COVID-19 Crisis Contribution Case Studies

West Midlands Combined Universities

West Midlands Combined Universities (WMCU)

West Midlands Combined Universities brings together Birmingham City University, Coventry University and the University of Wolverhampton to work with partners to lead the way on inclusive education, economic growth, social mobility, place-shaping and prosperity in the West Midlands.

A partnership between

Birmingham City University

Coventry University

University of Wolverhampton

Embedded in the region's three major cities, we work with West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and public and private sector partners, to achieve regional ambitions and deliver the local industrial strategy.

Our three, flexible and progressive universities have, and will continue to, play a significant role in helping the country deal with COVID 19.

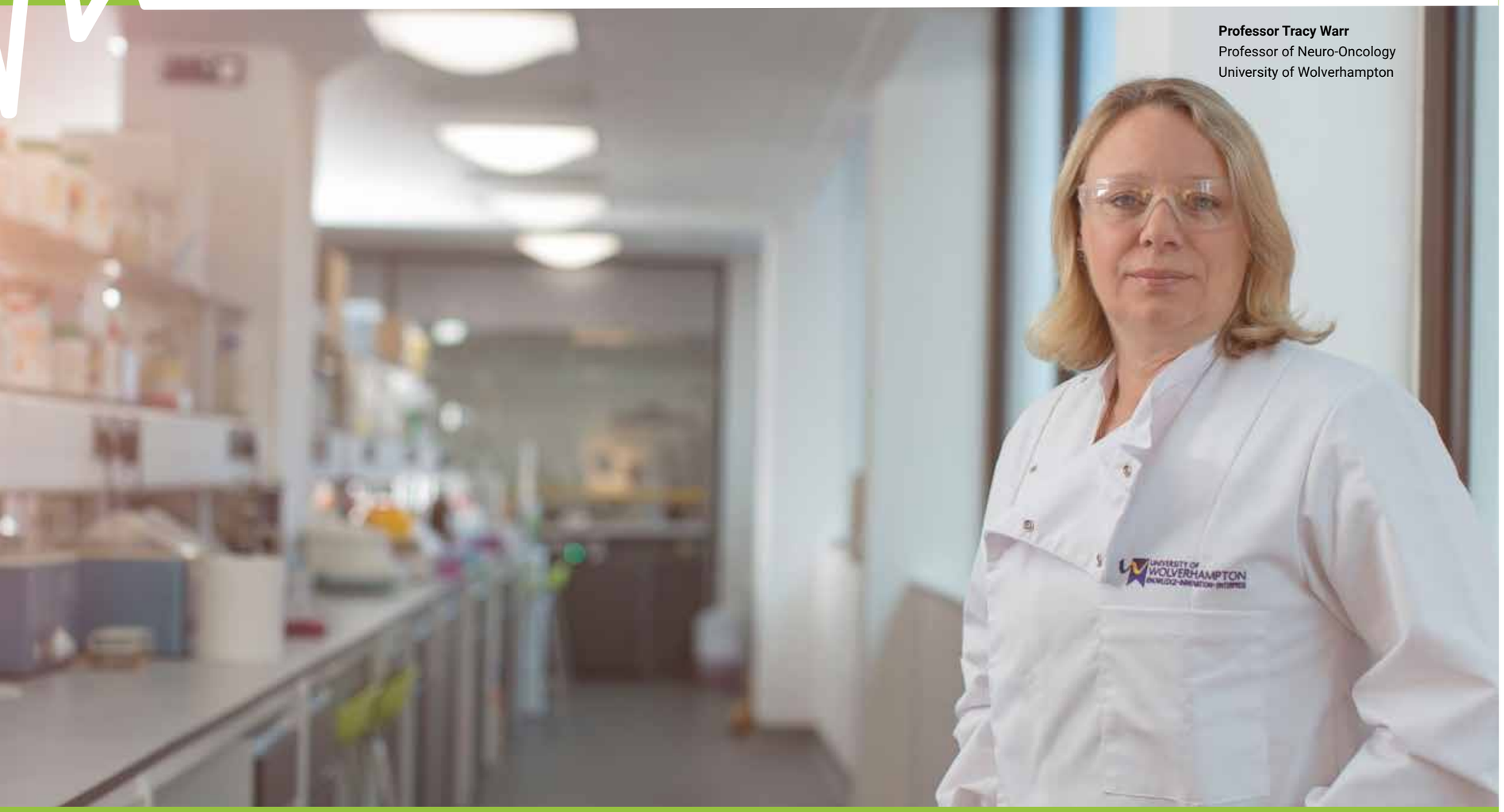
We continue to support our staff and students as well as our communities, businesses and of course our key workers throughout the course of this pandemic.

We design, develop and implement new schemes and ideas every day, whilst ensuring we play a fundamental role in the re-skilling and training of workers to deal with this challenging situation.

Thousands of items of PPE have been manufactured, loans of specialist equipment and machinery, flexibility in learning, cutting edge research, access to specialist facilities, new support services for students and key workers and provision of an incredible amount of workers and volunteers have been just some of the ways in which these three universities have joined the effort to beat this pandemic.

Overleaf is a selection of some of the brilliant work done to date by the WMCU partners.

Provision and Production of Vital PPE and Life-Saving Equipment



University equipment supports fight against COVID-19

The University of Wolverhampton has provided a vital piece of equipment to support the national effort in the fight against COVID-19.

Universities, research institutes and companies across Britain are lending their testing equipment to three new hub laboratories which are being set up for the duration of the crisis. NHS staff will be first in line for the new coronavirus (COVD-19) testing programme being developed in collaboration with government and industry.

The University's Research Institute in Healthcare Science has supplied an Applied Biosystems 7500 Fast System PCR machine which has been transported to the new North Hub laboratory at Alderley Park in Cheshire, having been picked up by the Army in March from the City Campus in Wolverhampton.

The machine uses a technique of testing called Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) which is usually used to test for viruses such as Hepatitis C or influenza.

Professor Tracy Warr, Professor of Neuro-Oncology at the University of Wolverhampton, said: "The 7500 system is being used in the diagnosis of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) in suspected cases of active infection using samples such as nasal and mouth swabs.

"The real time PCR system is used to detect Ribonucleic acid (RNA) from the genome of the virus and this is important, not only for diagnosis in individual cases, but also to provide information about the spread of the disease.

"The equipment was originally purchased in 2010 with generous donations from the Inner Wheel Club of Stafford and the Adrian Pope Foundation to support the brain tumour research programme at the University of Wolverhampton, specifically to determine the levels of gene expression in paediatric and adult brain tumours compared to normal brain and facilitate the development of new targeted molecular treatments.

"Since 2010, it has been used extensively by many biomedical researchers to investigate many different health conditions including other types of cancer, cardiovascular disease, polycystic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes."

The University is actively looking at other ways to contribute to the fight against COVID-19 and has donated its PPE to local NHS Trusts as well as using its 3D printing technology at the Telford Innovation Campus to manufacture visors for front line staff and members of the community who are volunteering.

University donates over 1,000 pieces of PPE to fight against COVID-19

Birmingham City University has donated over 1,000 items of protective equipment to frontline staff supporting the battle against Coronavirus.

Staff across the University's Arts, Design and Media Faculty collated hundreds of aprons, protective goggles and face visors to donate to Birmingham City Council's appeal for equipment, to be used by key workers delivering essential services across the city.

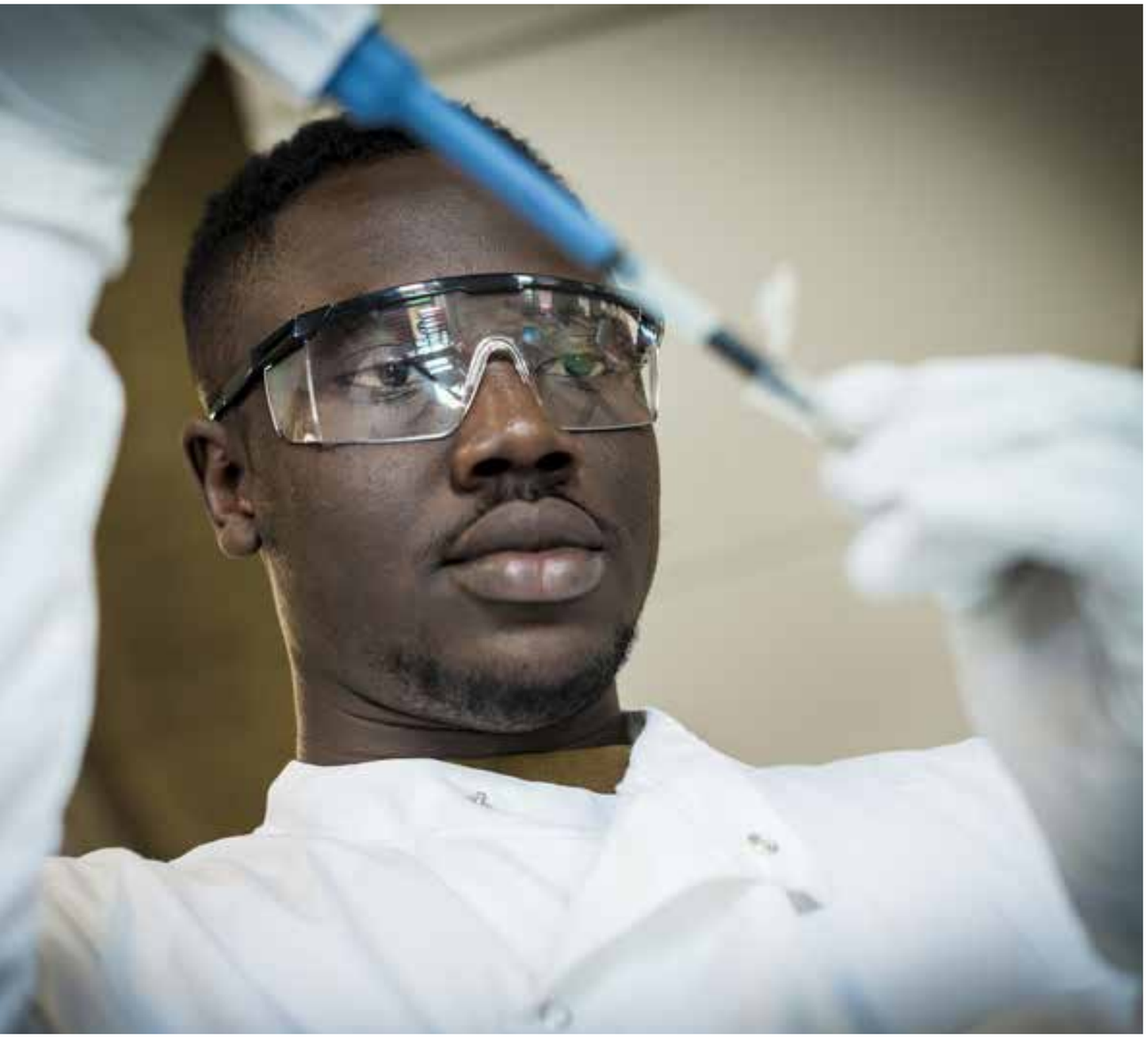
The staff scoured the University's technical work areas across its School of Jewellery, School of Art and Parkside Building to uncover more than 1,000 pieces of equipment, which could support the city's collective efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The technical equipment is ordinarily used by staff and students to make an array of jewellery, sculptures and design products but will now be made available to care providers, social workers and community volunteers.

Items donated included:

- Hundreds of aprons
- A collection of protective face shield visors - some brand new and unboxed
- Several boxes of protective goggles
- Hundreds of face masks
- More than 30 boxes of gloves

The University is now investigating how it can make its facilities and resources available for use to produce more products and materials that can be used in ongoing efforts to protect key workers during the battle against Coronavirus.



Coventry University donates protective equipment to frontline staff

Coventry University has donated crucial personal protective equipment in a bid to help frontline care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 400 pairs of protective goggles and tens of thousands of plastic gloves have been given to Warwickshire County Council's public health team to be distributed to care home workers in the county after they made a request to the University for any spare equipment.

Access to PPE has been one of the biggest challenges for those tackling the pandemic and Coventry University's Ann Green, head of School of Life Sciences, has donated the equipment to ease the burden on and improve the working conditions for care home workers in the county.

> "If you look across the country, there has been a struggle to distribute equipment to where it is needed so we are making sure it gets to the frontline.
>
> It's equipment we had ready for undergraduate teaching which we're not going to use while the university is closed so we're sending it to where it's needed and where it's going to be used."

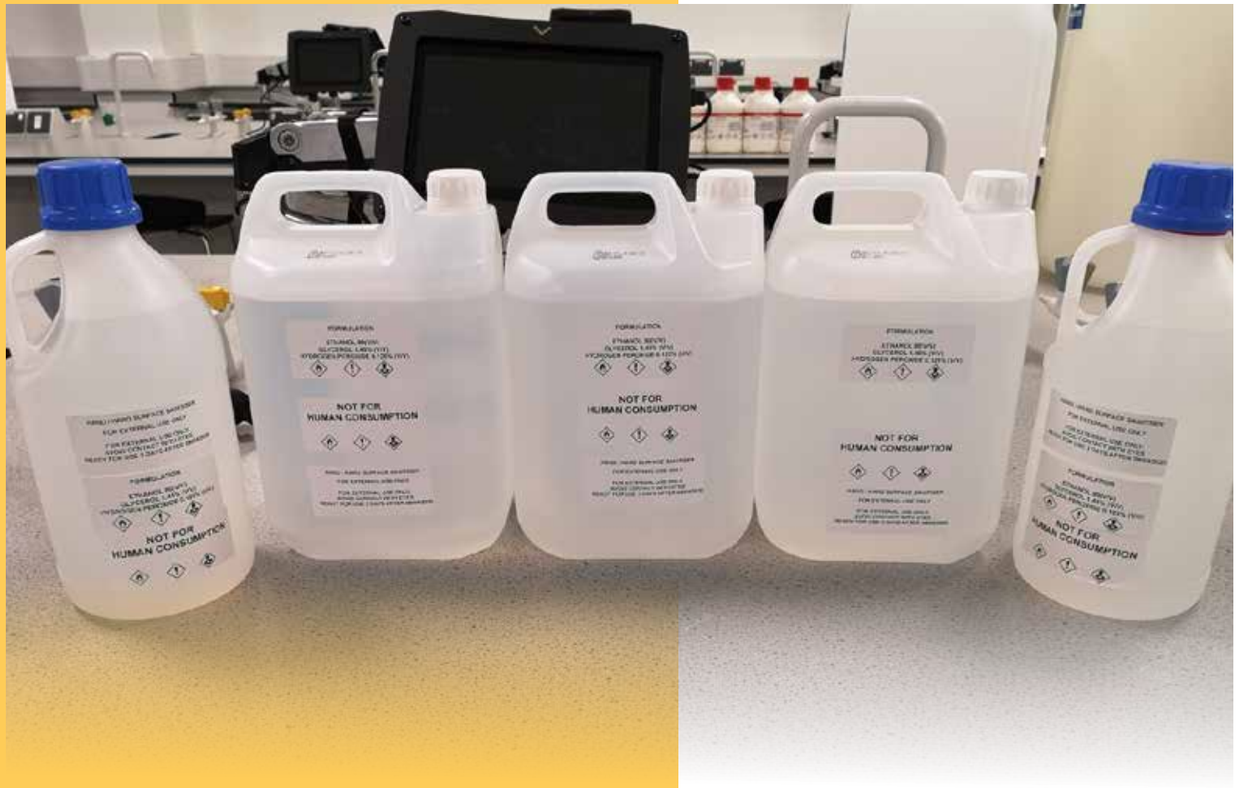
Stuart Henderson-Andrews
Lab manager at Coventry University's School of Health and Life Sciences

University of Wolverhampton begins large scale production of sanitiser

The University of Wolverhampton's School of Pharmacy and School of Engineering are working to assist local NHS Trusts and the local authority during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Academics and technicians have been producing surface and hand sanitiser in their laboratory facilities at the city centre campus in Wolverhampton, helping to combat the short supplies of the anti-viral cleaner.

Dr Matthew Palframan and Dr Mark Hewitt from the School of Pharmacy made a trial batch of the sanitiser for use in the University before the lockdown was imposed. Since then, they have been working alongside Dr Amin Dhir of the School of Engineering's Chemical Engineering department to upscale the quantities being produced, as well as adopting the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s methodology for making sanitiser, made available to laboratories around the world via their website.



The WHO recipe uses Ethanol, Isopropyl, Glycerol and Hydrogen Peroxide to make an effective anti-viral agent and the University team has been using its existing supplies of materials to manufacture a simple sanitising liquid strong enough to effectively kill the COVID-19 virus on both hard surfaces and on hands.

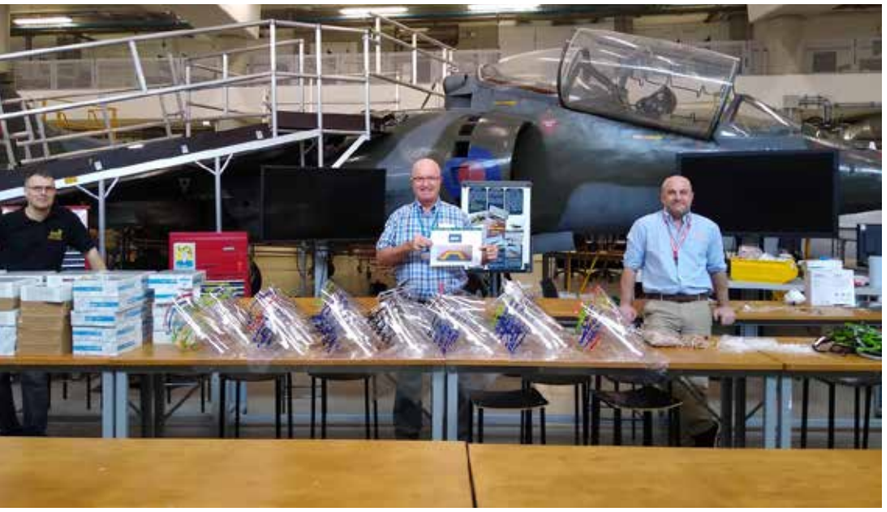
The team has produced over 100 litres of sanitiser in 24 hours which are ready for transport, and will need decanting once they reach their new homes to be used effectively.

The University is currently working with local NHS Trusts, local council and healthcare providers to distribute the new supplies of sanitiser.

> We're excited to be able to begin producing sanitiser to a high specification on such a large scale. It's a testament to the hard work of the team to be able to adapt to the WHO process and work across multiple disciplines to respond to the needs of the NHS Trusts and our front-line care workers. We plan to continue production, and get more ingredients as they become available so that we can continue supporting our community.
>
> **Dr Colin Brown**
> Head of the Wolverhampton School of Pharmacy

Coventry University manufactures and donates face shield visors to NHS

Coventry University is manufacturing full face protection equipment to donate to local NHS and public health teams to help frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Academic and technical staff in the university's Faculty of Engineering, Environment and Computing are using 3D printing machines and laser cutting equipment to produce much-needed face shield headband frames and clear face visors.

The university is targeting the production of 500 face shield visors per week until at least the end of April.

The face shields are being donated to Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group, South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust and some local public health teams to help alleviate shortages of personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The face shields were produced using open-source designs that have been developed for rapid manufacture with off-the-shelf materials and have been approved by the recipients as being fit for purpose in the current situation.

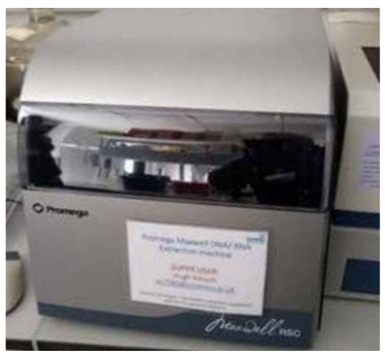
Professor Michael Fitzpatrick, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Engineering, Environment and Computing said: "We're very pleased to be able to use the facilities at Coventry University in support of the National Health Service and care providers.

"Our academic and technical staff have responded positively and selflessly to the task of taking designs for personal protective equipment and realising them with our range of 3D printing and laser cutting equipment.

"We plan to run production continuously for the coming weeks."

University loans DNA equipment to help speed up Covid-19 tests

Coventry University has loaned a DNA extraction machine to University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) to help ramp the number of tests being done for COVID-19.



The machine, a Promega Maxwell RSC, can process 16 samples simultaneously and can extract DNA in under an hour which can then be tested to see if the coronavirus is present.

This now takes the existing number of testing kits running at the hospital to four, complementing a larger testing machine, which can process greater numbers of samples.

Professor Neil Anderson, Director of Pathology Services at UHCW said: "Thanks to our partners at Coventry University, we can have greater flexibility in how we process samples and also much larger capacity to further strengthen the NHS response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The additional system will complement the existing kit we have on site and enable us to undertake more testing.

"We have already created a new laboratory specifically for COVID-19 testing, so that we increase the numbers of samples tested across Coventry and Warwickshire."

Manufacturing engineering on display as University 3D prints face-shields

Academics and technical staff at the University of Wolverhampton's School of Engineering have been using 3D printing technology to manufacture face-shields for NHS Trust staff and front-line caregivers across the region.

Using Prusa 3D printing machines at the Telford Innovation Campus normally used by students for engineering projects, staff have collaborated to perfect a fast and stream-lined manufacturing process for RC3 headbands using a polymer called Polyethylene terephthalate glycol modified (PETG).

When the headbands are printed, a transparent plastic visor, cut to shape using the School of Engineering's Zund cutting desk, is added to the front, creating a protective barrier that shields the whole face.

Dr Syed Hasan, Head of the School of Engineering at the University, said: "Engineers have been discussing and collaborating on how to combat the COVID-19 pandemic even before we moved into social distancing.

"It was imperative that the School of Engineering in Telford contribute to the safety and wellbeing of our local and regional partners, especially as nursing and paramedic cohorts have just taken up residence at the Telford campus.

Finding ways to quickly manufacture PPE (personal protective equipment) using the cutting edge technology we have available is very important, but the job is only half done. We need to produce thousands more masks in the coming weeks to help those who need it."

PETG is a robust material to print in, meaning it can be sterilised and reused by NHS Trust staff, unlike many of the current headbands that are being discarded after 3 hours of use on hospital wards and in care homes. The first shipment of 50 visors has been delivered to Wolverhampton's New Cross hospital, where these simple yet effective items will protect front-line staff caring for those with COVID-19.

With more 3D printers being made available to the School of Engineering by their industrial contacts and collaborators every day, the team are hoping to get as many as 30 printers running in a 24 hour production process, with a machine making nine headbands per hour, and the potential to make over 1,500 headbands every 24 hours, provided they have enough of the PETG material.

Professor Nazira Karodia, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Regional Engagement, who is co-ordinating the University's community response to COVID-19, said: "I'm proud of the team in the School of Engineering for their commitment to using their skills and knowledge to combat COVID-19.

"The facilities at the Telford Innovation Campus are world class, and the dedication of academics and technicians who are teaching students in virtual classrooms before heading into their workshops is outstanding."

The University is actively looking at other ways to contribute to the fight against the pandemic and has provided a new 'super lab' at Alderley Park, Cheshire, with an advanced PCR machine for testing for COVID-19 as well as donating PPE, including gloves, safety goggles and clinical waste bags to local NHS Trusts and a hospice and using its School of Pharmacy and School of Engineering to produce hand and surface sanitiser for front line staff and members of the community who are volunteering.

Universities Contribute Academic Expertise and Research to the Community in Time of Need

University of Wolverhampton scientists are reaching out virtually by continuing to teach their subject matter online – taking science into the community during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Faculty of Science and Engineering's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Response Team has developed an online focused programme of curriculum linked activities that revolve around the specialism of the group including microbiology, forensics and the wonders of the natural world.

The team has also produced video content and over the coming weeks will be sharing online activities, links and resources that parents can use when they are home schooling their children and help them keep occupied during social isolation.

They will also be on hand to answer any queries. The 'Ask Me Anything' (AMA) sessions will be taking place daily between 12.00 midday and 1.00 pm. All activities will take place on Twitter @ STEMResponseWLV.

Dr Martin Khechara, Associate Professor for Engagement in STEM at the University, said: "Usually at this time of the year the STEM Response team would be preparing for key STEM events and we would be right at the heart of the community, talking to schools, attending and organising events such as Big Bang and the University of Wolverhampton Faculty of Science and Engineering annual festival, Sci Fest.

"Obviously due to the current pandemic, we are having to think a bit differently about how we support the community as they endeavour to continue to learn about STEM subjects in these difficult times and we wanted to take the subjects directly into the living room during the school shutdown period.

"Our online programme which primarily will take place on the Twitter platform is designed to support parents who are home schooling as well schools that are still open for children of key workers. We will be running competitions as well as producing special features for events to celebrate key international days in the STEM Calendar."

The programme includes Micro Mondays, where microbiology staff peer into the world of everything tiny; Wild Wednesdays will explore the wonders of the natural world with the resident primatologist; and Forensic Fridays will investigate the mysteries of crime and death with a forensic researcher.

Listen to Dr Khechara talk about virtual learning on BBC Radio WM: https://soundcloud.com/wlv_uni/bbc-radio-wm-interview-scientists-reach-out-virtually-to-teach-subject-matter-online

Researchers create AI tool to speed up Covid-19 diagnosis through x-rays

A new healthcare tool that applies artificial intelligence technology to improve the accuracy of COVID-19 detection in chest x-rays has been developed and shared by Birmingham City University researchers.

DeTraC, created by computer vision and data scientists Professor Mohamed Gaber and Dr Mohammed Abdelsamea, uses machine learning to assess and diagnose using large datasets of images from several hospitals across the world.

The technology is now publicly available within the World Health Organisation and global medical community as an open source program.

The announcement arrives on World Health Day, following a period of 10 days where the two academics – in collaboration with researcher Asmaa Abbas from Assiut University in Egypt – worked to adapt and deploy their diagnostic tool in response to updates from WHO tracking the spread of the virus.

DeTraC, which stands for Decompose, Transfer and Compose, is a convolution neural network that can be trained using a limited number of medical images.

The Birmingham City University scientists' work is the latest in a series of announcements made by the UK institution utilising the expertise, knowledge, resource and capacity of staff and students in order to contribute to the global fight against Coronavirus.

> "We believe that our work will open the door for a number of other researchers to help medical professionals to improve their diagnosis by providing unbiased solutions directly from the images. It will boost artificial intelligence research in medical image processing and analysis – which could ultimately lead to faster diagnosis of Covid-19."
>
> **Dr Mohammed Abdelsamea**

Coventry University delivers mindfulness sessions to NHS frontline staff

Coventry University is delivering mindfulness and compassion sessions to NHS staff who are working in frontline roles to combat the COVID-19 outbreak.

The first session was held on Monday 6 April for paramedics and nurses who are undertaking the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care course, a top-up degree course designed for qualified clinicians. The session focused on showing participants how to calm the nervous system through meditation and breathing exercises.

The sessions are being offered to all 213 students on the course in response to the unprecedented difficulties that NHS frontline staff are facing during this COVID-19 outbreak, including extreme work pressures, moral and ethical dilemmas and psychological distress.

Apart from the mindfulness sessions, the university has also provided links to 'MIND' advice for NHS staff and the 'Headspace' App (free for NHS staff to download for the next three months) as well as other resources.

> "NHS frontline staff are working under enormous pressure during this crisis, and it's important that they also get the support they need to promote their mental wellbeing. These sessions will support individuals to release tension and unease held in the body, supporting a calmer nervous system which enables clearer thought, better sleep and wellbeing. Being under enormous amounts of pressure and stress leaves the mind and body weakened. Engaging in breathing practice and compassion meditations supports the regaining of equilibrium."

Dr Liz Sparkes
Course director, MSc Mindfulness and Compassion at Coventry University

> "I highly recommend the meditation sessions. Now is a better time than any to start engaging with this type of practice and it makes a real positive difference being done live to help us engage in the moment. As someone who is currently fighting off symptoms of coronavirus, it was especially helpful."

Luke, a Paramedic who took part in the first session

Other sessions have focused on managing the emotional toll of caring for others and how frontline workers can look after their mental wellbeing and avoid compassion fatigue.

Criminologist trades prison for pizza to support army of new home cooks

A criminology professor has launched a new website to support those cooking on a budget during the coronavirus lockdown.

Professor Elizabeth Yardley, who teaches at Birmingham City University's School of Social Sciences, is swapping crime and restraining orders for cottage pie and risotto with her 'Pound Chef' recipes – all executed for less than £1 per person.

Professor Yardley, who researches gendered violence and homicide, hopes her recipes will capture imaginations and help to add variety to family menus whilst many of us serve prolonged periods of time behind doors, following government guidelines on social-distancing.

She said: "I've been preparing most of my own meals from scratch for years and disappearing into the kitchen to cook is something I really enjoy doing.

I'd planned to set up a recipe website for some time and it was one of my 2020 new year resolutions. This was going to be my weekend project over the summer months. However, given the outbreak of COVID-19, I wanted to get my recipes out there as soon as possible.

"Most of us are now stuck at home and during these times, food becomes something of an obsession! What are we having for lunch? What are we having for dinner? What are we going to eat at the weekend? Many of us have our own go-to recipes, which we are going to get tired of very quickly.

Professor Yardley's recipes include 'Easy Speedy Mushroom Risotto' costing 98p to rustle up, 'Thin and Crispy Pizza' for 69p and 'Warming Carrot and Potato Soup with Garlic and Ginger', which'll cost 48p per portion.

> "I'm conscious that the recipes I share are affordable and won't stretch household budgets, which are already under considerable strain given the current situation. All of the recipes on my website have an ingredient cost of £1 or less per person.
>
> I work full time in my academic role, so 'Pound Chef' is my weekend and evenings project - I will try and get as many of my recipes up on the website as quickly as I can! I want to ensure that the website responds to the needs of our new army of home cooks, so do feel free to drop me a line via the contact form on the Pound Chef website with any feedback or suggestions."

Love learning campaign

The University of Wolverhampton is a key member of the Wolverhampton City Learning Region (WCLR), which is part of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). As part of this work, representatives have attended webinars hosted by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) focused on responses of UNESCO learning cities to COVID-19.

Challenges faced by cities include a record number of children and youth who are not in school or university because of temporary or indefinite closures mandated by governments in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus.

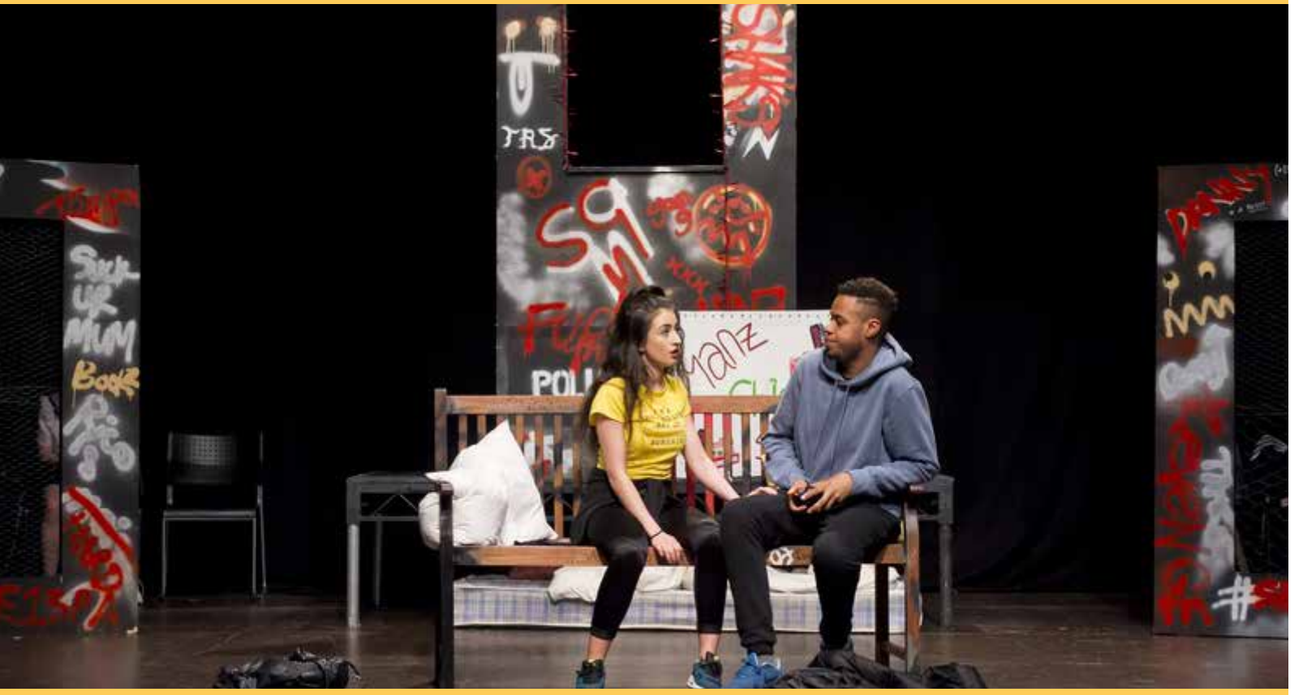
Natalie Lewis, Learning Regions Coordinator at the University of Wolverhampton, says the webinars have been incredibly useful in helping to shape both the Wolverhampton response but also the Centre for Lifelong Learning responses by Regional Learning Centres.

She is developing the WCLR webpages in collaboration with partners city-wide to create an online presence of learning opportunities across the City Region.

A love learning social media campaign will also be developed to help connect people to learning opportunities during the stay at home period of COVID-19.

The UNESCO webinars can be accessed from: https://uil.unesco.org/event/webinar-unesco-learning-cities-respond-covid-19

Coventry's universities announce joint project to support creatives



Coventry University and the University of Warwick have launched a joint project that will fund local artists hit financially by the COVID-19 outbreak to allow them continue their projects during the outbreak.

The project, titled Coventry Creates, will offer up to £2,000 funding for creatives in the Coventry area so that they can keep producing art work in the run up to the City of Culture 2021 year.

The selected works will be showcased this summer in a special digital exhibition in conjunction with the Coventry City of Culture Trust and then kept in the Coventry City of Culture Digital Archive.

Neil Forbes, Coventry University's Research Lead for City of Culture said: "It's of vital importance we support the city's creative sector right now and we want to offer them sustainability and recognition for their work.

"These are people who are often self-employed and working on small-scale start-ups, working from commission to commission and we want to make sure they don't fall into the gaps in terms of funding offered during the pandemic.

"Not only is it a way to showcase their work, it's also to make sure they receive vital funding at a difficult time."

Professor Jackie Hodgson, University of Warwick Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research said: "Coventry University and the University of Warwick are both delighted to be able to announce this partnership call providing funding of up to £2,000 per project, to commission local artists and creative organisations to collaborate with our researchers in order to create novel artworks in response to research projects.

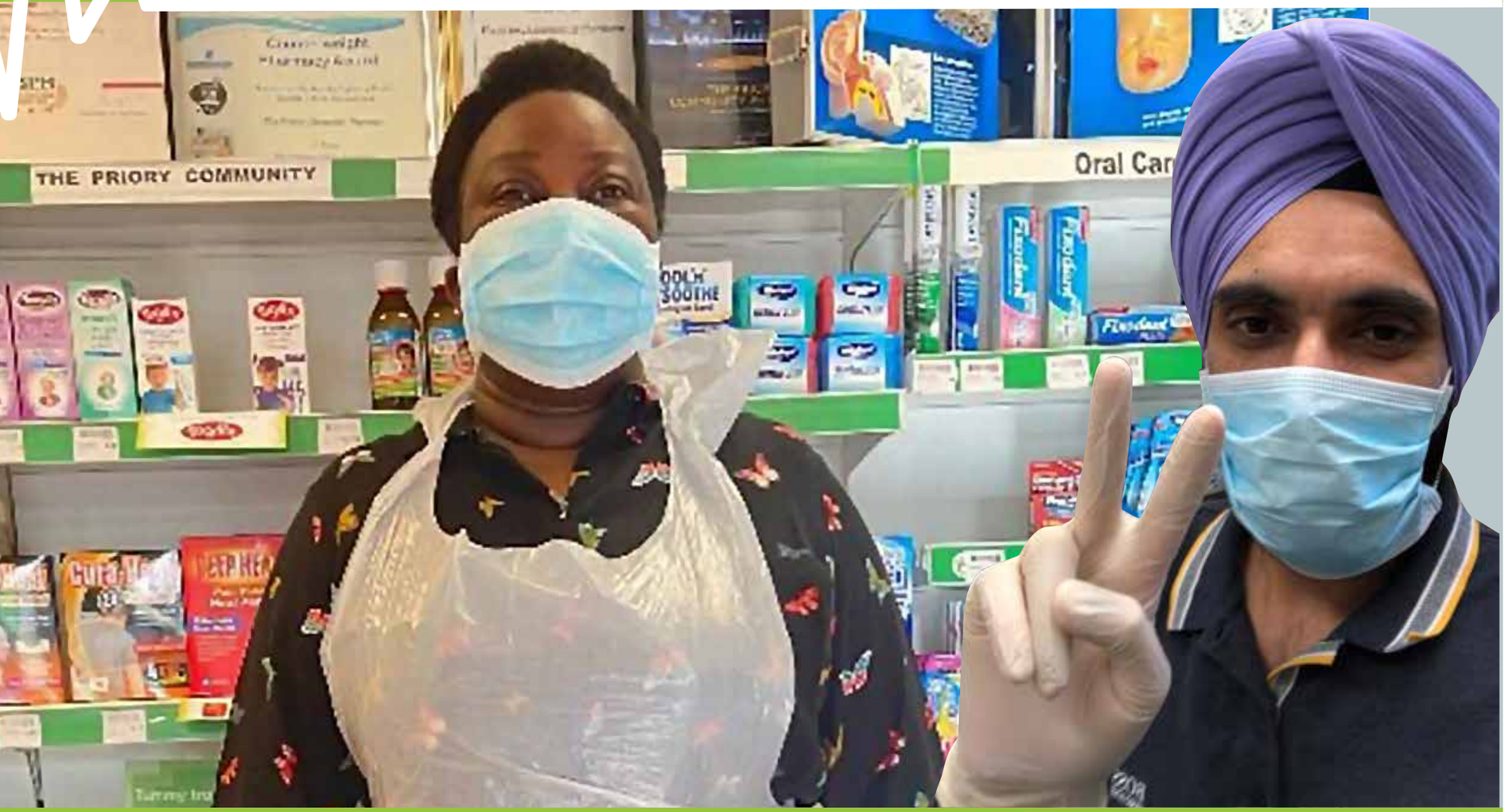
"This is an exciting opportunity for researchers to work with artists of all descriptions in creative and innovative ways, to extend the reach of their work, gain new contacts and engage with City of Culture."

The two universities would like to hear from anyone working in the arts including (but not limited to); combined arts, dance, film, libraries, literature, music, museums, and theatre and visual arts. We also look forward to receiving applications that showcase interdisciplinary and innovation.

The commissions will be showcased in a digital exhibition in summer 2020, to be curated by the University Partnership in conjunction with the City of Culture Trust. All works of art resulting from this call will also be digitally archived in the Coventry City of Culture Digital Archive.

The call for applications is open to all types of research, relating to the two universities' City of Culture Research Themes. Whilst we are keen to see applications from new projects that are specifically about the COVID-19 crisis and are still developing as the situation unfolds (e.g. infectious disease, immunity, pandemics, social isolation, mental health, homeworking, remote working, key workers, education, air/water pollution etc.) projects project do not need to relate to the crisis in order to apply.

West Midlands Combined Universities Support Local Communities in COVID-19 Volunteering Effort



Postgraduate research students help the fight against COVID-19

Seven postgraduate students studying for PhDs in the School of Pharmacy at the University of Wolverhampton have joined front-line staff to help the fight against COVID-19.

The doctoral candidates are independent prescribing pharmacists, employed in a number of NHS Trusts, GP clinics, community pharmacies and in hospital injectable therapy clean rooms around the West Midlands and London region.

The pharmacists are all devoting their own time, between shifts and on their days off, and money to fund their fees, laboratory investigations, telephone charges, travel and printing to conduct their research.

Their research projects, while investigating different medical conditions and in different clinical settings, aim to achieve better outcomes for patients who have been diagnosed with long-term and chronic conditions.

They are aiming to improve their treatment journey experience and develop their shared responsibility towards self-care and improving their adherence to mutually agreed treatment plans and prescribed medication, improving their overall sense of wellbeing. Dr Hana Morrisey, Reader in Clinical Pharmacy at the University, said: “Some of our students have moved from working part-time or working eight hour shifts to working much longer hours in support of the local community effort to fight this pandemic.

“Olutayo Arikawe is working additional shifts at a Pharmacy in Dudley, Amardeep Singh, Nasreem Bibi and Miriam Ahmed are working up to 12 hours shifts, 6 days a week at GP Clinics in Wolverhampton and Birmingham, Marko Puzovic is working at a hospital in Shrewsbury and Vincent Ebhabha is working in Pharmacy Clinical Homecare in London.

“At times like these, when NHS Trust services are stretched and overburdened, it’s wonderful to see students who are willing to offer their valuable services in their own time to help the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. As their supervisors, we thank them for their fantastic work, and we wish them to stay safe and well as they continue their great work out in the community.”

Birmingham student creates 1,000-strong volunteering group to help during the COVID-19 outbreak

A nursing student from Birmingham City University has set up a volunteering group to help vulnerable members of her south Birmingham community during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Katie Dixon, who is studying adult nursing at Birmingham City University, has since recruited nearly 1,000 people to help in the Kings Heath community, with another 250 kind hearted residents awaiting approval to join the ranks.
This comes as the government calls for 250,000 volunteers to support people who have been asked to shield themselves from the virus by staying at home for 12 weeks.

As a student nurse, Katie says she was inspired to help by a desire to help people in her community.

She started out by dropping flyers off to neighbours on her road offering to help with essentials like shopping, but soon discovered that others would like to offer their help and that more residents could benefit from it.

Katie said: “It’s my dream and goal to work within the community when I qualify as a nurse, as this is where my heart is, both personally and professionally.

“We have a real sense of community where I live, which is so lovely, especially at a time like this when so many are worried. This is what prompted the idea to start a volunteering group at our local neighbourhood watch group.

“I mentioned that I had created a flyer to help the elderly and vulnerable on the road I live on. It quickly became apparent that others wanted to do the same, so it made sense to create a group specifically for this purpose. I knew that in order to be effective, it was going to require a lot of organisation and structure.

“Organising and leading a mutual aid group containing nearly 1,000 volunteers – with another 250 awaiting approval – has been a huge learning curve. But it’s also been an amazing opportunity to put my leadership skills into practise.

“I never realised just how transferable they would be, particularly extending them to a context like this. I’m finding myself using skills including time-management, team-working and delegation. I’ve written mutual aid safeguarding and GDPR guidance for volunteers – with some help from the professionals of course.

“It’s been a whirlwind, but we are making a difference and that’s what it’s all about. We’re still being inundated with offers of help and now the elderly and vulnerable in our local area are getting in touch for support. It’s been hard work, but to know we are making a difference, even if only at a local postcode level, is everything.

“Everyone has pulled together to make this a remarkable safe network and I know over the coming weeks and months we will continue to do everything we can to support those in need during the uncertain times ahead.”

Birmingham City University is the largest trainer of undergraduate nurses in the Midlands and recently launched nursing degree apprenticeships in a bid to boost the region’s workforce.

Student paramedics join fight against COVID

Paramedic students from Coventry University have headed to the frontline to help ambulance staff tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

About 50 students who have previously worked with West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) on placements have joined up once again with ambulance staff at the service's request to help bolster their numbers as they work during the coronavirus outbreak.

Paul Corns, Course Director of the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science at Coventry University, said: "It all moved very quickly, from WMAS first making the request, to the students going on induction days and now they're out there working as frontline staff.

"The students have been very keen and were willing to assist without hesitation." The paramedic students are all about six months away from become fully qualified paramedics and they will be working as paid support staff for WMAS, which will also count as their placement.

The first students joined up with WMAS for their first shifts last Tuesday, one of whom is Sophie Bassi who is based at the service's Bromsgrove hub and has been out working across the region.

Mrs Bassi said: "Being at home wasn't an option and with the skill set I already have, I knew it would be of use. I definitely had to join WMAS and assist them.

"It's been absolutely manic but the people at Bromsgrove have been really lovely and welcoming.

"I'm working alongside a lot of Coventry University students and how we've all pulled together as a team to help each other has been really good."

This is just one of many ways in which Coventry University staff and students have been helping our public services tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

More than 25 PhD students have volunteered to help University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire with COVID-19 testing in the coming weeks and paramedic students from the university have taken up frontline roles with West Midlands Ambulance Service.

About 400 pairs of safety goggles and 90,000 pairs of gloves have been donated to Warwickshire County Council's public health team for use in care homes and the university's health simulation facilities in the Alison Gingell building have also been made available for local health trusts to use for training purposes for their staff.

> "We're very proud of them all for offering their services so readily and willingly at what is a very challenging time for everyone."

Paul Corns
Course Director of the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science

CU Scarborough nurses ready to tackle Coronavirus

Nursing students and staff at CU Scarborough will be joining frontline NHS staff at Scarborough Hospital to bolster numbers in the fight against COVID-19.

A dozen second-year student nurses from the Scarborough campus will join the effort and are currently awaiting details of when they will be needed.

One of those is Lucy England, a second-year student, who is expecting to be helping on the wards next week. She was due to start her original placement at the hospital two weeks ago but that got cancelled due to the Coronavirus outbreak, but when the hospital called for students to join the team as nursing support staff she and many others jumped at the chance.

CU Scarborough has deep links with the NHS in the area and trains nurses in a region where the NHS has struggled to recruit.

The student nurses will be working four days at the hospital and then spend one day a week on their academic studies, as part of their course and placement.

Also joining them at Scarborough Hospital will be one of their tutors, Dr Janet Wilson, who will be returning to work as a nurse in addition to her role at the Scarborough campus.

Janet will bring a wealth of experience to the table, having spent many years working at Northern General Hospital in Sheffield, before moving into teaching in 2008.

> I cannot wait to join the workforce in my local hospital and utilise the skills I have learnt over the last year and a half as a student nurse.
>
> During my training I have worked alongside many amazing nurses and having the opportunity to give something back was not something I could pass on.
>
> Being able to work as part of the amazing team at Scarborough Hospital will be a part of my career I will not forget in years to come.

Lucy England
Nursing student
at CU Scarborough

Along with reinforcements to the workforce, donations of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to frontline workers in the local area are to be made from the stock at CU Scarborough, which will help staff tackling the Coronavirus outbreak at both Scarborough Hospital and St Catherine's, a palliative care hospice in the town.

Claire Barwick, Head of Curriculum of Health, Education and Nursing at CU Scarborough said: "Scarborough Hospital needs our support at the moment. Our stock would just be sitting in training rooms otherwise, so it's better to get it out there so it can be put to use helping people."

Clinical wipes, boxes of gloves, aprons and safety masks have been set aside for donation and will be distributed to the two sites based on their needs.

Coventry University answers call to help the NHS

Coventry University and its students are answering the call to help the NHS in the fight against COVID-19.

As the country goes into lockdown, more than 25 PhD students and research staff have volunteered to help University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) with testing patients for COVID-19 in the coming weeks. The university has also drawn up a list of equipment it could provide to the NHS to help it increase the number of tests it can carry out.

Many of the volunteers are overseas students who cannot get home and want to help our local NHS services, which will be under growing pressure during the outbreak.

Coventry University already trains hundreds of student nurses and allied healthcare professionals every year through its Faculty of Health and Life Sciences in Coventry and its CU campus in Scarborough – many of whom work on placements with local NHS trusts.

> "I am absolutely overwhelmed with the response and very proud of our students"

Professor Helen Maddock
Executive Director of Coventry University's Centre for Sports, Exercise and Life Sciences

Some of the students who have volunteered are from France and Pakistan and are unable to get home themselves to be with their families but want to do whatever they can to support and help their local hospital during this unprecedented time.

Some of the duties the student volunteers are capable of carrying out include extraction of DNA and RNA, which will then be tested for the COVID-19 strain.

Mr Raja Idris, who is researching the relationship between cardiovascular disease and obesity for his PhD is one of those who has volunteered and is ready to help UHCW when called upon.

He said: "At the moment the lab is closed and with this madness surrounding COVID-19 I just wanted to help in any way that I could."

"I told them I'm available if they need me, even if that's just ushering people about at the hospital."

In addition to the volunteers, equipment such as RNA and DNA extraction kits have been put aside by the university, for use by the NHS if it is needed to ramp up the number of tests it carries out for COVID-19.

Prof Maddock added: "We have been liaising with government officials, relevant biotechnology companies and UHCW over the weekend to collate what equipment and reagents we have available which could be used to help but we are waiting to hear back on what is needed and where. We are ready to do what we can to help."

University Buildings Made Available For Frontline NHS Workers

University of Wolverhampton Provide Accommodation for Local Key Workers

The University of Wolverhampton have made student accommodation available at its Walsall Campus for NHS Trust frontline staff – they are due to move in following the Easter Bank Holiday. We have offered the use of 133 rooms for doctors, nurses, midwives and paramedics. NHS Trust staff from New Cross Hospital have also been offered the use of student accommodation in Liberty Heights in Wolverhampton and local police will be using rooms in accommodation at City Campus.

University reopens building as skills hub for hundreds taking on frontline roles with the NHS

Birmingham City University is to reopen its Seacole Building to help train hundreds of students taking on frontline NHS roles in the fight against COVID-19.

The University will make its City South Campus and state-of-the-art facilities available for hundreds of students to help prepare them to take up extended work placements within the NHS to help bolster the workforce.

The building will now be used as a Skills Hub to help students nearing the end of their studies, current NHS staff and returning employees to learn key techniques and skills needed in the frontline battle against coronavirus.

Staff from the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences, including colleagues from the Defence School of Healthcare Education, will deliver skills-based training to help teach new and essential techniques.

The University has been working closely with the skills teams in local NHS Trusts, especially University Hospitals Birmingham, to ensure the skills taught are in line with Trust requirements, and that their training makes the biggest impact in supporting patients.

Nearly 300 student nurses from the University will be taking up positions within the NHS to support the nation-wide effort to stem the spread of the virus.

Approximately 95 per cent of the University's student nurses, currently in the last six months of their studies, have offered their services for an extended placement with the health service.

Placements will operate for six-months, and students will be employed directly by the NHS but also remain students at the University. Some midwifery and Allied Health Professional students will also be taking up roles.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting on lives right across the country and it is no secret that the NHS needs to increase its workforce to help meet the anticipated demand from the virus.

"Opening up our Seacole building gives us the chance to support people taking on these roles with extra specialist training and access to our facilities to help them to deliver the vital care that is so important right now.

We are proud of the contribution staff and students across the University are making to the effort to tackle coronavirus and are delighted that we have been able to work with our NHS partners to offer this service."

Professor Louise Toner
Executive Director of Coventry University's Centre for Sports, Exercise and Life Sciences

Coventry University offers flagship building for NHS training activities

Coventry University has reopened its Alison Gingell building to help the NHS to train staff to take up clinical roles in the fight against COVID-19 in Warwickshire.

The £59 million building, which houses the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (HLS), was opened for two days initially, from 2-3 April to train medical students to prepare them to undertake new clinical responsibilities with South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust (SWFT).

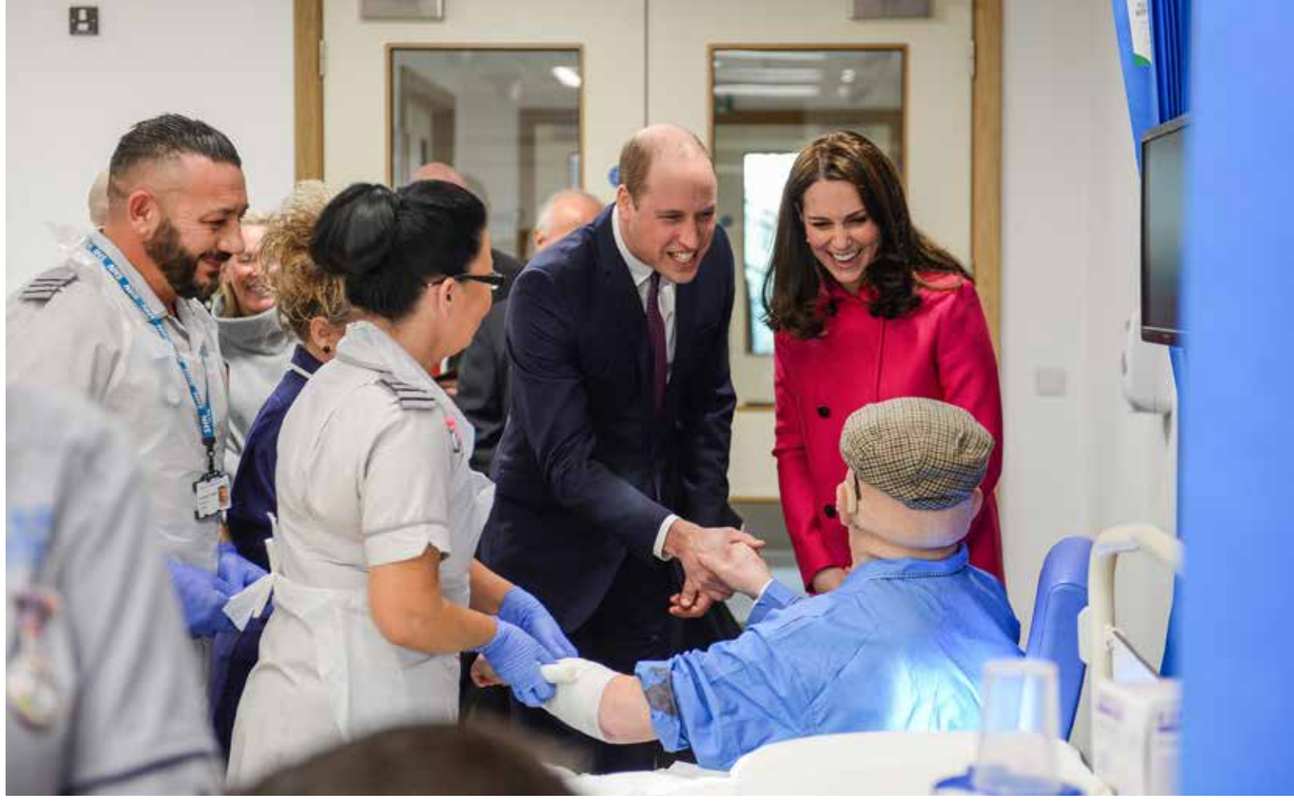
Coventry University provided its staff - including cleaners, facilities managers, security, catering, and technicians - to help support the training activities. Some academic staff were also on hand to offer support with the training sessions, which were led by Clinical Education Fellows from Warwick Hospital.

The university has had to shut its Coventry campus buildings and move teaching and learning online but is offering to open the Alison Gingell building to other NHS partners if they need to use it for essential staff training purposes. The building is the only facility of its kind where students learn to care for a patient at every stage of their healthcare experience, from paramedics arriving at their house and their subsequent ambulance journey, to their stay in hospital, through to their discharge and rehabilitation at home.

It was officially opened in January 2018 by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

“We are delighted to support SWFT, one of our key practice partners, by reopening the Alison Gingell building for the training of staff who are taking up new clinical roles. We are providing access to our space, simulation equipment and teaching resources where needed. The large building will enable social distancing to be maintained, in line with the Government’s guidance. We are very keen to support SWFT in as many ways as possible. We work incredibly closely together to develop and prepare large numbers of health care students, many of whom have clinical placements within SWFT.”

Professor John Latham CBE,
Coventry University Vice-Chancellor



> “We are very proud of our final-year medical students stepping up to take on a new role on the wards, providing valuable assistance to the nursing and medical teams. Starting such a role during a pandemic is undoubtedly daunting, but their commitment to supporting the NHS at such an unpredictable time has been inspirational.”

Dr. Hannah Webber
Clinical Education Fellow at Warwick Hospital

West Midlands Combined Universities

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