

Summary of medical advice for colleges re social distancing 20th March 2020

Introduction (from listening to colleges)

For students who remain, college is their home and we need to make this reasonable, practical, and minimise risks whilst recognising a duty to support, especially for estranged students, care leavers and stranded international students. Colleges also consider the well-being of their staff including cleaners, porters and kitchen staff a top priority.

General advice

PHE provides advice but this is not mandated, and colleges need to make pragmatic decisions that balance recommendations with logistics and student mental health. Provided students are asymptomatic, not household contacts of a case and are not in a vulnerable group, then they should follow the general current advice from PHE on social distancing

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

Living and social arrangements

- Encourage set ups that allow students to be living in small groups without mass circulation rather than on mass (subgroups of students on same staircase sharing kitchens, small social rooms for limited interaction)
- Advise close large communal areas (large libraries, large common rooms) but smaller social areas for subsets may be acceptable for student well-being
- Encourage students to restrict their social group to a few contacts

Food

- Many colleges have closed dining halls and moved to takeaway boxes, self-catering and deliveries. Some have been able to set up shops with essential groceries for staff and students
- Other colleges are keeping dining halls open with risk lowering precautions in place, as they feel it is important for student mental health to be able to go for meals. These precautions would include hand hygiene, spacing of students, attendance in shifts of small groups, plus reinforcement of rules not to attend if any symptoms. This has been discussed with PHE who agree that colleges need to make local pragmatic decisions that balance social distancing measures with student well-being, and maintaining dining rooms with precautions is reasonable. This will need ongoing risk assessment as the situation evolves.
- We would not encourage arrangements for students to go to other colleges to dine, but some colleges may find joining up to deliver food to other colleges helpful with staffing issues.

Well-being

- Encourage outdoor activity, but not in large groups, for students who are well without indication for self-isolation. Household contacts can exercise together, otherwise aim to be > 2m apart

- We know the colleges are working hard to support student mental health at this time, which is paramount

Cleaning

- Some colleges have made students responsible for cleaning their own rooms and issued students with their own cleaning materials and this is sensible. Regular household cleaning products are suitable. If there are safety concerns about issuing students with bleach, alcohol based products or antibacterial wipes are suitable.
- If students are symptomatic, the room should only be used by the student. When coming out of self-isolation if the room is to be vacated then the room can either be cleaned according to the guidance (see Cleaning and disinfection below, or Judith can advise re contractors based on experience of the C1 facility) or else lock the room and leave for 72 hours and then clean as usual.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Illness in students

- **If a student develops symptoms then they must immediately move into self-isolation for a minimum of 7 days as per PHE guidance. This may sometimes require a change of their room within college or to C1**
- Students who are considered to be household equivalent contacts* of a possible case after symptoms started should self isolate for 14 days from onset of case's symptoms. If the household equivalent contact/s develop symptoms they need to self isolate for a minimum 7 days from onset of their symptoms. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>
- Where there are concerns about the health of students, NHS 111 should be contacted (online or by telephone).
- Students in self-isolation should inform the designated person in their college for oversight of their wellbeing

*Household equivalent contacts are those students that share a house or flat with the case whilst symptomatic. For students on staircases / corridors who share a kitchen or bathroom or social space, some local discretion may be taken to establish if they had significant contact in this setting whilst the case was symptomatic. PHE says other students who share a kitchen / bathroom / social space with a student who develops symptoms do NOT need to go into 14 day self-isolation as a household contact providing that the symptomatic student isolated themselves immediately.

Vulnerable groups

- Defined as > 70 years, being eligible for a flu jab due to a diagnosed medical condition, or pregnant <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>
- Advised to significantly limit face-to-face interaction in line with above guidance
- Can go outdoors with caution but should avoid being < 2m distance to others

- Colleges will need to be aware of their vulnerable students and will be supporting them where possible. Vulnerable staff should generally not be working although individual risk assessments can be made, especially for the pregnant where there is currently an absence of evidence for significant harm to mother or fetus in 2nd and 3rd trimester (no data yet for 1st trimester exposure).

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