

Appendix H: Text for inclusion in letter from the Deputy Registrar (Academic Services) to organisational heads

October 2014

Dear Colleague

Managing the risk of infectious diseases occurring at the University of Bristol

At the beginning of each academic year, I write to you with an update about steps that the University has taken to ensure that it is as well prepared as possible for managing the risk of occurrences of meningitis within the student community, and for dealing with cases of the disease should any arise. This year I am writing to inform you that we have made a number of changes that we hope will improve that process, and also that will better prepare us for other common infectious diseases which present a higher risk to the student body than to the general population.

1. Development of a generic Infectious Diseases Protocol

In conjunction with Public Health England, the University has developed a generic Infectious Diseases Protocol to replace the Meningitis Protocol. It is designed to enable a flexible, effective, and rapid approach to the occurrence of any infectious disease amongst our student population.

The protocol is based on the broad principles that underpinned previous versions of the University's Meningitis Protocol, but has been written with the understanding that students also remain at increased risk of contracting infections such as measles and mumps, compared with the general population. The protocol has also been written to enable the University to respond effectively should students contract rare or unexpected diseases, or in the event that pandemics occur such as the 2009 H1N1 influenza (swine flu) pandemic.

2. Meningitis remains our primary concern

Whilst we have amended our plans to enable them to be more flexible in the event of the occurrence of any infectious disease among our students, meningitis remains our primary concern. We continue to work internally and with external partners to ensure that we do all that we can to protect our students, and respond effectively in the event that a case of meningitis occurs.

Upon registration all students that arrived this year were issued with a small card (for carrying in their purse or wallet), which lists the symptoms of meningitis. All University residences have also been provided with literature about meningitis to be distributed to students living in University accommodation.

Prior to their arrival, new students were advised to check whether they have been immunised against strain C of the disease, and if they have not, to arrange immunisation before they arrived. Any students who arrived at the University without having already been immunised were invited to attend Meningitis C and MMR immunisation sessions held at the Students' Health Service during Welcome Week. Students who were not immunised at the start of term will continue to have the opportunity to book an appointment to be immunised during the course of the year. They can also be given an MMR vaccine during this process.

Any students who choose to register with external GPs in the Bristol area are advised to consult them about available vaccines.

Since I wrote last year, a new vaccine for the B strain of the disease has been licensed for use. It is expected to join the UK vaccination programme in due course but there is no indication that it will be made routinely available for those of University age and therefore students remain at risk. However, as a result of a one-off gift to the University, all new students registering in 2014/15 will be offered the Meningitis B vaccine. This is administered as two doses, one month apart. Arrangements are being made to hold mass evening sessions in late October and November. Coordination of this vaccination programme, including communication to students, will be carried out by the Student Services Division.

This [short summary of the disease and the vaccination programme](#) may be useful.

3. Recognising Symptoms of Meningitis

Meningitis is a very serious illness and if any students express concern to University staff that they or their friends might be experiencing symptoms of the disease, staff should direct them immediately to the [Students' Health Service](#). The symptoms include one or more of the following, although not all of these symptoms will necessarily occur together:

- **severe headache**
- **high temperature/fever**
- **vomiting**
- **stiff neck**
- **dislike of bright lights**
- **pale, blotchy skin**
- **drowsiness/lethargy**
- **joint pains**
- **cold hands and feet**
- **rash of red/purple spots which looks like bruising under the skin.**

4. The Infectious Diseases Protocol

Our new procedures for managing infectious diseases are based on the principles and knowledge attained over the years in relation to the management of cases of meningitis. The new protocol includes details of appropriate arrangements for communication between staff within the University, the rapid tracing of close contacts of any students affected, and the administration of antibiotics to those at risk, on a large scale if necessary. The new [Infectious Diseases Protocol](#) is also supported by appendices that contain useful information about meningitis, including an FAQ page, and information on key contacts both internal and external to the University.

When cases of infectious disease occur, all of the University's communications with the media will be handled by the Director of Marketing and Communications (or nominated deputy), working in conjunction with the Public Relations Office and professionals from Public Health England. However, it may be that journalists, as well as anxious students, parents or members of the general public, will telephone other parts of the University for information. Staff most likely to be receiving such calls (secretaries, switchboard and security staff) will be issued with an information sheet listing the numbers to which calls should be referred, including the helpline numbers of the relevant charities.

We do, of course, hope that none of these arrangements will be required, but all members of the University community need to be aware that these contingency plans are in place.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Robinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lynn Robinson
Deputy Registrar (Academic Services)

Distribution List

All Org Heads, and any of the following who do not come under that list:

Faculty Managers
FEDs
FEMs
School Managers
SAMs
Senior Tutors
Wardens
UBU Chief Exec
UBU Engagement Manager
Head of International Office
Head of Security
Academic Director of UG Studies
Academic Director of PG Studies