



JUNE/JULY



BUZZ

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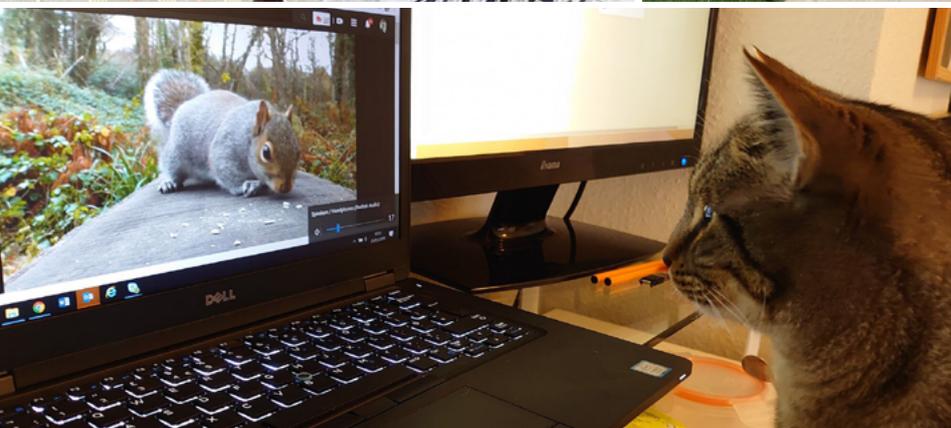


INSIDE

*Combating
COVID-19*

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

COLOUR
IN WITH
BRUMHAUS
AND
DAVE DRAWS



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Vice-Chancellor's view



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Eastwood

In place of his usual column, the Vice-Chancellor has filmed a socially distanced video tour of some key campus locations, and he spoke with a few of the staff working hard to keep campus running and safe during restricted operations, as well as those leading key research at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19.

Like us, we are sure you will welcome the opportunity to revisit our beautiful campus, albeit virtually, and hear first-hand just some of the activity that has continued during restricted operations. To view the video, please visit:

youtu.be/b6-4is8qNKM



YOUR BUZZ

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Front cover images:
UoB staff during the coronavirus pandemic

Phased campus reopening

We know that many of you are keen to return to campus as soon as you can.

In order to ensure the safety of our staff and students, it is necessary for us to begin opening the campus gradually from 1 June and continue to follow government guidance on safe working and social distancing. We are doing it this way to:

- Ensure the safety of our staff and students
- Enable critical research to continue
- Support our students' education

Those permitted to return to campus from 1 June will be contacted by their line manager and will receive a special pass to allow them onto campus. It is critical that only those who are permitted return to campus, otherwise the safety of our staff and our community will be put at risk. Staff must wear their ID badges at all times.

We have put in place a range of measures to ensure your safety, including one-way systems where appropriate and keeping seating two metres apart. It's really important

that you follow the guidance and observe the directions on social distancing. Only come on to campus if you are feeling well. If you have any of the following symptoms you should get tested and you must stay at home and self-isolate if the test is positive.

- High temperature
- New, continuous cough
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

For staff who will continue to work from home, we understand that you may be disappointed that you're not returning to campus as soon as you'd hoped.

The safety of our staff, students and community is our number one priority, so we need you to stay at home for a while longer while we make sure that it is safe for your return.

We understand that you may have found this period difficult and perhaps you've felt that you've not been as productive as usual, balancing work with many other commitments or coping with isolation.

You know what? That's OKAY. You should take pride in what you've achieved during this period. What started as a temporary fix may not be a longer-term solution. We will be providing some practical advice on guidance very soon to help you achieve your best whilst working from home.

For now, thank you for bearing with us while we ensure that it is safe for your return. **Stay Safe!** We look forward to seeing you again when the time is right.

For further information, please visit:
intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/coronavirus/index.aspx



Combating COVID-19

As the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic gripped the world, most staff and students returned home to work and study remotely. Some staff remained on campus to ensure that essential operations continue and to support those on the frontline fighting the virus.

On these pages we share just some of the ways in which Birmingham has responded as part of the global effort to combat COVID-19.



SUPPORTING FRONTLINE SOCIAL CARE STAFF

As the country-wide shortage of hand sanitiser became apparent, the scarcity of supplies left key workers short of this vital aid to help prevent the spread of the virus.

At the request of Public Health England (PHE), a team of technicians at our new Collaborative Teaching Laboratory came together to produce urgently needed hand sanitiser for Birmingham's social care workers.

The sanitiser, using supplies gathered from across campus and made to World Health Organization standards, was sent to Birmingham City Council's Council House to be decanted into individual bottles and distributed to frontline social care workers.



MAPPING THE VIRUS USING GENOMIC SEQUENCING

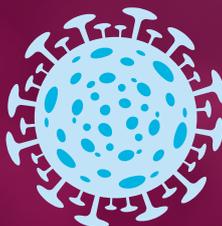
The University, led by Professor Nick Loman, has joined the COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium (COG-UK) – a £20 million investment to map how COVID-19 spreads and evolves using whole-genome sequencing.

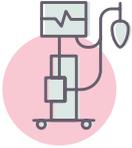
The consortium will deliver large-scale, rapid sequencing of the cause of the disease and share intelligence with hospitals, regional NHS centres and the government.

Samples from people with confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be sent to colleagues in our Institute of Microbiology and Infection who have deployed a real-time genome sequencing facility capable of sequencing genomes of the virus causing COVID-19 from patients in the West Midlands in less than 24 hours.

Professor Loman said: *'The government's investment is well-timed to accelerate the pace of viral genome sequence production and ensure this information is openly available to epidemiologists and virologists worldwide. This will provide an unprecedented real-time view of COVID-19 virus evolution.'*

Understanding viral evolution provides valuable epidemiological information, revealing the chains of transmission that must be stopped in order to stop this outbreak. It will also allow us to observe how the virus adapts to a human host over time, and how human interventions including drug treatments and eventually vaccines will exert pressure on the virus.





ENSURING TEAMS CAN ACCESS VITAL EQUIPMENT

We've all seen the news and the reported shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline healthcare workers. To help address the problem, medical device specialists have joined together to support the supply and deployment of vital medical equipment into the healthcare system.

Researchers from the Healthcare Technologies Institute are working with partners at Hugo Technology and MRA Technology to order new devices such as ventilators, infusion pumps, dialysis and critical care equipment that is fit for purpose and appropriate for use in treating COVID-19 patients.

The team is sourcing suitable suppliers and devices and checking devices are compliant, as well as commissioning, training, ensuring availability of replacement parts and potential ongoing maintenance. The work includes both domestic suppliers and imported equipment, striking a balance between fast access and due process to make sure vital equipment is supplied in a safe and reliable manner.

The team has already been at work verifying ventilators and infusion devices from suppliers across the world prior to their being installed in NHS hospitals and in the new NHS Nightingale Hospital set up in London's ExCel exhibition centre. Going forward, the plan is to help set in place systems and processes that are sufficiently robust to enable the NHS to respond to future emergencies.



IMPROVING COVID-19 ANTIBODY DIAGNOSIS

Experts from the University are working together on improving the detection of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies, which is the best way of fighting the disease while the worldwide search for a vaccine continues.

Colleagues at our Clinical Immunology Service are working with the Binding Site and Birmingham Health Partners to improve antibody diagnosis, which will help to identify patients where prompt medical intervention can prevent them having to go into intensive care. It will also play an important role in guiding the relaxation of the lockdown by identifying the proportion of communities at large that are now immune.

Professor David Adams, Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences and Director of Birmingham Health Partners said: *'Without vaccination, the role of antibody testing, as a means to assess community infection, is of paramount importance. By bringing together unrivalled academic, clinical and commercial expertise in antibody testing, this collaboration has the potential to deliver a reliable test to detect antibodies against coronavirus. If successful, this will be a game-changer in our fight against COVID-19.'*



UPSCALING TESTING ON CAMPUS

Labs at the University have been repurposed to support the testing of frontline NHS staff in the city, supporting University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) to upscale their testing capacity during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Enabling same-day testing for staff at UHB, the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) and Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital (BWCH), testing has been prioritised for staff in Birmingham who are showing symptoms or living with someone who is symptomatic.

Capacity within the University's labs means that there is the potential to process up to 10,000 tests per day. Leading the testing is Professor Andrew Beggs, from the Institute of Cancer and Genomic Sciences, who said: *'It is vital that we can get NHS staff tested and back to work. I'm really pleased we can utilise the equipment and the expert scientists at the University of Birmingham to increase testing capacity.'*





SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT'S TESTING FACILITIES

Professor Alan McNally is playing a significant part in the fight against COVID-19 as Infectious Disease Lead at one of the government's flagship COVID-19 testing facilities in Milton Keynes.

Launched on 9 April, the Milton Keynes Lighthouse Lab was the first of three government 'mega-labs' to be set-up across the UK, vastly increasing testing capacity and allowing tens of thousands more patient samples to be processed each day. The lab brings together automated lab testing technology from the National Biosample Centre, clinical trial expertise from the University of Oxford's Clinical Trial Service Unit (CTSU) and lab experience of some 70 volunteers from the worlds of academia and science.



PROTECTING WITH 3D PRINTED VISORS

Our researchers have shared their expertise to make face visors for use by frontline medical staff in Birmingham Children's Hospital.

A makeshift manufacturing team, comprised of students and staff led by Dr Sophie Cox, Dr David Bassett and Dr Thomas Mills from the School of Chemical Engineering have assembled a total of 30 3D printers which will allow them to produce around a hundred masks per day.

Dr Sophie Cox, from the Healthcare Technologies Institute, says: *'We're joining a growing community of 3D printing users around the UK who are able to make use of these designs to manufacture a product that can be used widely by our frontline NHS colleagues.'*

Dr David Bassett adds: *'Rapid prototyping offers us a route to respond directly and quickly to the shortage of PPE needed for frontline workers in the NHS and beyond. Ramping up manufacture and distribution by traditional routes takes time and these face shields will provide much needed supplementary protection for frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19 in the interim.'*



TRACKING VULNERABLE CANCER PATIENTS WITH COVID-19

The world's first coronavirus registry, to track how cancer patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 will be impacted, has been established by a team of oncologists from the Universities of Birmingham, Oxford and Leeds.

The UK Coronavirus Cancer Monitoring Scheme will pioneer clinician-led reporting to track cancer patients and inform treatment pathways with the aim of safeguarding patients.

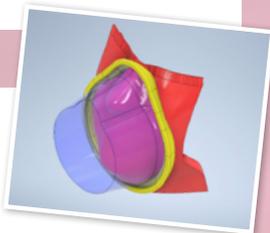
Led by Dr Lennard Lee, the scheme will relay real-time daily updates back to individual cancer centres, providing valuable insights to inform key decision makers on who is most at risk. Crucially, it will enable national monitoring of the impact of COVID-19 on cancer patients and cancer centres.



IMPROVING THE FIT OF FACE MASKS

Scientists at the Healthcare Technologies Institute (Dr Sophie Cox, Professor Liam Grover, Luke Carter, Morgan Lowther and Dan Wilmot) are working with King's College London to improve the seal and fit of facemasks used in hospitals during the COVID-19 crisis.

Abrasion and bruising of facial tissue has caused issues for healthcare professionals, but this new collaborative project is exploring the feasibility of providing person-specific reusable, medical-grade silicone seals to fit with the generic facemasks currently used in the NHS and reduce exposure.





AN INNOVATIVE PROTECTIVE POP-UP TENT

An innovative, disposable pop-up tent, which creates a protective barrier between patients and healthcare professionals has been designed by experts at the University.

Staff in the Colleges of Medical and Dental Sciences and Engineering and Physical Sciences, under the lead of Matthew Campbell-Hill, have designed the Disposable Resuscitation, Intubation and Nebulisation Kit Shield (DRs INK Shield) – a compact device designed to cover the patient’s head, neck and shoulder area while treatments for COVID-19 are administered.

The shield can be assembled in seconds and features self-closing access points, protecting medical staff from airborne droplets that may put them at risk of contracting the virus while allowing them line-of-sight access to the patient’s airways to perform life-saving procedures such as inserting or removing breathing tubes.



STUDENTS SEEK SOLUTIONS VIA GLOBAL ONLINE HACKATHON

Our students coordinated a huge global initiative in which participants around the world worked around the clock to combat issues created by the coronavirus pandemic.

Will Russell, who is studying Computer Science in the University’s College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, helped to lead the global online ‘hackathon’ called Hack Quarantine alongside other students – Tom Goodman (Computer Science) and Avery Cunningham (Metallurgy and Materials) – with over 2,500 technologists and scientists across five continents taking part.

Will, who is in his second year of his undergraduate degree, explained: *‘The hackathon is an invention marathon where participants can work with people around the globe to build a project related to technology.’*

‘It isn’t about hacking into a system, it’s instead about hacking something together and learning a great deal in the process.’

‘By working with medical professionals and industry, we’re providing knowledge and tools to empower hackers to work towards improving health, remote working and helping vulnerable populations.’



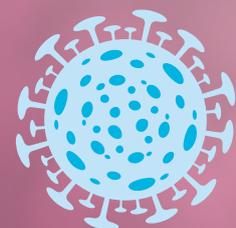
SUPPORTING PEOPLE RETURNING TO CLINICAL ROLES

To support those returning to the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic, the SCRIPT e-learning programme has been rolled out for free across the NHS to support those returning to clinical roles.

SCRIPT was developed by experts at the University to improve therapeutics knowledge for newly qualified doctors and other healthcare professionals.

The platform offers individual portfolios for Foundation trainee doctors and dentists, paediatric specialist trainees, GPs, nurses and non-medical prescribers. The programmes comprise a number of modules tailored to each discipline, and the roll-out now includes a new module to provide an overview of COVID-19 and its management outside of the critical care environment as well as a portfolio of modules made available to the Ambulance Services.

Dr Sarah Pontefract, Programme Director for SCRIPT said: *‘In the unprecedented situation we are experiencing currently, it is vital that healthcare professionals at all stages of their career, including those returning to the frontline, feel adequately prepared in whatever role they are taking on in fighting this disease.’*



CATERING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Our Catering team has been supporting the most vulnerable in our community by delivering supplies to local organisations in need.

Rory Shannon and his team at the Vale and Pam Foley have been coordinating the delivery of donations as part of a great team effort to:

- Queen Elizabeth Hospital for NHS staff
- Crispin Care Dementia Home for staff and residents
- House of Bread Stafford (Homeless Charity)
- Let's Feed Brum
- Charford First School
- Newstart
- Northfield Partnership helping the vulnerable and elderly
- Selly Oak Community Response to COVID-19 (a student-organised group, providing a food bank for students and residents in Selly Oak)



Charford First School



Newstart Charity emergency food bank



Let's Feed Brum nightly food and drink drops

OUR NURSING STAFF AND STUDENTS SUPPORTING THE FRONTLINE

Colleagues and students from across the School of Nursing have been supporting the NHS and their communities in a number of ways. A large number of our third-year BNurs students have put themselves forward to undertake 'extended placements'. This means that they will be situated in partner NHS Trusts, including University Hospitals Birmingham, Birmingham Women's and Children's, and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust. The students will be working in frontline services providing direct care to patients across the locality and have said that their presence is a welcome one, with one student commenting: *'The staff have come together as a family to look out for one another'*.

Several colleagues have had their inductions at NHS Nightingale Birmingham in preparation for volunteering while Ronnie Meechan-Rogers, Linda McGrath, Professor Annie Topping and Louise Beesley have been helping NHS clinical education teams to develop skills for staff for going into the new hospital.

Jane Nicol has been supporting a Worcestershire community in-patient unit, Lorna Hollowood has been supporting a clinical education team at Hereford Hospital and Dr Amelia Swift has been supporting NHS colleagues within the Intensive Care Unit at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham.



COMMUNITY RESPONSE

MAKING EAR SAVERS FOR THE FRONT LINE

Our colleague Clare Wallace has created over 2,400 'ear savers', which are knitted pieces of material with two buttons for frontline workers to hook the elastic hooks of face masks on during their shift. Clare was inspired after her step-daughter, who is a senior midwife, was in pain after wearing the facemasks for 12 hours at a time.

After creating her first batch of ten, Clare found her skills in high demand as she was asked to create more for a local hospital. Clare even featured on a local radio station, which led to people volunteering their time or donating materials and buttons so Clare could create more.

Colleagues at the University have supported Clare by knitting and donating buttons.

GREEN HEART RUNNERS

The Green Heart Runners, led by Robbie Roberts, Deputy Director of Operations in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences, and Jess Harrington, Business Improvement Manager in External Relations, is a running club aimed at University staff and runners in the surrounding area.

On Sunday 19 April they were due to be running their first team event in Sutton Park. This was, of course, cancelled due to the current restrictions, so instead, they decided to run their own virtual race to raise money for B30 Foodbank in Northfield, on the same day.

In total 24 runners, four children, one dog and one Police Community Support Officer (on patrol!) ran or walked a total of 230kms, raising over £3,500 for the B30 Foodbank.





NURSERIES KEEP CARING

Childcare for key worker families has continued on campus, with all three University nurseries combining forces at The Elms Day Nursery Hub. Staff are working on a four-week rota to provide continuity of care, and to support social distancing.

The nursery children have been busy indoors and outside, from planting seeds to creating a scary dragon to battle for St George's Day. Families at home are also being supported with suggestions for fun, creative learning activities and regular updates.

Childcare Services Manager Paula Hunt is proud of how the staff teams have pulled together. *'We all miss seeing the children, their families and our own colleagues, so it's wonderful to be able to keep in touch online. A huge thank you goes to our staff who are working through this crisis – and, of course, to the key worker families we're supporting.'*

daynurseries.bham.ac.uk

OUR MEDICAL STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

Our medical students have set up a number of volunteering groups to support hospital trusts in the West Midlands and frontline NHS staff. Already, more than 1,400 students have signed up and over 1,000 students have been placed in hospitals carrying out varied roles supporting the hospitals to run as smoothly as possible.



Another group of the University's medical students are using their skills to support the fight against COVID-19 by training as NHS 111 call handlers with the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS). The frontline triage role will see students answering calls from the general public where, they will assess symptoms, offer health advice and refer patients to out-of-hours GPs or other relevant treatment centres using detailed computer systems to support their decision-making. Depending on the severity of the call, they will also be able to recommend an ambulance is dispatched to the patient. After completing a number of weeks under supervision, the call assessors may have the opportunity to extend their training to enable them to handle 999 calls.



HOTEL BEDS FOR KEY WORKERS

Edgbaston Park Hotel and Conference Centre has been providing NHS staff and other key workers a place to stay since 19 March 2020. Located just a short stroll from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, it's the ideal location for essential workers, limiting the additional risks of travel and protecting vulnerable loved ones.

The hotel has around 40 key workers staying every night. Hot and cold room service is available to support social distancing and work around shift patterns, and a takeaway breakfast is provided every morning. The hotel has added a screen in reception, additional hand sanitisers in public areas, and extra deep-cleaning. Most guests are NHS staff; other key workers include contractors from a local hospital site.

'As a hotel, our priority is always to give guests an excellent experience,' said General Manager Richard Metcalfe. *'Knowing who we're looking after, that now seems more important than ever.'*

edgbastonparkhotel.com



PPE COLLECTION AND DONATION

Among our activities, we are co-ordinating the collection of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to donate to the NHS. Members of our Estates team who are still working on campus have been collecting PPE from buildings across campus for Queen Elizabeth Hospital and other local NHS trusts, Birmingham City Council and a number of care homes across the city.

We have also received donations from University of Birmingham partners across China, who have sent protective equipment that medical and care staff in the West Midlands can use in the ongoing battle against coronavirus. Eight partner institutions have pledged over 105,000 items of PPE. The first shipment of 2,000 particulate filter respirators, 10,000 surgical masks, 20,000 examination gloves and 500 protective coveralls has arrived at Queen Elizabeth Hospital from Sun Yat-sen First Affiliated Hospital, Guangzhou.



Your isolation stories

We asked colleagues from across UoB three questions to sum up their time during restricted campus operations:

1

What has been your greatest achievement during lockdown?

2

What are you missing most about campus?

3

What will be the first thing you do when you're back on campus?

Lorraine Gayten, Director of Operations (CoSS)

1 I have taken a giant step towards overcoming my hoarding tendencies. I have cleared the loft of 26 years of 'treasure' and much of it has gone into a skip. I am amazed that we ever thought that two coffee tables, endless toys and a bunk bed frame would ever have another use – and why did we keep every piece of nursery, school, college and university work ever created by the kids? Some great memories and the neighbours don't know that the rainbows in our window were painted 20 years ago.



Cathie Dingwall, Deputy Head of Service Management, IT Services

1 *Work-wise* – managing the Service Management Operational Team virtually and making sure they are all happy and safe. *Personally* – seeing myself on screen for hours has been a tad challenging to my ego and led me in desperation to a home hair dye and cut, definitely my greatest achievement.

2 I have been WFH since 9 March and I really miss my colleagues, I think many of my IT colleagues would be surprised to hear that as I am not naturally a people person. I love the We Are UoB animals which have kept me sane and happy, however, liking a doggy photo and I find myself writing this!

3 Firstly I shall rationalise my office, I have realised all I need is a laptop (*see photo of home office*). Then I shall take a walk across the beautiful campus and remind myself how lucky I am to work at the University of Birmingham.



2 Very little can beat a walk through the campus on a sunny day but I probably most miss my colleagues and although we are getting the hang of virtual meetings, you cannot replace putting your head around a door to share a thought, an idea or an occasional rant.

3 If the sports centre is open it will be a swim, followed by a spin class and then a piece of fruit toast from Starbucks.

Cathy Cassell, Dean of Birmingham Business School

1 I don't think I have had too many achievements though I have been making some very nice cakes. I have had plans to achieve other things, but I think just keeping the family together and on track during lockdown has been a challenge enough.

2 What I miss most about the campus is my colleagues and all the chatting in the kitchen and on the corridors. I miss the discussions about what's on the tele, the usual football chat, talking about weekend exploits and just catching up generally about work.

3 I love our Business School building – University House – so the first thing I'll do when I am back is to try to catch up with everyone. It will no doubt involve hanging around the corridors and making lots of tea.



Your isolation stories continued...

Andy Tootell, Web Content Officer, External Relations

- 1 I'm not sure I can boast about any great achievements, but I have managed to repot and revive some miserable-looking cactuses that have been staring at me mournfully from the kitchen windowsill for months now. Some kind of recognition – a knighthood, maybe – is surely on the cards.
- 2 My nearest and dearest colleagues! I walk to Tesco Express every day to grab some lunch (and then onto Starbucks, which I'm usually unable to resist) where we spend 20 minutes chatting, laughing and generally putting the world to rights. I've missed that.



- 3 Wrestle my computer monitor from the boot of my car to the office, then anti-bac everything. Pause for a coffee... then anti-bac everything again.

Dolly Chakraborty, Marketing and Communications Assistant, School of Engineering

- 1 As the days began to feel like they merged into one, it made me realise just how important a good start to the day is. I started doing home workouts from YouTube each working day. They not only lift your spirits but keep you motivated and energised throughout the day.
- 2 Taking endless photos of Old Joe in all seasons; the beautiful campus itself; working in an office environment with a lovely team; going for a lunchtime classical concert at the Barber Institute; visiting Winterbourne Gardens on a sunny day with a picnic are just some of the things I miss.
- 3 Go for a lunchtime walk around the Green Heart with friends, getting our daily steps in and catching up on how life 'was' during the lockdown. In addition to this, arrange a BIG catch-up with friends and colleagues from External Relations at Bratby Bar on the first Friday back.



Duncan Maggs, Student Attendance Team Administrator, College of Arts and Law

- 1 Keeping to a routine of rising relatively early each morning even though I no longer travel to work. So I am online and on time for the 'huddle' – the daily half hour team video call where my SAT colleagues and I connect and which is a great help in staying focused during the working from home day.
- 2 When I arrive by bus and enter via North Gate I often pause and take in the vista that has opened up since the creation of the Green Heart with Old Joe and the red-brick buildings in the distance before walking down into the heart of the University.
- 3 I expect I will stop just that little bit longer to take in the view of the campus I described above as I walk down past the Library to the Law Building and greet my colleagues in the SAT office I have not seen in person for a while, before making the first cup of tea of the day.



Penelope Barber, Head of Operations, School of Mathematics

- 1 Minimising spouse's food shopping trips. This meant policy negotiation followed by intensive training and supervision (on-going) to implement having a weekly menu plan that precipitates a shopping list. Much emotional support needed for just the very concept.
- 2 Day-to-day greetings and conversations with colleagues and students. It's all very formal and limited by appointment and in 2D.
- 3 Enjoy the luxury of TWO big computer screens and decent desk space. So I'll find some nice big complicated spreadsheets to look at, or maybe building plans.

Matt Clulee, Events Manager, College of Arts and Law

- 1 Excepting the obvious ones that many will share – finding ways to remain productive and sane – beyond work I have also achieved Level 12 so far in 'Elder Scrolls: Oblivion'. I recommend it for immersion into a completely different world, or just killing things with a big axe...
- 2 The people, without doubt – the chat in our office, the buzz on campus with staff and students, and the option of a post-work pint or two in the Bratby.
- 3 A slow walk from the train station to the Arts Building, and breathe in and appreciate it. Old Joe and the Green Heart will be a very welcome sight. I may even treat myself to a bacon and sausage bap from the Spar!





Ellie Westwood, Digital Channel Manager, External Relations

- 1** I would say my greatest achievement during lockdown has been managing relationships with colleagues. In so many ways, the way we work has changed but I have really tried to focus on the positives that have come out of this, with this being one of them. I have certainly had a lot more meetings than usual but these are often shorter and more frequent allowing me to track the progress of projects more easily and build and maintain even stronger relationships with people that I work with across the University. In most cases, I see people more often than I did before (albeit virtually)!
- 2** The thing I miss most about campus is being able to pop out for a walk and appreciate where we work! I used to grumble when it took me longer to walk across campus because it was so busy with students... I don't think I will take that for granted again but will instead enjoy the hustle and bustle of campus!
- 3** If it's nice and sunny I will be grabbing some lunch and eating it al fresco on the Green Heart!

Sarah Jeffery, Centre Manager, City-REDI, Birmingham Business School

- 1** Getting through it! It's such a worrying time, and the prospect of my husband and I both working from home whilst also keeping our three-year-old daughter/co-worker entertained was somewhat daunting, but we're doing our best, staying safe, taking small wins where we can, one day at a time.
- 2** Seeing my City-REDI colleagues and other familiar faces from across the campus in person, and the general buzz of campus life. Oh, and uninterrupted toilet trips...

Louise Bagley, Institute Administrator, MDS

- 1** I have a few great achievements: Learning new technologies on the fly. I'd never even heard of Zoom before all this happened. Doing PE with Joe Wicks every weekday and sticking to it even when he has us doing two minutes of squats, as though it's a treat... I just don't have the energy of a ten-year-old! Making sure Momma Duck and her babies (see pic) were able to leave our garden and head to the brook and pond nearby. She knew exactly where she needed to exit and even looked in at me in the lounge as if to say, 'well come on then, open up the gate'. If it happens again next year we might need to put a duck flap in.



- 2** People, need I say more! Making the most of the green space which I've not fully explored since it's been finished. Oh and cheesy chips and beans for lunch at The Bratby!
- 3** Go and say hello to colleagues and friends in the Medical School... face-to-face! That will be so nice, Zoom and Skype are OK, but it just isn't the same.

Nicki Collins, Academic Support Administrator, Main Library

- 1** I have finished and submitted my Masters dissertation two weeks early. I have been studying part-time, online for a Masters since 2018, so it's a relief to get it finished. I get the result on 15 May. Once I get the result, I'd really like to be the next Lucy Worsley – fingers crossed.
- 2** I'm missing the green spaces to walk around at lunchtimes, and also missing Café Aroma, as it's a great place to meet up with friends and colleagues during break times.



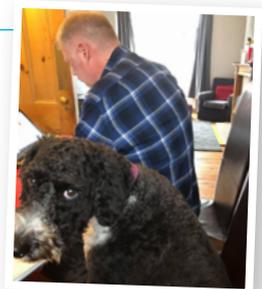
- 3** Probably go to the library café for my favourite decaf almond latte – sad I know, but I really miss having coffee made for me, and the staff in the library café are lovely!



- 3** Make a cup of tea and catch up with colleagues. A good cuppa really does make everything better (gin also helps, but tea does the job at work!). I'll then need to remember how to reconnect my laptop before settling down to work.

Liese Perrin, Research Development Manager, CAL

- 1** Managing to keep my dog from appearing in even more Skype meetings than she already has!
- 2** Being able to swivel round in the office and draw on the expertise of all my amazing colleagues immediately. And walking down the hill from the station first thing in the morning and seeing Old Joe.
- 3** I'm particularly looking forward to a coffee in Café Aroma with my fellow Research Development Managers – I really miss our weekly catch-ups.



Your isolation stories continued...

Francesca Ring, Assistant Operations Manager, School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion

- 1 I've found all the #challenges and achievements that people are sharing during lockdown to be a bit overwhelming sometimes and so I've deleted a couple of social media apps and started turning off my phone some evenings to switch off a bit. Having said that, let me share my achievements with you... in the early days of lockdown, when the sun was shining, I did dig out a dusty food processor and made my own guacamole, which I was incredibly proud of, I also realised by the end that the food processor wasn't entirely necessary. I've also learnt to make origami hearts, which is a good mindless activity when I'm looking for something to do.
- 2 I miss friends and colleagues on campus most. I miss being able to meet with people at lunch or catch up in the corridor after a meeting. The UoB Facebook Page has made me feel quite connected with campus and colleagues though, and I've found that I've learnt more about colleagues' lives than I ever would have if this situation hadn't arisen, which makes you think about how little we all knew about the people we spend a large proportion of our lives with.
- 3 I think I'm going to find it quite tiring and I'll be wondering how on earth I used to manage five days a week on campus and my commute without wanting a nap in the afternoon! The first thing will definitely be an in-person meeting with all my colleagues, who'd have thought we'd be so desperate for meetings!



Emma Lardner, Operations Officer, School of Chemical Engineering

- 1 I've spent a lot of time gardening during lockdown. I've cut down small trees, weeded the flower beds and planted marigolds, several herbs and most importantly mint (If I achieve anything during this time, I'd like it to be a fresh mojito).
- 2 I'm missing the Green Heart the most. In summer, my colleagues and I like to visit Staff House on Fridays after work and sit in the Green Heart catching up. Our work lives are so busy that it's the only time we get to sit, relax and have proper conversations!
- 3 When I return to campus, I can't wait to get back to the gym – I usually go to the gym at lunchtime, which gives me a chance to get away from my desk and increases my afternoon productivity (and decreases the need to consume more coffee!!).

Katy Caves, Executive Support Manager, Strategic Change

- 1 My husband is still able to work, so I'm home alone with our two children all day! Giving myself a break has been my greatest achievement. Realising that there is only so much I can do working from home and supporting their learning has helped me manage my own expectations. I've also done some baking, and I'm growing various vegetables (inspired by colleagues on We Are UoB).
- 2 My colleagues, cheesy, but true! I'm really lucky as my job means I work with lots of colleagues across campus, and I love meeting new people. I also really miss campus itself – especially at this time of year when it looks so beautiful.
- 3 Hug everyone I meet – you have been warned!



Paul O'Rourke, Change Manager, Strategic Change

- 1 I absolutely believe that embracing the slower pace of life during my solo lockdown has been a real achievement for me. I have relished in building and enjoying my vinyl collection, scrapbooking live music memories, and crafting things to send to family and friends to keep their spirits up.
- 2 My favourite part of my day is stepping onto the train platform and the walk to our office in Aston Webb. I will almost always bump into someone from a current or previous Strategic Change project for a catch-up. Of course, Old Joe is always in the backdrop. I enjoy observing the seasonal changes on campus on that walk and picking up my essential caffeine fix from the Bramall team who always remember your order.



- 3 I'm currently working with the IT Services team who have been brilliant in supporting teaching, research and Professional Services teams during restricted campus operations. Whilst the IT team kindly invited me along to their 2D online version, 'The Flatby', I am, of course, also looking forward to frequenting The Bratby for some much needed 3D pay-day drinks and post lockdown therapy.



Alison Davies, Projects Advisor, HEFi

1 I founded 'Bourn-running' nearly three years ago (based at Rowheath Pavilion, Bournville) and coach groups of runners from beginner to experienced. I wanted to continue providing the community with the opportunity to try Couch to 5k during the summer months, so I have created simple resources online at pavilionchurch.org.uk/Groups/299317/Bourn_Running.aspx

2 I'm missing my colleagues in HEFi and working in our office in the Old Gym!

3 I suspect one of the first things I will be doing when I return is to catch-up properly with everyone – I suspect most of us will have ideas of how to celebrate our return to work in person!

Ronnie Baglin, Lab Technician, School of Chemical Engineering

1 While being home, as I am a hands-on Lab Technician in Chemical Engineering and being unable to virtually work, I was able to volunteer to come back on campus and make hand sanitiser in CTL with other Technicians. I've also been able to run each morning and volunteer to help in the community and I've found the time to clear my house of stuff I have collected over 36 years and redecorate.

2 Sadly, being off campus makes you realise what a real family situation we all work in. How much we all miss our work, our fellow colleagues and structure of our daily lives. The amazing Facebook page has been fantastic, the support given by everyone and seeing people's talents is wonderful.

3 I will certainly take an hour to walk around campus and take in all the things that not just myself but I am sure many of us take for granted. To walk around and see how much progress has been made in the time I have worked here, to value the beautiful scenery, the beauty of all the buildings. And to stop and have a nice outdoor cup of coffee.

Paul Bowman, Executive Officer, Executive Office



1 Creating an eight-stage obstacle course in the garden (my PB is 1 minute, 5.6 seconds).

2 Spontaneous interactions. I miss bumping into colleagues in the corridor, saying hello as I walk past someone's office, and having a quick chat before or after a meeting.

3 Check that I haven't left anything mouldering in the fridge. (Fingers crossed).

Michelle Burgess, Office Manager, Birmingham Clinical Trials Unit

1 My greatest achievement during lockdown is getting back into running. Having had chest/lung problems, I hadn't run since September 2019 (it didn't help that I was also at my heaviest!). Having lost over a stone with the help of WW, I'm enjoying my morning run come rain or shine.

2 Gosh, I miss my BCTU colleagues so very much! The unit is such a lovely place to work and I've been there over ten years now and colleagues are my friends.

3 When back on campus I'm eager to save my plants, but as there is little hope of that I'll enjoy buying some new ones for my little corner of our office.



Hannah Twist, Brand Manager, Communications and Reputation

1 Making a vegan katsu curry that tastes as good as the Wagamama one.

2 Meeting friends for lunchtime strolls.

3 Putting the dates of the farmer's market in my diary when that's up and running again. Love the wood-fired pizza.

Pets of UoB



Hasan's cat Josie is taking self-isolating slightly seriously these days!

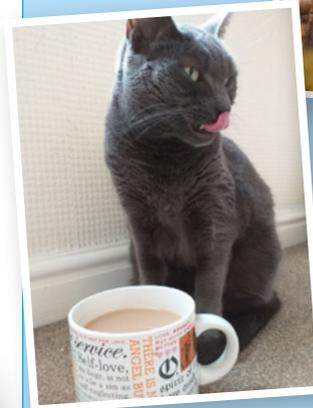


Lucy's dog Frank has been hard at work barking at the intruders during virtual meetings.

Harrie's resident pheasant, Mr P likes to check back and keep an eye on her.



Working from home is thirsty work for Danielle's cat Madin.



Darren's co-worker Gomez is great at spreadsheets.



This isn't the first time Amanda has found her lab mates, Slinky and Jasper sleeping on the job.



Sophie's office dog Marcel is taking his new role very seriously.





CAMPUS CURIOSITIES

What is it?

Faience bowl, ancient Egyptian, Eton Myers Collection of Egyptology

Where is it?

Orchard Learning Resource Centre (Selly Oak campus)

Many objects within the Eton Myers Collection of Egyptology are made from Egyptian faience, a glazed ceramic material with a distinctive blue-green colour. Faience was composed of crushed quartz or silica (sand), natron or plant ash, copper and lime. This beautiful colour was described by the Egyptians as *tjehenet*, meaning 'gleaming' or 'dazzling'; it was ideologically important and associated with themes of rebirth and fertility, and thus widely used. There is evidence of its use in ancient Egypt from as early as the Predynastic Period (around 3000BC) onwards, an indication of its enduring popularity.

Many high-quality examples from the Collection demonstrate the ancient craftsman's skill. However, a small portion of faience bowls such as this one illustrate what could go wrong during production. Dated to the Roman Period (c. 30BC–395AD), this bowl would have been fired in a kiln at high temperatures to create a 'gleaming' surface. Several production errors include the breaks around the bowl's rim, the remains of supports used during firing which are stuck to the bowl's base, and a distinctive pool of overfired glaze inside the bowl. It seems that during firing, not only were items placed too closely together, but this bowl fell and was thus fired at an uneven angle.

Find out more

You can search the Eton Myers Collection of Egyptology via the online catalogue: mimsy.bham.ac.uk

You can also find out more about faience objects and production from the collection via the virtual exhibition 'Objects Come to Life' on the Birmingham Egyptology website: birminghamegyptology.co.uk

Chancellor's column

We are going through the most challenging time globally, not just in our lifetime, but since the Second World War and possibly the worst economic crisis in 300 years. We will have feelings of dislocation, anxiety, uncertainty, ambiguity and pressure.

Before writing this, I read what I wrote in *Buzz* just two months ago and how the world has changed beyond comprehension!

The test of leadership is not in the good times but in the tough times and I take my hat off to our Vice-Chancellor, and all of the University leadership team in stepping up to the mark and dealing with every aspect of this crisis, ensuring the welfare of our entire community, staff and students alike.

We have had to adapt in completing this academic year without being able to be present physically, in the midst of a global lockdown, and we are having to deal with planning, with the most uncertain outlook, for the coming academic year.

Globally, we are dealing with a health crisis which has led to a demand and supply shock. We are fortunate that our government, on the economic front has taken swift action with a £330 billion government loan guarantee scheme and tens of billions of pounds of support, including the Job Retention Scheme, rates relief and grants. The Bank of England similarly immediately reduced interest rates to the lowest level since 1694 when the bank was founded and immediately implemented £200 billion of Quantitative Easing. This crisis has affected everyone, with the domino effect reverberating throughout the supply chains and globally.

The University has played a key role, including through our best of the best medical school, in helping with the crisis, including in the crucial area of testing. Fortunately, the University is in a strong position financially – this has not only helped us to invest and grow superbly over the past years – so much of it visible throughout our campus, be it our new library, sports centre, or university school. However, being in this position is all the more important in a time of crisis such as this and we as a university are in a strong position to weather this storm.

Looking ahead, we are past the peak of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and beginning to, in a phased manner, restart the economy.

What we have avoided is setting up a false fight between health and wealth. We cannot rebuild the economy without prioritising health. We need to build confidence together and what we have seen working in this crisis is when there has been collaboration – a great example being the setting up of the first Nightingale hospital in East London – a 4,000-bed hospital operational nine days from scratch. This was only possible because of the collaborative efforts of the NHS, the local university, the armed forces including the Gurkhas and the private sector working together.

I give full credit to the government, from the time they have announced initiatives to help get us through this crisis, they have listened and iterated, filling in the gaps by introducing new measures constantly, including the 100% government-guaranteed bounce-back loans for small businesses.

Similarly, with testing, which is going to be key to getting the country back to work and building confidence in the public, we have only been able to ramp up testing to a target of 200,000 tests a day by the end of May because of the collaboration of our world-class universities, pharmaceutical companies, research institutions, laboratories, the NHS and the armed forces.

Looking ahead, we have to restart the economy, have a revival of the economy and have a renewal of the economy, and we have to build back better!

In the three times that I have nearly lost my business, *Cobra Beer*, three things have helped me get through the crises – having a strong brand, the support of my loyal team and family, and always behaving with integrity – the University has all three of these in spades!

Lord Bilimoria is the founder and chairman of Cobra Beer, Chancellor of the University of Birmingham and the founding Chairman of the UK-India Business Council.





Why I wrote a novel about mental health

Unexpectedly, in 2017 Jemma Mahadeo (Academic Services Project Officer and UoBe Festival Project Manager) started writing her first book, and *she's* more surprised about it than anyone.

Here, Jemma opens up about what led her to write a novel at that point in her life and explains how important it is to share *Billy's Brain and Other Liars* with the world.

A couple of years ago, shortly after having my second son, Charlie, I picked up a pen (actually it was my husband Rishi's laptop much to his annoyance) and I started to write. I didn't exactly know what I was writing but it felt strangely cathartic, as if years of jumbled up thoughts I couldn't always articulate, were finally getting sorted. Rishi came into the living room one evening, after noticing my sudden writing habit and said with a slight laugh, 'are you writing a book or something?' and I thought to myself in that moment, 'yeah, why not?' I never actually thought I'd write it, I certainly never thought I'd publish it, and that's why I didn't tell a soul what I was doing. Speaking of books, I've always been a bit of a closed one!

So, every night I carried on writing, because I felt like I had something important to say, and saying it, even just to myself at that stage, made me feel better.

Since publishing it, the most common question I get from my closest friends and family, once the shock and disbelief has worn off, is 'but where did it all come from?' and it's a question I've so far struggled to answer. So, I've been mulling it over, and I think, as with most things, it's not that easy to explain, but here goes.

Firstly, in 2016, my husband and I lost a really good friend. He was found in his living room at home in Derby. He'd taken his own life. He had suffered terribly with depression for the whole time we had known him, and we'd had many a conversation about how it made him feel day-to-day. Despite his illness, what I remember most about him was his eccentricity, his bonkers sense of humour and just how uniquely funny he was. His depression made him lie to himself, he thought nobody cared, that his son would be better off without him, that we all would. Total rubbish.

“Every night I carried on writing, because I felt like I had something important to say, and saying it, even just to myself at that stage, made me feel better.”

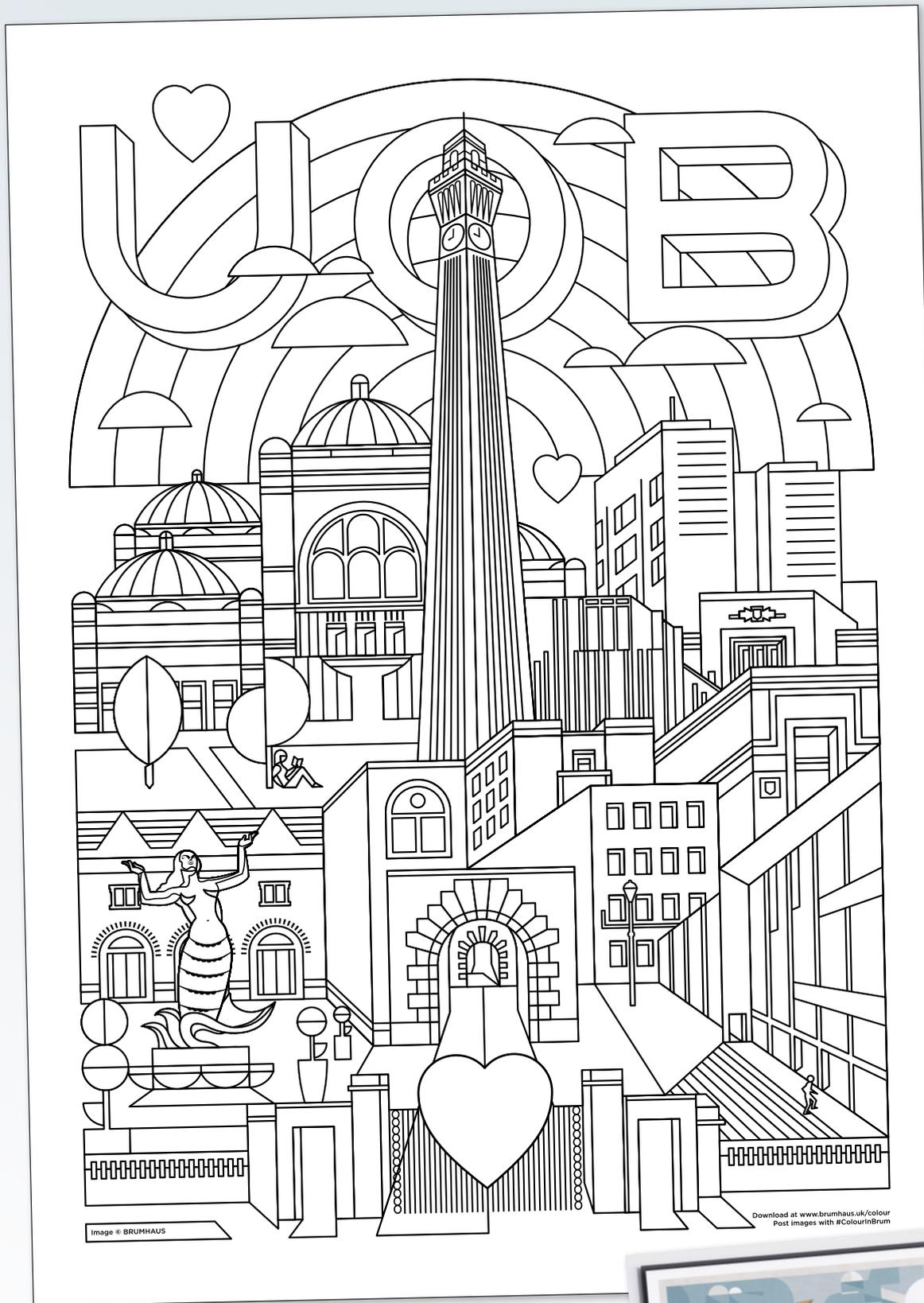
Secondly, in the last five years, I've given birth to two beautiful boys. Having kids changes your life in many crazy ways, and it also makes you worry about everything. I suddenly found myself worrying that if they ever had struggles, they might not open up to anyone because they're boys. Maybe I'd feel the same if they were girls, I really don't know, but as much as I want to protect them from everything, I can't, and that's a difficult thing to accept.

So, it's perhaps no surprise now that the main character in *Billy's Brain and Other Liars* is a teenage boy struggling with his mental health, but there are other characters with their own issues to resolve, and there's laughter and hope in abundance too. My hope is that readers enjoy it, that it moves them and that it makes them think beyond the final page.



If you fancy taking a look, *Billy's Brain and Other Liars* is available at Amazon.

BRUMHAUS DRAWS OUR HOUSE



Alex Edwards of *Brumhaus* has kindly redesigned his University of Birmingham campus drawing for us during the lockdown period. Why not have a go yourself, or with your children, at colouring in the campus and the colourful rainbow? Share your design on social media using the hashtag [#colourinbrum](#) Thank you, Alex!

You can find more of Alex's work on his website: www.brumhaus.uk including his latest work: *Gas Street Basin*.



Gas Street Basin ©

You can download the full A4 sheet at intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/brumhaus

