Dear colleagues,

With apologies, the number for the COVID-19 support line included in the communication earlier today was incorrect. The correct number is **0118 214 7813**. This number will operate from 10.30am on Monday 2 November.

 **Corporate Communications**

**Marketing, Communication and Engagement, Advancement Group, University of Reading**

communications@reading.ac.uk  |   t: 0118 378 6178  |  [www.reading.ac.uk](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.reading.ac.uk%2Fdps&data=04%7C01%7Ck.stringer%40reading.ac.uk%7C69de42683a1242a1cb9608d87e8815a2%7C4ffa3bc4ecfc48c09080f5e43ff90e5f%7C0%7C0%7C637398470270328127%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=nUdPJdXvdaTMSB5ynFvjcpsafvdkn5kTV9T2LzxVxhw%3D&reserved=0)

**From:** Communications
**Sent:** 01 November 2020 11:16
**To:** all-staff@lists.reading.ac.uk <all-staff@lists.reading.ac.uk>
**Subject:** Important update on COVID-19: government announcement of lockdown measures

Dear colleagues,

You will no doubt be aware of the Prime Minister’s announcement proposing a pre-Christmas ‘circuit breaker’ lockdown in England starting on Thursday 5 November. The aim is to bring COVID-19 case numbers down using a month of increased restrictions, hopefully allowing people to travel more safely for the Christmas break. These new measures only apply to England and do not change regulations in place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

You will undoubtedly be wondering about the implications for both colleagues and students. The Prime Minister made clear that the educational activities of schools, colleges and universities will not be subject to these additional restrictions, so we would like to reassure you that we will continue to conduct teaching and research, subject to all the safety provisions that we already have in place and any other national restrictions on broader activity and socialising.

We will review the full detail of the new provisions carefully to ensure that we are continuing to operate safely and in compliance with government guidance, and share further updates with you before the new provisions come into effect on Thursday.

[This message](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.reading.ac.uk%2Fessentials%2F-%2Fmedia%2Fessentials%2Ffiles%2Fstudent-communication---1-nov-2020.pdf&data=04%7C01%7Ck.stringer%40reading.ac.uk%7C69de42683a1242a1cb9608d87e8815a2%7C4ffa3bc4ecfc48c09080f5e43ff90e5f%7C0%7C0%7C637398470270328127%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=I%2BxQ%2BMZBER%2FDEt2xMi45d6HQD5u0aNvevzX4guA1cNw%3D&reserved=0) will go to students shortly.

**New COVID-19 support line to open on Monday**

Against the backdrop of a changing national picture, it is understandable that you may have questions. So we are launching a **University of Reading** **COVID-19 support line** on **0118 378 5445** to better support our community. The support line will provide a central point of contact for you as well as students, parents or members of our local Reading community who have queries or concerns. The support line will **open at** **10.30am on Monday 2 November**, and will then operate from 9am to 5pm on weekdays and 11am to 4pm on weekends.

As well as the new support line, we are also boosting the number of colleagues operating our Case Management Team, which is supporting national test and trace efforts. This will ensure that we continue to provide timely support for students or colleagues who receive a positive COVID-19 test result, and their close contacts within the University community.

If you are contacted by a student who has concerns or questions about our COVID-19 response, is experiencing symptoms or has received a positive test result, please direct them straight to the support line for the most up-to-date information, rather than seeking to provide them with advice yourself.

**Close coordination with health authorities and local government**

As a further measure to support our response, we last week requested the establishment of a joint Incident Management Team with Public Health England (PHE) and Reading Borough Council. This will provide us with guidance specific to our University community.

This new Incident Management Team met for the first time late last week, and PHE confirmed that [cases at the University](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.reading.ac.uk%2Fcoronavirus%2Fcovid-dashboard.aspx&data=04%7C01%7Ck.stringer%40reading.ac.uk%7C69de42683a1242a1cb9608d87e8815a2%7C4ffa3bc4ecfc48c09080f5e43ff90e5f%7C0%7C0%7C637398470270338123%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=B9ftE1DYPbE9UHcWQrzaJ7NLNC01iSO6bJVH4QXJwgY%3D&reserved=0) show a pattern of transmission through student households and socialising. The total number of staff cases remains low and very few of these have had any contact with our campuses.

The rise in University cases is consistent with an increase in Reading generally, with confirmed cases in the region now over 100 per 100,000 people. While the number of new daily University cases returned to single figures by Friday following a brief increase at the start of the week, PHE is now formally treating the growth in cases at the University as an ‘outbreak’. This classification provides the University with additional support mechanisms through the IMT. The IMT will meet again in the week of 9 November to assess developments.

**PHE confirms no additional restrictions required**

It is extremely encouraging that PHE expressed confidence in the safety measures that the University already has in place and does not recommend any additional restrictions at this time, such as reducing face-to-face teaching or other on-campus facilities.

PHE are confident that transmission of infection on campus is occurring through households and social activity rather than teaching settings, which do not pose an identifiable risk given the safety measures that the University has in place. Staff cases remain low and the affected individuals have either not been on campus or are not linked to teaching.

Although it is clear from PHE advice that we are taking all the necessary steps to protect the safety of our community, we are keeping our response under constant review, with the Major Incident Team continuing to meet daily.

**How you can play your part**

Echoing the Prime Minister’s remarks, there is much that all of us can do to help reduce the spread of COVID-19:

* + comply strictly with all government and University guidance, particularly when socialising – this includes wearing face coverings, washing hands regularly and maintaining social distance
	+ report through your line manager if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or receive a positive test result
	+ download the [NHS Track and Trace app](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcovid19.nhs.uk%2F&data=04%7C01%7Ck.stringer%40reading.ac.uk%7C69de42683a1242a1cb9608d87e8815a2%7C4ffa3bc4ecfc48c09080f5e43ff90e5f%7C0%7C0%7C637398470270338123%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=wuVg2Egr0JqwUWTAuNT9HCiUGP6p1uxgld2yAJSYnP4%3D&reserved=0) and the University’s own [CallMy Alert app](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.reading.ac.uk%2Finternal%2Fstaffportal%2Fnews%2Farticles%2Fspsn-812784.aspx&data=04%7C01%7Ck.stringer%40reading.ac.uk%7C69de42683a1242a1cb9608d87e8815a2%7C4ffa3bc4ecfc48c09080f5e43ff90e5f%7C0%7C0%7C637398470270338123%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=QPHHGAK5A%2B0eoZvGt6qBy4Ky1f6ydpz1vnAoWknrWNY%3D&reserved=0)
	+ check that the mobile number recorded in the [Employee Self-Service system](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fess.reading.ac.uk%2Ftlive_ess%2Fess%2F%23%2Flogin&data=04%7C01%7Ck.stringer%40reading.ac.uk%7C69de42683a1242a1cb9608d87e8815a2%7C4ffa3bc4ecfc48c09080f5e43ff90e5f%7C0%7C0%7C637398470270348114%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=UIv90PcssTNlgqQzFu4sOMQgzTBop9pD8KORz44KlFM%3D&reserved=0) is correct so that the Case Management Team can contact you by text message or phone call if needed
	+ check your University email and the Staff Portal regularly for the latest information and guidance.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 on all our lives, and the uncertainty this creates, is naturally concerning for many within our community. We would like to reassure you that the University is well-placed to respond should the situation escalate further. The University Executive Board (UEB) will be considering on Monday the latest government announcement and the final details of contingency plans that seek to protect the safety of our whole community while continuing to deliver the best experience for our students that we can. We will communicate these following UEB approval.

In the meantime, if you have any concerns, please do contact the COVID-19 support line from 10.30am on Monday 2 November.

Best wishes,

Parveen and Paul

Professor Parveen Yaqoob (Deputy Vice-Chancellor) and Paul Inman (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, International)
Co-Chairs of the Major Incident Team