



Office for Life Sciences

Office for Life Sciences Bulletin – 1 May 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 information from Government to help your members and networks prepare.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list, please email

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EU Negotiations update

The first meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee was held on 30 April via video conference. This Committee has been tasked by the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee to start work on implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol. To see the UK post-meeting statement please click [here](#).



Events

NEW – Register to join a free webinar hosted by BEIS on financial support for small businesses during COVID-19. The webinar will be held at 11am on Tuesday 5 May and help small businesses find out how to access the COVID-19 business support measures. You will have the opportunity to ask questions during the webinar.

To register and find out more, please click [here](#).

NEW – “Managing your business during coronavirus: reporting, regulations and tax” webinar. Click [here](#) to register to join this webinar at 11am on Thursday 7 May and to find out more.

UPDATED – Government departments are hosting a series of free webinars to help businesses understand the support available including:

Wednesday 6 May – [COVID-19: Impacts and changes to International Trade](#)

Multiple dates – [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – How to make a claim](#)

Multiple dates – [Coronavirus COVID-19 Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme](#)



Regulations (Medical devices)

UPDATED – The European Parliament and Council have approved a [proposal](#) to delay the full implementation of the Medical Device Regulation 2017/745 (MDR) for one year to 26 May 2021. This means that the full applicability of the MDR will fall outside of the transition period agreed with the EU.

We anticipate that this delay will alleviate some of the pressure on healthcare systems, manufacturers and regulatory bodies whilst dealing with the urgent coronavirus pandemic.

We will provide guidance on this in due course. In the meantime, the existing regulatory requirements should continue to be met.



Workforce

NEW – Furloughed workers planning to take paid parental or adoption leave will be entitled to pay based on their usual earnings rather than a furloughed pay rate. Find out more [here](#).

NEW – View a recording of the HMRC Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme how to make a claim webinar [here](#).

NEW – Please find a news story on action taken to protect vital transport links for supplies and people [here](#).

UPDATED – Guidance for apprentices and employers about changes to apprenticeships due to COVID-19, including updated information on furloughed apprentices, end-point assessments, function skills apprentices and qualification certification. Please find more information [here](#).

UPDATED – Guidance for critical workers about schools and education during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found [here](#).

NEW – A new online learning platform to help boost the nations skills while people are staying at home has been launched. Free courses are available through The Skills Toolkit, giving people access to free, high-quality digital and numeracy courses to help build up their skills. Please find the toolkit [here](#) and more information [here](#).

NEW – Information pack for supporting employees during coronavirus on domestic abuse. The order to stay at home can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse. As an employer, you can play an important role in reassuring staff that they can still leave their home if they are experiencing domestic abuse and that there is still support available, including online support, helplines, refuges and the police. We encourage you to share this important message with staff using the information provided in the [Home Office's employer pack](#).



Support to business

UPDATED – All essential workers and members of their households who are showing symptoms of COVID-19 are now able to get tested. In addition, any worker who needs to leave home to travel and cannot work from home and is displaying symptoms can now get

tested. Please find further guidance [here](#), the list of essential workers [here](#) and the online system for booking tests [here](#). This applies to England only, [Wales](#), [Northern Ireland](#) and [Scotland](#) have their own criteria.

NEW – Temporary new measures are being introduced to safeguard the UK High Street against aggressive debt recovery actions during the coronavirus pandemic. Please find more information [here](#).

NEW – HM Treasury announces revision to the UK Debt Management Office's financing remit 2020-2021, to provide the critical support needed by individuals, families and businesses. Please find more information [here](#).

UPDATED – PPE export control guidance for UK businesses trading internationally has been updated with information on the PPE export control process. Please find more information [here](#). Further Information for economic operators who will temporarily need a licence to export PPE outside the EU, EFTA member states and certain other territories can be found [here](#). The three attachments on the page have been updated to reflect the revised EU regulations.

NEW – 100% government backed Bounce Back Loans Scheme for small businesses will allow businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000 and access the cash within days. Loans will be interest free for the first 12 months, and from Monday 4 May, businesses can apply online through a short and simple form. Please find further information [here](#).

NEW – Please see the Chancellor's 27 April update to the House of Commons on the Government's economic response to COVID-19 [here](#).

NEW – Please find the slides and datasets from the 27 April COVID-19 press conference [here](#) and the 28 April [here](#). The Prime Minister's [statement](#) and [slides](#) on coronavirus from 30 April are also available.

Find out how you can ask the government a question at the press conference [here](#).

UPDATED – Wages for furloughed employees are now being paid through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Payment takes 6 working days from when a claim is submitted. If you have not made a claim you can still claim online [here](#).

NEW – HM Treasury and HMRC have set out new timelines for tax policy consultations and other work in light of the COVID-19 crisis, please find more information [here](#).

NEW - COVID-19 treatments could be fast-tracked through a new national clinical trial initiative, accelerating the development of new drugs for patients hospitalised with COVID-19 and reducing the time taken to set up clinical studies for new therapies from months to weeks. Please find more information [here](#).

NEW – From 1 May 2020, PPE purchased by care homes, businesses, charities and individuals to protect against COVID-19 will be free from VAT for a three-month period. Find further information [here](#).

NEW – Safeguards for Great Britain-Northern Ireland air links Investment will protect air passenger flights for important routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Find out more [here](#).

Guidance from MHRA

UPDATED – MHRA have updated their guidance page on COVID-19 tests and testing kits with a new version of the specification and updated information about home testing kits and home sampling. Please find the guidance [here](#).

If a company thinks it meets our specification criteria for the design and delivery of tests, or if your test does not meet the specifications but looks promising, please consider submitting your proposal via the MHRA [portal](#).

If a company successfully navigates the survey portal but does not yet have a CE mark, they can [apply to the MHRA for a derogation](#).

UPDATED - The British Pharmacopoeia has been updated with important changes to ordering BP chemical reference substances. Please find more information [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.
- Click [here](#) for a list of Business Representative Organisations and Trade Associations you can speak with to get advice.
- Specific information for businesses and employers in [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#), and [Wales](#) is available. In England, [Growth Hubs](#) can advise on local and UK Government business support.
- COVID 19 key contact details:
 - General offers of help from industry: gcfccovid19enquiries@cabinetoffice.gov.uk, or visit [this](#) webpage.
 - To offer your support producing ventilators please contact the Business Support Helpline for England 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.
 - Share the impact COVID-19 is having on your organisation with intel@beis.gov.uk
 - To provide feedback on MHRA engagement please contact engagement@mhra.gov.uk