

Communicable and Notifiable Diseases Policy



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EIA:	N/A

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Liverpool Hope University's approach to managing communicable and notifiable diseases affecting students, staff, and visitors, using an inclusive approach to managing public health risks within the University.

The policy provides guidance for effective prevention, control, and response measures in line with advice from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), specifically the Cheshire and Merseyside regional office, local health partners, and UK government regulations.

The University has responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to minimise the transmission of infectious and communicable diseases. Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), the University must report any qualifying work-related infectious diseases when they occur among people at work and support reporting under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010.

2. Scope

The scope of this policy is to ensure that suitable and sufficient preparedness, response, and recovery actions are in place for communicable health threats. The policy applies to all University students, staff, and visitors, with particular emphasis on communal living environments, such as student residences, and areas where individuals gather for academic or social purposes.

This policy sets out actions in the following circumstances:

- Before a case occurs (to ensure awareness and early detection).
- When one or more cases occur.
- In the event of a death.
- Aftercare following an outbreak of a communicable disease.

3. Definitions

- **Infectious Diseases:** Diseases caused by pathogens (bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites) that invade and multiply within the body. Not all infectious diseases are spread from person to person.
- **Communicable Diseases:** Diseases that can be spread from one person (or animal) to another, either directly (e.g., through touch or droplets) or indirectly (e.g., via contaminated surfaces, food, or insects). Influenza and COVID-19 are both infectious and communicable diseases because they spread between people.
- All communicable diseases are infectious diseases; however, not all infectious diseases are communicable.
- **Notifiable Diseases:** Under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010, certain infectious diseases are legally classified as notifiable in England. When a student or member of staff is diagnosed with, or is suspected of having, a notifiable disease, healthcare professionals are required to report this to the local authority or UKHSA without delay.
- The list of notifiable diseases includes, but is not limited to, tuberculosis, measles, mumps, meningococcal disease, and food poisoning.
- **Outbreak:** The occurrence of two or more linked cases of the same communicable disease within the University community (students, staff, or visitors) over a defined

period, or a greater number of cases than expected for a particular disease in a given setting or population, even if the cases are not directly linked.

Significant Outbreak: An outbreak that:

- Involves a notifiable disease under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010.
- Poses a serious risk to health due to severity of illness, potential for rapid spread, or unusual presentation.
- Affects a large number of individuals (e.g., multiple cases across different cohorts, residences, or campuses).
- Involves a vulnerable population (e.g., immunocompromised students or those on health and social care placements).
- Requires a coordinated response beyond routine case management, including communication with UKHSA, the NHS, local public health authorities, or other external agencies.
- Has the potential to significantly disrupt University operations, such as teaching, examinations, and accommodation.
- [Communicable Disease Outbreak Management Guidance](#)

4. Outbreak Management – General Principles

The University will respond to any outbreak with proportionate control measures based on the nature, severity, and scope of the disease, guided by UKHSA and NHS advice. Outbreak management applies to both notifiable and non-notifiable diseases. An escalation flowchart is provided at section 14.

- Outbreaks will be managed at a local level (e.g. Collaboration between Student Life, Student Welfare and Wellbeing, Health & Safety, or Campus Services).
- Significant Outbreaks will trigger the Outbreak Response Group and formal liaison with public health authorities.
- The Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost will provide executive leadership for significant outbreak response, supported by the Outbreak Response Group.

4.1 Reporting Principles

Any staff member receiving information about a potentially notifiable disease among students, staff or visitors should not assume that the University is already aware and must ensure that information is promptly passed on to Health & Safety, Student Life or Student Welfare, or People Services as necessary.

5. University Responsibilities – Notifiable Diseases

While the duty to notify falls to medical practitioners, the University has a clear role in supporting the management of notifiable diseases. This includes:

- Promptly reporting any suspected or confirmed cases brought to the University's attention to the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost.
- Facilitating cooperation with UKHSA, including providing information on potential contacts, accommodation arrangements, and shared facilities where relevant.
- Supporting public health actions, such as communication with affected students, staff or groups, contact tracing, isolation or exclusion requirements and vaccination campaigns.

- Protecting confidentiality in line with GDPR and medical health data legislation, while ensuring that essential information is shared with those who need to know for public health reasons.
- Where necessary during a significant outbreak, the University may establish a helpline, distribute health advice, or offer practical support such as academic adjustments or access to medical care.

6. Roles & Responsibilities

6.1 Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost

Upon notification of a confirmed 'significant outbreak':

- Convene an Outbreak Response Group, which may include:
 - Director of Student Life.
 - Head of Student Welfare and Wellbeing.
 - Director of Governance and People Services.
 - Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing.
 - Head of Governance.
 - Director of Estates.
 - Estates Services Manager.
 - Health and Safety Advisor.
 - Students' Union Representative.
 - Other invited staff member required to support response.
- Approve and monitor the specific 'Outbreak Management Plan' (OMP).
- Oversee liaison with UKHSA, Cheshire and Merseyside.
- Approve and oversee University communications, including media and public relations.
- Ensure regular updates to the University Executive Board (UEB).
- Oversee arrangements for prophylaxis distribution, where required.
- Consider informing other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

6.2 Director of Student Life & Head of Student Welfare and Wellbeing

- Provide the operational response for student cases and report to DVC&P.
- Liaise with UKHSA, Cheshire and Merseyside.
- Support and coordinate prophylaxis and vaccination programs with UKHSA.
- Provide welfare support to affected students.
- Liaise with H&S, Estates and Accommodation Managers to implement control measures.
- Monitor cases and provide regular updates.

6.3 Director of Governance and People Services

- Provide the operational response for staff cases and report to DVC&P.
- Liaise with UKHSA, Cheshire and Merseyside.
- Support and coordinate prophylaxis and vaccination programs with UKHSA.
- Provide welfare support to affected staff.
- Plan additional support for vulnerable staff.
- Liaise with Estates and Accommodation Managers to implement control measures.
- Monitor cases and provide regular updates.

6.4 Director of Corporate Communications

- Coordinate messaging in consultation with Student Life and UKHSA Cheshire and Merseyside.
- Provide accurate and timely information to students and staff, in consultation with the Head of Student Welfare and Wellbeing.
- Establish and staff a university helpline during a 'significant outbreak' as necessary.
- Publicise the helpline on appropriate media platforms.
- Maintain updated content on the University website.
- Manage external communication and media relations.

6.5 Director of Estates and Campus Services Manager

- Implement infection control measures in university buildings and accommodation halls.
- Provide logistical support for large-scale responses, including cleaning, disinfection, and environmental controls.

6.6 Health & Safety Advisor

- Be consulted for risk-based decision making with Head of Student Welfare and Wellbeing to escalate to the Outbreak Response Group or manage locally, involving role holders as necessary.
- Support the Director of Student Life and Head of Student Welfare and Wellbeing, Director of Governance and People Services with coordination of operational response where necessary.
- Conduct risk assessment for an effective response.
- Produce incident reports and ensure compliance with RIDDOR where necessary.
- Conduct post-incident review and submit reports to the Health and Safety Committee.
- Track actions and monitor follow-up recommendations from investigations.

6.7 Head of Governance

- Provide legal advice regarding outbreak management.
- Ensure university compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations.

7. Management of Communicable Diseases

7.1. Preparation for outbreaks

Preparedness for communicable diseases such as pandemic flu must consist of the following:

- The Outbreak Response Group will be aware of national and international trends relating to relevant diseases.
- The University business continuity plan must consider the business implications of communicable diseases, associated outbreaks and how to mitigate impact on loss of or reduction from normal service.
- Awareness in raising health promotion activities for staff and students at relevant times in the academic year and at times of peak concern (local/national escalation of communicable disease cases).

7.2. Outbreak of Non-Notifiable Diseases

- Any person becoming aware of suspected disease should notify as per reporting principles.
- Record the nature, location, and number of cases.
- Make a risk-based decision in consultation with the Health and Safety Advisor to escalate to the Outbreak Response Group or manage locally, involving role holders if low risk.
- Implement appropriate control measures with Estates and Accommodation Managers.
- Provide ongoing monitoring and updates.

7.3. Control Measures for Outbreak of Communicable Diseases

The University will implement the following control measures to reduce transmission risk where necessary, dependant on disease and in accordance with NHS or UKHSA guidance.

- Promote personal hygiene (handwashing and respiratory etiquette).
- Provide access to hand sanitising stations.
- Increase cleaning of high-contact areas.
- Ensure adequate ventilation in buildings.
- Support students and staff with isolation guidance.
- Facilitate vaccination clinics in partnership with UKHSA.
- Provide clear communication on symptoms and when to seek medical advice.
- Offer welfare support for those affected or isolating.

7.4. Communication Plan During an Outbreak

All communication during an outbreak will be:

- Clear, factual, and reassuring.
- Approved by the DVC&P, and in consultation with UKHSA as necessary.
- Disseminated through various channels: email, website updates, and social media.
- Coordinated with external stakeholders and media, where necessary.

7.5. After an Outbreak

- Support to the University community will be offered, especially if a significant event such as extensive hospital admission, surgery or death has occurred.
- Support may include, but is not limited to, emotional and psychological support, i.e. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Student Wellbeing support at one to one or school/departmental level, extenuating circumstances support, health advice and return to studies advice for the affected individual(s).

8. Specific Management of Meningitis and Meningococcal Disease

Meningitis, including meningococcal septicaemia, is a serious and potentially life-threatening illness that requires expedient recognition and immediate action. Although rare, outbreaks in university settings can occur due to the close living and social conditions of students.

8.1. Prevention and Awareness

Information about meningitis symptoms, vaccination, and when to seek help will be included in induction activities for new students and reinforced throughout the year.

All students are encouraged to:

- Familiarise themselves with the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia
- Register with a local GP.
- Seek prompt medical advice if unwell.
- Look out for each other's wellbeing, particularly in shared accommodation.

Staff who have regular contact with students, such as Student Life, Student Welfare and Wellbeing, Wellbeing Assistants, Accommodation staff and Campus Services, should be well informed to:

- Recognise early symptoms.
- Understand their role in responding to a suspected case.
- Help disseminate accurate information.

8.2. Response to Suspected or Confirmed Cases

All suspected cases of Meningitis, including meningococcal septicaemia must be treated as medical emergencies.

8.3. Immediate Notification

- The attending doctor or medical professional is responsible for notifying UKHSA of any suspected or confirmed cases.
- The Director and Head of Student Wellbeing for students or Director of Governance and People Services if a staff case, will coordinate the internal operational response upon notification, while closing liaising with the DVC&P.

8.4. Definitions of Meningitis Diagnosis

1. **Possible case:** Clinical diagnosis without microbiological confirmation; alternative diagnoses considered equally likely.
2. **Probable case:** Clinical diagnosis with no lab confirmation, but meningococcal disease considered most likely.
3. **Confirmed case:** Diagnosis confirmed via laboratory testing.
4. **Outbreak:** Two or more confirmed or probable cases in a defined group (e.g. halls or social circle) within a 4-week period, caused by the same strain.

8.5. University Actions (see Appendix 1, Specific Meningitis, A-D Scenario Actions)

The University will:

- Notify UKHSA Cheshire and Merseyside upon suspicion or confirmation of meningitis.
- Notify key internal stakeholders as identified in this policy.
- Collaborate with UKHSA and local healthcare providers for case management and contact tracing of closed contacts.
- Arrange prophylaxis (antibiotics or vaccination) for close contacts in collaboration with UKHSA.
- Issue targeted communications to affected students and staff, distinguishing between close and casual contacts.
- Provide reassurance to the wider university community.
- Establish a student/parent helpline as necessary and prepare reactive media statements as appropriate.

- Support affected students with healthcare access and mental health services.
- Promote vaccination awareness campaigns (e.g., [Menacwy-vaccine](#) for new students).
- Reinforce hygiene and infection control messaging within residences and across campuses.
- University webpage information [Essential Health Information for Students](#).

8.6. Communication Procedures

- Communication will be guided by meningitis diagnosis, risk level, and UKHSA advice.
- UKHSA will be consulted on messaging and media responses.
- Ensure accurate, timely information via email, briefings and meetings, and notices.
- Address health concerns without creating undue alarm.
- Communicate appropriately with students, staff, and families.

8.7. In the Event of a Death

Where meningitis disease results in a fatality, the University's support and management procedures will be enacted and bereavement support and communication plans will be implemented. Coordination with families, public health authorities, and the university community will be prioritised to ensure compassionate, timely responses.

8.8. Student and Staff Support

Students and staff affected by a meningitis case or outbreak will require ongoing support from the University, such as:

- Mental health, wellbeing and counselling services.
- Academic adjustment and flexibility (e.g., mitigating circumstances).
- Ongoing reassurance through public health information provision.
- Provision of debrief with relevant departments to identify lessons learned.

9. HSE Reportable Diseases Involving University Staff

- Upon confirmed diagnosis, notify the individual's Head of School, Department, HR Manager, and the Health & Safety Advisor.
- Ensure information gathering, reporting and HSE notification as necessary.
- Health & Safety Advisor will coordinate immediate risk control measures.
- Investigate and submit findings to UEB and the Health & Safety Committee.
- Monitor implementation of any actions or recommendations.

10. Training and Awareness

- Information and training will be provided for staff involved in outbreak management
- Awareness campaigns will be conducted, particularly during peak periods of risk (e.g., flu season, student arrivals).
- Information on protective measures related to an outbreak will be made available to all students and staff.
- Student Life will conduct periodic awareness campaigns, i.e. Meningitis awareness and promote vaccination.

11. Review and Audit

- This policy will be reviewed three yearly by the Health & Safety Advisor with consideration of UKHSA and NHS guidance updates.
- Post-incident reviews should inform policy updates.
- Reports will be submitted to the University's Health & Safety Committee for oversight.

12. Notifiable Infectious Diseases Information

Infectious Diseases: [Gov.UK - Infectious Diseases A to Z](#). Notifiable Diseases [Notifiable Diseases and How to Report Them](#)

Contact Details - UKHSA Cheshire and Merseyside Regional Office

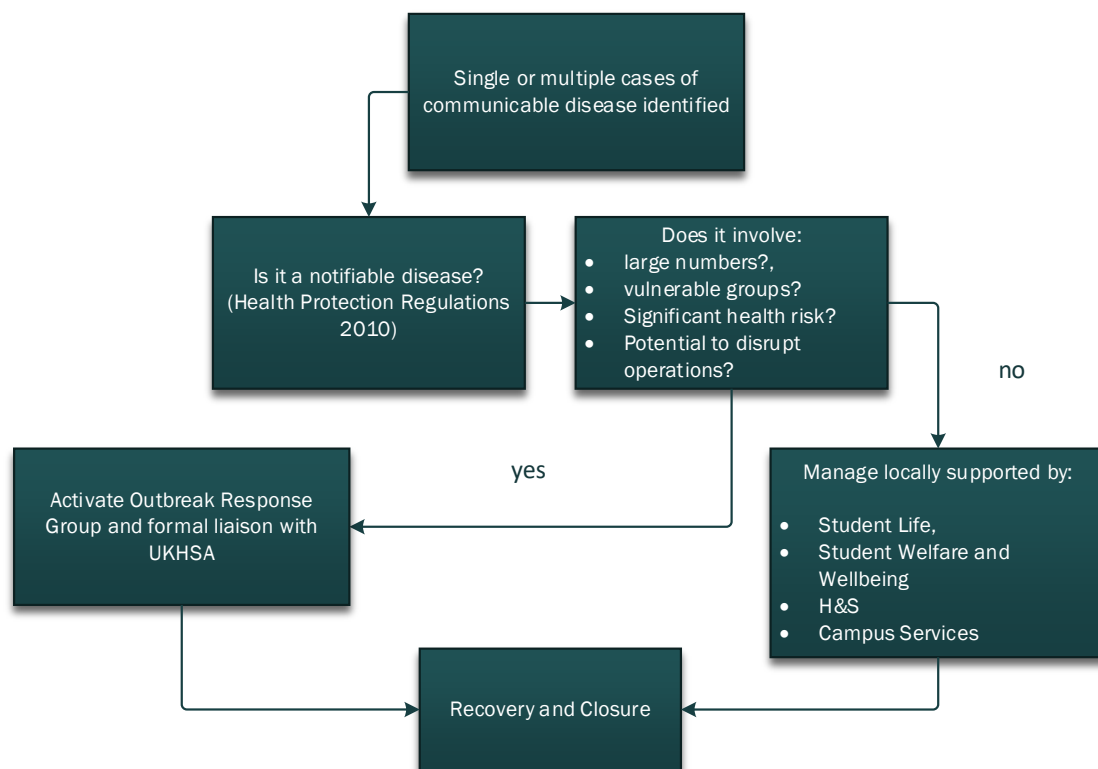
- **Telephone:** 03442250562 **Out of Hours:** 0151 434 4819
- **Email:** candmhpu@ukhsa.gov.uk
- **Address:** Suite 3B, 3rd Floor, Cunard Building, Water Street, Liverpool, L3 1DS

13. Useful Resources

- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA): [Managing Outbreaks and Incidents](#)
- UKHSA Contact Information: [UKHSA and Guidance](#)
- Health Protection Teams [Contact Directory](#).
- NHS Meningitis Information: [NHS - Meningitis](#)
- Meningitis Now: <https://www.meningitisnow.org>
- Meningitis Research Foundation: <https://www.meningitis.org>
- UKHSA Meningococcal Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/meningococcal-disease-guidance-data-and-analysis>

14. Outbreak Escalation Flowchart

This flowchart on page 11 provides a clear decision-making pathway for managing communicable and notifiable diseases, and to determine when to manage cases locally and when to escalate to the Outbreak Response Group.



Appendix 1 - Specific Case University Actions – Meningitis

Please note, communication documents 1-4B are retained separately by the Health and Safety Advisor and Head of Student Welfare and Wellbeing.

A. Possible Case – Non-meningococcal (e.g. viral meningitis)

Diagnosis is uncertain and not considered to be meningococcal disease.

UKHSA Action:

No public health measures are generally necessary.

University Action:

- Notify relevant role/stakeholders.
- Issue Communication **1A** to halls of residence and teaching group (same or next working day).
- If later ruled out, issue Communication **1B** promptly to allay concern.
- No further action unless diagnosis changes.

B. Single Case – Probable or Confirmed Meningococcal Disease

UKHSA Action:

- Identify close contacts.
- Issue prophylactic antibiotics.

- Notify local GPs.

University Action:

- Notify relevant role/stakeholders.
- Issue Communication **2** the same day to those in same residence and teaching groups.
- Provide general advice to wider university community as necessary.
- Prepare a reactive press statement in collaboration with UKHSA as necessary.

C. Multiple Unrelated Cases (Not an Outbreak)

UKHSA Action:

Standard treatment of each case individually.

University Action:

- Notify relevant role/stakeholders.
- Issue Communication **3** once unrelated nature is confirmed.
- Release press statement as needed, in consultation with UKHSA.

D. Multiple Related Cases (Outbreak)

UKHSA Action:

- Convene Outbreak Response Group.
- Identify high-risk group and issue antibiotics/vaccines.
- Notify hospitals and GPs.

University Action:

- Notify relevant role/stakeholders.
- Issue Communication **4A** (within 4 hours) to high-risk students (e.g. same flat or course).
- Issue Communication **4B** (same day) to wider teaching group.
- Establish a helpline for students and parents.
- Coordinate joint press statement with UKHSA.

Risk Group Definitions

Close contacts (typically offered antibiotics):

- Same flat/shared kitchen/bathroom.
- Close social contacts or regular personal interaction.

Casual contacts (usually not offered antibiotics):

- Same lecture or large teaching groups.
- Students in confined small groups (tutorials/seminars) may require further risk assessment.
- Informed for reassurance purposes.