

## **‘Yorkshire’s universities are crucial to the region’s recovery’**

### **We call on the government:**

- to provide sufficient resources and policy flexibilities for places and local institutions in Yorkshire to work in partnership with businesses and communities to create a more inclusive, prosperous, healthier and resilient region;
- to recognise the distinct role of universities in Yorkshire and the vital contributions they have played during the response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- to back the higher education sector in Yorkshire with a sustainable programme of financial support that would strengthen universities as key anchor institutions (and mitigate some of the damaging effects of the region’s heavily-impacted economy), in order;
- to enable universities to widen and deepen individual and collective interventions, delivered directly through research, teaching and civic missions, in support of economic and social recovery and rebuilding in Yorkshire.

The impact of Yorkshire’s universities’ collective response to COVID-19 has been recognised nationally – see: [Universities UK #WeAreTogether Report](#)

### **Local and immediate responses of universities to COVID-19**

Since the emergence of the pandemic in the UK, universities in Yorkshire have been:

- Sharing campus facilities and resources with the health and social care sector, and in particular jointly working on IT & security with the NHS.
- Donating vital medical equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies and delivering them to local health and care services.
- Encouraging staff and students to volunteer in local communities, and connect people in isolation with vital services.
- Designing and manufacturing face shields, protective eye-wear, ventilators and breathing aids to meet the national demand.
- Supporting staff with professional qualifications to return to practice in the NHS.
- Deploying graduates early in order to join the NHS frontline.
- Developing new technologies (including apps) to support the NHS.
- Delivering training to NHS staff working in the new Nightingale hospitals.
- Providing teaching spaces, catering facilities and meeting rooms to help recruit non-clinical staff in the health and social care sector.

- Expanding existing business support activity, including making free online resources available, such as webinars, masterclasses and expert advice for companies in the region.

### **Actions that are having global reach and impact**

The specific local focus of universities in Yorkshire has also complemented the broader reach and impact of research taking place in the region, which is contributing directly to the global efforts to tackle COVID-19:

- The University of York is working in collaboration with scientists at the University of Leeds to understand the structure of a key protein which could pave the way for possible antiviral therapies to alleviate the symptoms of COVID-19.
- The University of Leeds Institute for Data Analytics (LIDA) has joined a new COVID-19 data alliance with IBM, Google Cloud and others constituting of data analytics experts challenged with finding new, faster ways of supporting the response to COVID-19 and the subsequent global recovery.
- A University of York virologist is leading efforts to analyse the genetic code of the virus that causes COVID-19. Whilst at the University of Sheffield, researchers are mapping the spread of the virus and sequenced the first two genomes of the novel coronavirus – and were asked to be part of a national consortium to sequence as many UK genomes as possible. This evidence helps the global science community to understand how this virus is spreading and is changing.
- The Bradford Institute for Health Research – involving the universities of Bradford, Leeds and York – is harnessing its research expertise and infrastructure to support the local response to and recovery from COVID-19. In partnership with the NHS and Bradford City Council, the Institute is leading a COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group (C-SAG), providing expert input and advice to the local response and of relevance at regional, national and international levels.
- Experts at the universities of York and Sheffield are studying the impact of COVID-19 on food supplies and working with industry partners to understand the fragilities in supply chains to improve food security; including looking at the consequences of the pandemic on families in poverty.
- A team at the University of Hull and Hull-York Medical School has initiated two international clinical trials for possible treatments for COVID-19, which is showing encouraging results. The respiratory clinical trials team is trialling two treatments to tackle the virus and lung inflammation – the main cause of mortality in COVID-19 patients.
- Atmospheric scientists at the University of York are leading a national advisory group tracking data on air pollution during the lockdown. Whilst environmental experts at the University of Hull's Aura Innovation Centre are examining the impact of COVID-19 on the UK's ability to meet its statutory net-zero carbon targets.

### **In terms of collective economic impact, the 12 members of Yorkshire Universities...**

- Contribute £3bn each year towards the regional economy.

- Drive enterprise, productivity and prosperity through their world-renowned and applied research and development, and innovation.
- Train 68,500 graduates each year to enter the labour market.
- Support the employment of 56,000 full time equivalent jobs at their own institutions and in the wider regional supply chain.
- Invest £324 million in capital infrastructure annually, which forms a vital component of regeneration and development in the region's cities and towns.
- Play a crucial role in securing foreign direct investment and increased trade into Yorkshire.
- Attract talent in the form of thousands of students and staff from all parts of the UK and across the world who each make a vital contribution to the region's economy and society. For example, in 2018/19, just over 196,000 students – from more than 120 countries – studied at the region's universities.

### **Universities and the levelling up agenda**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the government gave a commitment to 'level up' the UK, and to narrow economic and social disparities between regions. This agenda matters more than ever as a result of the current crisis. Putting the UK economy on a new footing will require a collective effort. Universities will feature strongly in national strategies and also in local recovery plans led by Mayors, Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships in Yorkshire. The challenges facing the region, as a result of the pandemic, are illustrated in the latest labour market statistics, and evidenced by the businesses and industries across different sectors coming under increasing pressure.

Securing the long-term institutional and financial stability of universities in Yorkshire is paramount given their expected contributions towards economic recovery in the form of skills development and retraining, innovation, knowledge exchange and creating new opportunities for more people to realise the benefits of higher education. The immediate support measures for higher education, announced by the government, include new temporary student number controls, as well as bringing forward £100m in research funding and £2.6bn of tuition fee income in 2020/21. These measures are welcome and should enable universities to manage some short-term financial challenges. However, a more substantial and sustainable programme of support will be required if universities in Yorkshire are to fully-realise their potential of playing a leading role in the region's recovery and rebuilding.

Supporting the statement published today (9 June 2020) by Yorkshire Universities...

#### **Dan Jarvis, Mayor of the Sheffield City Region, said:**

"In South Yorkshire, higher education is crucial to our communities, our economy, and our way of life. Universities will play a vital role, as our regional and national economies and societies recovery from the Coronavirus, and we look to renew and rebuild.

"Programmes such as Sheffield Hallam University's South Yorkshire Futures, which works on educational attainment and raising aspiration for young people, will be more

important than ever as we rebuild after COVID-19. As will the continued research from facilities such as the Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre, as they look into improving the health and wellbeing of the population through innovations that help people move.

“If we are to emerge more resilient from this pandemic, it will be because of the decisions taken now to protect and preserve some of our great regional and national assets. It’s therefore down to Government to support our universities and show they are truly committed to ‘levelling up’ across the UK. Our universities have stepped up during our hour of need, providing the students and the skills to get us through this pandemic. When we come through this crisis, they will be paramount to our economy, to our health, and to social mobility across our region.”

**Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Chair of West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Leader of Bradford Council, said:**

“Skills, training and lifelong learning are key to people of all ages accessing the good quality jobs we know are essential to driving up living standards, improving prosperity and tackling inequalities. Universities, alongside colleges and employers from all sectors, have a critical role to play in helping more individuals access better opportunities, thereby meeting the needs of employers and enabling the West Yorkshire economy to reach its full potential. Our plans for economic recovery, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the signing of a new devolution deal, will encourage growth. In order to achieve that, we anticipate a major contribution from the higher education sector in the region.”

**David Kerfoot MBE, Chair, York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, said:**

“Before our world was turned on its head by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government gave a commitment to ‘level up’ the UK, and to narrow economic and social disparities between regions.

“This agenda matters more than ever as a result of the current crisis and collaborations, both new and old, will be key to getting the economy back on track.

“At the York and North Yorkshire LEP, we have enjoyed a longstanding relationship with both the University of York and York St John University. Whilst they themselves will find it tough in the current climate, we look forward to continuing our close partnership working including skills development, knowledge exchange and innovation which will be crucial for our economy to be fit and strong in the future.”

**Stephen Parnaby OBE, Chair, Humber Local Enterprise Partnership, said:**

“In the Humber, we recognise the vital contribution that the University of Hull makes in terms of innovation, education and in developing strategic partnerships that help drive the local economy. The University is a significant employer in its own right and acts as a Civic Partner with all four local authorities, providing excellent research that directly support our sector specialisms, such as the Aura Innovation Centre which brings together like-minded ‘green’ business in the region. Our recent skills analysis demonstrates that the region will require many more residents that hold higher

qualifications, and this indeed will be so as we recover from the current economic shock.”

**Roger Marsh OBE DL, Chair of Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, said:**

“We have a world-class cluster of universities in Leeds City Region that make a significant contribution to our economy, society and culture. The research and innovation undertaken by our universities is world-leading and generates tangible benefits for our businesses and public services.

“As we move towards supporting the region’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the higher education sector will play an even more critical role in helping the region build a more prosperous and more resilient future.”

**In response to the comments by the region’s LEPs, Combined Authorities and Metro Mayors, Professor Sir Chris Husbands, Vice-Chancellor, Sheffield Hallam University, and Chair of Yorkshire Universities, said:**

“Universities of different types and scale in Yorkshire are making vital contributions to efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and will be instrumental in supporting the economic and social recovery. As a sector, we want to strengthen our partnerships with local institutions, business and communities in the region as part of the recovery effort. Ensuring that government understands the value of the higher education sector and, in particular, the value of universities at this challenging time, is crucial.”

**Contact**

[Dr Peter O'Brien, Executive Director, Yorkshire Universities](#)

**Notes**

Yorkshire Universities (YU) is a regional partnership with a shared commitment to strengthen the contribution of universities and higher education institutions to the economic, social and civic well-being of people and places in Yorkshire. Members of YU are: Leeds Arts University; Leeds College of Music; Leeds Beckett University; Leeds Trinity University; Sheffield Hallam University; University of Bradford; University of Huddersfield; University of Hull; University of Leeds; University of Sheffield; University of York; and York St John University.

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