



Office for Life Sciences

Office for Life Sciences Bulletin – 19 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 round of negotiations between the EU and UK began on 2 March. Given the latest COVID-19 developments, EU and UK negotiators have jointly decided not to hold face-to-face negotiations in London. Both sides are currently exploring alternative ways to continue discussions, including, if possible, the use of video conferences.

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.

The department 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 it will be treated accordingly.

NEW – BEIS is looking for organisations who can support in the supply of ventilators and ventilator components across the United Kingdom as part of the government's response to COVID-19. Please find further detail [here](#), and if your business can help please register your details [here](#).



Workforce

NEW – The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises British people against all non-essential travel worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented international border closures and other restrictions. Please continue to check FCO travel advice on Gov.uk for the latest updates. Please find further guidance [here](#).

NEW - New guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable people has been published. It advises on social distancing measures we should all be taking to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Employees should work from home, where possible avoid large gatherings and non-essential use of public transport. Please find further guidance [here](#).



Support to business

NEW - The government has recently launched a Business Support campaign bringing together in one place a range of government business support and advice. For more information, visit www.businesssupport.gov.uk.

Support announced by the Chancellor

On 17 March, the Chancellor announced [unprecedented support for business and workers](#) – to support the economy and businesses large and small. You can find his full speech [here](#).

The package of government-backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses makes available an initial £330bn of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of GDP. That support will be delivered through two main schemes:

- To support liquidity amongst larger firms, a new lending facility with the Governor of the Bank of England to provide low cost, commercial paper.
- To support lending to small and medium sized businesses, extending the new Business Interruption Loan Scheme announced at the Budget.

The Chancellor also announced tax cuts of nearly £20bn for British businesses.

UPDATED - Small Business Grant Scheme

The Government will provide additional funding for local authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no business rates.

- This funding will provide a one-off grant of £10,000 to businesses currently eligible for small business rate relief (SBBR) or rural rate relief.
- A £25,000 grant will be provided to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses operating from smaller premises, with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000.
- If your business is eligible for SBBR or rural rate relief, you will be contacted by your Local Authority – you do not need to apply.

UPDATED - Businesses should read and follow the online COVID-19 [guidance for employees, employers and businesses](#). If you have a query that isn't covered by this guidance you can contact the Business Support Helpline on: [0300 456 3565](tel:03004563565)

NEW - The Small Business Minister and Small Business Commissioner are calling on the UK's big businesses to speed up payments to their small business suppliers wherever they can to ease COVID-19 related cash flow issues. You can find more information [here](#).

NEW - Following last week's shift to the 'delay' phase of the COVID-19 action plan new and [updated industry guidance](#) has been published for specific sectors.

NEW – DHSC have issued guidance on the impact of COVID-19 on research funded or supported by NIHR. Please find the guidance [here](#).

NEW - Employers can join a free ACAS webinar 'Coronavirus – an advisory webinar for employers'. The webinar provides practical advice for employers to help manage the impact of coronavirus in the workplace. It includes:

- Steps that can help reduce the spread of the virus
- Effective ways of communicating with employees
- Self-isolating, time off, sickness certification and sick pay
- Altering working hours, shift patterns and working arrangements
- Remote working and the use of technology

Businesses can find out more and [register here](#).



Useful Links

- [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.