

## **University leaders come together for student call to action on COVID safety**

University leaders from across Greater Manchester have come together to remind students of their important role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 as the new academic year starts.

As the first of approximately 100,000 students arrive in the city region, Vice-Chancellors and Students' Union (SU) Officers from the Universities of Bolton, Manchester, Salford, Manchester Metropolitan University and the Royal Northern College of Music are issuing a joint call to action to students.

The universities are working with the NHS and public health bodies as well as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, local councils and Greater Manchester Police to ensure students are clear on what they can do to keep themselves and the wider community safe, whether they live in University residences, private accommodation or at home.

As well as setting clear expectations, activity will include initiatives such as community night-time support patrols in areas where many students live, such as areas of South Manchester. Should it become necessary, all universities will use sanctions for students who do not adhere to rules on safe behaviours.

Campuses have been largely closed since March and the universities have been undertaking meticulous planning to re-open them safely over the coming weeks.

Students have been briefed regularly about what to expect and, while each university has its own COVID-19 safety commitments, the Vice-Chancellors and Students' Union leaders are now reminding them of their shared responsibility to the whole community.

While students can expect a warm welcome, some traditional 'Welcome' activities, which usually bring together large groups, won't take place this year, or will happen online.

The universities are also urging students not to buy wristbands to so-called 'freshers events,' - large scale club nights that are currently prohibited - and only to take part in official activity promoted by their University or Students' Union.

The University leaders committed to the following:

### **Vice Chancellors' and Students' Union leaders' Joint Commitment:**

"This is a special time in the university calendar, where we welcome new students to campus for the first time as well as welcoming many more back.

"This September though is like no other, not just for our students, but also for the communities in which they live and study.

"Across our universities, staff and students have worked tirelessly in the fight against COVID-19 – many on the front line in healthcare, volunteering, or at the sharp end of research to treat those suffering with the virus or to protect those at risk.

"This commitment to fighting COVID-19 continues as we bring students back on to campus and surrounding areas in our cities.

“As new and returning students join our community, we remind them of their responsibilities in minimising the transmission of the virus in our city region and in acting as ambassadors for our universities in the areas where they live and socialise.

“We continue to work with public health bodies, the NHS and regional and national government to put COVID safety measures, guidance and regulations in place across our universities.

“Joining campuses and surrounding areas will start to bring normality to lives that have been significantly disrupted over the last six months, but it must be done safely and sustainably.

“Together we commit to ‘doing our bit’ for Greater Manchester and we ask our students to do the same.”

**Professor Malcolm Press, Vice-Chancellor Manchester Metropolitan University**

**Professor Linda Merrick, Principal, Royal Northern College of Music**

**Professor George Holmes, President and Vice-Chancellor, the University of Bolton**

**Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell, President and Vice-Chancellor, The University of Manchester**

**Professor Helen Marshall, Vice-Chancellor, the University of Salford**