



Management of Communicable Disease Incidents at Robert Gordon University

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Author: Fiona Browning & Philip Chan

Policy application: NHS Grampian and Robert Gordon University

Purpose: To maintain effective communication links between NHS Grampian and Robert Gordon University

Responsibilities for implementation: NHS Grampian's Health Protection Team and Student Life, Robert Gordon University

Organisational:

Sector:

Clinical Service:

Policy statement:

Review: This guidance will be reviewed every two years.

Approved by:

Date:

Designation:

1. Objectives

1.1 Maintain clear lines of communication between the University staff and NHS Grampian's Health Protection Team [Appendices 1 & 2]

1.2 Identify the responsibilities of key individuals during an outbreak of infection or an infection control incident at the university.

1.3 Issue relevant university students, employees and their relatives with clear information regarding any outbreak or infection incident in a manner that respects confidentiality and prevents alarm.

1.4 To establish that the NHS Grampian Health Protection Team would be the principal source of infection control advice for the University.

2. Introduction

2.1 NHS Grampian's Health Protection Team (HPT) is available 24 hours a day all year round and is responsible for:

- Monitoring, investigating and controlling communicable diseases and environmental hazards in Grampian.
- Identifying and managing outbreaks in the community and major hospital outbreaks
- Providing support and advice to the local authorities, emergency services, Scottish Water, Animal Health and all levels of health and social care staff
- The coordination of immunisation programmes and provision of advice and training to professionals
- Education and training for a wide range of professional groups

2.2 The HPT is the **first** and main point of contact for advice to RGU in the event of any concerns relating to:

- suspected cases of infection/communicable disease
- suspected outbreaks of infection/communicable disease

The role of the University will be to act on any advice given by the HPT and to assist in the management of any infection incident, for example by contacting students identified by the HPT as those who are at risk of infection.

3. Responsibilities of NHS Grampian and Local Authority

NHS Boards and the Local Authorities have a statutory duty to co-operate with each other and to appoint competent persons to fulfil the requirements of the Public Health etc (Scotland) Act 2008.

Responsibility for the enforcement of the food safety legislation and measures to control food borne disease rests with the Local Authority. The Local Authorities are also the enforcing authority for Health and Safety legislation for some sites.

The Consultant in Public Health Medicine (CPHM) with responsibility for Health Protection acting on behalf of the Director of Public Health (DPH) normally leads and co-ordinates the investigation and control of an outbreak or incident. The Incident Management Team (IMT) acts with the delegated authority of the NHS Board and the Local Authority. In a multi-board outbreak, Health Protection Scotland would co-ordinate the public health management.

If an individual incident occurs that requires Public Health activity an Incident Management Team (IMT) may be convened in order to assess any ongoing risk, agree control measures and communicate with those involved.

4. Definition of an outbreak and incident

An outbreak is defined either as two or more linked cases of the same infectious illness or when the observed number of cases exceeds the number expected.

An incident is defined as a case, or suspected case of communicable disease that has actual or potential serious implications for the public's health e.g., measles case or meningococcal infection in a student or member of the University staff.

An Incident Management Team (IMT) may be established for a single case or an outbreak depending on the infection in question.

5. Individual Incident Management

In the event of an incident of notifiable disease requiring Public Health action occurring in the University community, the NHS Grampian HPT will inform the Director of Student Life.

Section 7 contains detail of communication responsibilities during incident management.

In some situations, an IMT may be convened at the discretion of the CPHM acting on behalf of the NHS Board.

6. Membership of Incident Management Team

It is the responsibility of the NHS Board, unless otherwise indicated, to convene an IMT. Managing an outbreak is a shared responsibility of NHS Grampian and the Local Authority. Operationally, in most circumstances, the Health Protection Team will lead this.

Membership of an IMT convened to address an incident at the University will depend on the infection being investigated but is likely to include some or all of the following individuals as appropriate:

- CPHM (Chair)
- Consultant Medical Microbiologist/Virologist

- Director of Environmental Health (or deputy)
- Health Protection Nurse Specialist
- Director of Student Life (or nominee)
- Corporate Communications Officers from NHS Grampian (lead) and the University
- Other individuals may be invited to attend by the CPHM

6.1 Roles/responsibilities of IMT

6.1.2 CPHM/Health Protection Team

- Case definition
- Management of case including exclusion and infection control advice
- Identification of any other related cases
- Contact tracing as appropriate
- Co-ordination of chemoprophylaxis and immunisation (if required) for identified contacts
- Contribute to advice and support to the next of kin/family including situations where they are not 'contacts'
- Preparation of advisory letters for identified student population as required
- Helpline provision, if required
- Liaison with university
- Consider if wider dissemination of information is required (e.g. to the public via GPs or press)

6.1.3 University (Appendix 3)

- Take every opportunity to encourage students to register with a General Practitioner
- Provision of names and addresses of relevant staff and students to the HPT
- Dissemination of any communication provided by the HPT
- Keep key personnel at the University briefed of the ongoing situation
- Provision of facilities should mass dispensing of antibiotics/ mass immunisation be required

7. Communication

Management and overall responsibility lies statutorily with the CPHM.

Following discussion with the HPT, the Director of Student will inform the relevant campus staff as appropriate.

The Director of Student Life, acting on advice from HPT, will advise university personnel of any action they are required to take.

7.1 Public Relations

It is the statutory responsibility of the HPT to manage the incident/outbreak, including issuing letters to the University to distribute to students/staff as required. **All liaison with the media or distribution of information to students/staff etc will be led by the Health Protection Team in consultation with the NHS and University communications teams.**

NHS Grampian's Corporate Communications Team will lead in handling press interest, in consultation with the University Communications and Marketing Office who will also advise the university Switchboard of any Helpline numbers.

7.2 Press Statements

The Consultant in Public Health Medicine and the most senior University spokesperson available will issue joint press statements.

7.3 Press Conferences

The decision to call a Press Conference will be made by the IMT. NHS Grampian Headquarters will host any press conferences.

7.4 Information to Students and Staff

The main objectives are that:-

- confidentiality of the student(s)/staff member(s) concerned is maintained
- those affected and their families are treated with care and sensitivity
- all those who need to be informed are contacted in the most rapid, efficient and sensitive manner possible
- the University has in place efficient and effective communication strategies to deal with infection incidents

During an infection outbreak/incident e.g. a case of meningococcal infection, the student and staff population at the University may require to be informed of events. Any information distributed among the staff/students, will be provided by the Health Protection Team.

The Director of Student Life will be responsible for informing the relevant Head of School, Disability Manager and Accommodation Support & ResLife Manager who will, in turn, ensure that students are advised, **as considered appropriate by the Health Protection Team**. The Director of Student Life will be provided with a copy of any letters or messages to be circulated.

Information will be circulated using some, or all of the following:

- Individual letters to those deemed at increased risk of infection
- Information sheets for circulation amongst relevant students and staff
- The university Marketing and Communication will put a 'Message of the Day' on the University computer network to deliver updated information to staff and students when they log on. This message will be provided by the HPT
- Director of Student Life will brief staff members responsible for circulating the information within their Departments.

8. Awareness and Training

The Director of Student Life and university staff will take every opportunity to remind students about the importance of registering with a local GP.

The HPT will provide infection prevention and control training as requested by the Director of Student Life and/or the Disability Manager and the Accommodation Support and ResLife Manager. This can be useful for the Student Resident Assistants in University-managed accommodation.

APPENDIX 1

NHS GRAMPIAN HEALTH PROTECTION TEAM

The Health Protection Team is responsible for the surveillance, investigation and control of communicable disease and non-infectious environmental hazards. This service is available 365 days a year 24 hours a day.

How to contact the Health Protection Team

Health Protection Team
NHS Grampian
Summerfield House
2 Eday Road
Aberdeen
AB15 6RE

Email: grampian.healthprotection@nhs.net

Telephone:

- Working Hours **01224 558520** (duty nurse)
- Out of Hours **0845 456 6000** (first on call for Public Health).

APPENDIX 2

University Contact Details

| Name | Office | Mobile | Email |
|---|--------------|--------------|--|
| Director of Student Life | | | |
| Filippo Antoniazzi | 01224 263769 | 07824 343463 | f.antoniazzi@rgu.ac.uk |
| Personal Assistant/Department Administrator | | | |
| Niki Cruickshank | 01224 262117 | | n.cruickshank@rgu.ac.uk |
| Disability Service Manager | | | |
| Annette Davidson | 01224 262142 | 07774 008087 | a.davidson@rgu.ac.uk |
| Accommodation Support & ResLife Manager | | | |
| Terry Knight | 01224 262141 | 07964 332723 | t.knight@rgu.ac.uk |
| Communications Office | | | |
| Anna Duthie | 01224 262210 | | a.duthie3@rgu.ac.uk |
| Accommodation & Catering Manager | | | |
| Ian Webster | 01224 262140 | | i.webster@rgu.ac.uk |
| Amanda Cassidy | 01224 263302 | | a.j.cassidy1@rgu.ac.uk |
| Printing & Graphics | | | |
| William Walker | 01224 262944 | | bill.walker@rgu.ac.uk |
| Martin Parker | 01224 262942 | | m.parker@rgu.ac.uk |
| Deputy Principal & Vice-Chancellor | | | |
| John Harper | 01224 263058 | | j.harper@rgu.ac.uk |
| Garthdee Medical Practice | | | |
| Dr Gail Davidson | 01224 208312 | | |
| Student Union | | | |
| Kerry Harrison | 01224 262297 | | k.harrison1@rgu.ac.uk |
| Chaplain | | | |
| Isaac Poobalan | 01224 640119 | | i.m.poobalan@rgu.ac.uk |
| Occupational Health & Environmental Safety | | | |
| Clinton Grant | 01224 262088 | | c.t.grant@rgu.ac.uk |