



Office for Life Sciences

Office for Life Sciences Bulletin – 27 March 2020



OLS Introduction

The Office for Life Sciences (OLS) is a joint unit between the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

This bulletin aims to keep the life sciences sector up to date on the latest guidance whilst the UK is in the transition period and during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, providing you with important information from Government to help your members and networks prepare.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list, please email anisha.visram@beis.gov.uk.

Future Relationship with the EU

The first meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee will be held on 30 March. For further information, please find the Written Ministerial Statement [here](#).

COVID-19 key contact details

For general offers of help from industry on COVID –19 preparations please contact gfcovid19enquiries@cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

To offer your support producing ventilators please contact the Business Support Helpline for England number on 0300 456 3565 or ventilator.support@beis.gov.uk.

If you have already offered to assist on the ventilators project but not received a reply, please contact existing.ventilators@dhsc.gov.uk.

Request for evidence – impact of Covid-19 on businesses

The Government is closely monitoring developments in relation to potential economic impacts on the UK economy and individual businesses and supply chain. BEIS is keen that businesses feedback any specific concerns.

BEIS welcomes information from you and your members on:

- The impacts across supply, demand and labour markets
- Actions being taken by firms to address these impacts
- Any gaps in the Government response from your perspective

Please send this information to intel@beis.gov.uk. Individual company information may be commercially sensitive and will be treated accordingly.

Request for assistance – raising awareness

If you would like to help the UK government reach businesses across the UK to urgently raise awareness of the new UK Government Coronavirus Business Support campaign, please find the new toolkit [here](#).

The toolkit includes content and messaging for you to share on your social media, websites, internal channels and newsletters to amplify campaign messages. The toolkit will help ensure all businesses have the best and most up to date information on the support that is available to them in a fast-moving situation.



Workforce

UPDATED – The definition of Key Workers includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in a critical sector and you cannot keep your child safe at home, then your children will be prioritised for education provision. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be. You can find more information [here](#).

ADVICE – Employers who have people in their offices or onsite should ensure that employees are able to follow Public Health England guidelines including, where possible, maintaining a 2 metre distance from others, and washing their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available).

The single most important action we can all take in fighting the coronavirus is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives. The government has introduced 3 new measures, please find further information [here](#).

1. Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes
2. Closing non-essential shops and community spaces
3. Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public

Gatherings of more than two people in public are permitted where the gathering is essential for work purposes - but workers should be trying to minimise all meetings and other gatherings in the workplace.

Travelling to and from work is permitted, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home.

These measures will last for three weeks from 23 March, at which point the Government will look at them again and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

Please find a list of frequently asked questions [here](#).

NEW – The Education and Skills Funding Agency is taking steps to ensure that, wherever possible, apprentices can continue and complete their apprenticeship and to support providers during this challenging time. [New guidance](#) has been published for apprentices, employers, training providers and assessment organisations.



Support to business

NEW - Advice for employers and employees on the Job Retention Scheme has been published. Under the scheme, all UK employers with a PAYE scheme that was created and started on or before 28 February 2020, will be able to access support to continue paying part of their employees' salary for those that would otherwise have been laid off during the COVID-19 crisis. Please find further information [here](#).

UPDATED – The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme is now open. The scheme supports SMEs with access to working capital of up to £5 million in value for up to 6 years. To apply, you should talk to your bank or one of the 40 accredited finance providers as soon as possible. The full rules of the scheme and the list of accredited lenders are available on the [British Business Bank website](#).

For further information on COVID-19 business support, including the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate, Time to Pay scheme and VAT deferral, please visit [this](#) page.

NEW – Specific information for businesses and employers in [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#), and [Wales](#) is available.

NEW – Companies House have announced that businesses will be given an [additional 3 months](#) to file accounts to help companies avoid penalties as they deal with the impacts of COVID-19. Full guidance on applying for an extension can be found [here](#).

UPDATED – Advice from the Department for International Trade for UK businesses that export or deliver goods and services abroad and have been impacted by the spread of COVID-19 can be found [here](#).

NEW – Enforcement of the gender pay gap reporting deadlines are suspended for this reporting year (2019/20) due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The decision means there will be no expectation on employers to report their data. Please find further information [here](#).

NEW – Commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of COVID-19 will be protected from eviction. Please find more information [here](#).

NEW – Under the new COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility, the Bank of England will buy short term debt from larger companies. All non-financial companies that meet the criteria set out on the [Bank of England's website](#) are eligible. The scheme is now available for applications. More information is available from the [Bank of England](#).

UPDATED – Information on the financial assistance scheme for employers unable to pay statutory redundancy payments can be found [here](#).

NEW – The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency have produced guidance for industry covering the COVID-19 outbreak, please find it [here](#).

NEW – HMRC have produced guidance on temporary changes to the use and supply of denatured alcohol and duty free spirits, to help businesses who produced hand sanitiser and gel. You can find it [here](#).

NEW – The Government has launched a Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp. The free to use service will provide official, trustworthy and timely information and advice. To use the free service, simply add 07860 064422 in your phone contacts and then message the word 'hi' in a WhatsApp message to get started. Further information can be found [here](#).



Useful Links

- [Gov.uk/transition](https://www.gov.uk/transition) provides a central hub of resources for the transition period
- You can sign up to email alerts about the transition period on GOV.UK at this [link](#).
- EU citizens and other interested stakeholders can sign up for Home Office email updates about developments on the status of EU citizens in the UK after we leave the EU and the next steps for EU citizens in the UK at this [link](#).
- Access the 'Check How to Export Goods' tool [here](#) for the information you need to export goods out of the UK market.
- Click [here](#) for more information and advice on exporting.
- Click [here](#) for updated information on the Covid-19 response from the Department for Health and Social Care and Public Health England.