended learning, with face-to-face tuition, following the provisions of this guidance, and public health guidance, including, for example, the appropriate use of face coverings
- Tier 2 (fallback position): HE providers should move to an increased level of online learning where possible. Providers should prioritise the continuation of face-to-face provision based on their own risk assessment. We expect that, in the majority of cases, this will be for those courses where it is most beneficial (for example, clinical or practical learning and research)
- Tier 3 (where stricter measures are needed): HE providers should increase the level of online learning to retain face-to-face provision for priority courses (for example,

clinical and medical courses), and in as limited number of situations as possible. Students should follow government guidance published as part of any additional restrictions applied locally, including where this says that students should remain in their current accommodation and not return their family home or other residential accommodation to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus through travel. In these circumstances, providers should support students to do so by keeping services for students, such as university libraries and catering facilities, open

- Tier 4 (last resort): We expect the majority of provision to be online, with buildings open for essential workers only. This should include the continuation of essential research