

Coronavirus Update – Thursday 19 March 2020

The level of information and queries we are receiving is unprecedented and we know that many companies are becoming overwhelmed with the need to make decisions on some difficult and complex issues. We are prioritising the guidance needed based on the feedback we are getting and everything will be posted on our dedicated [coronavirus webpage](#).

With schools closing to all except the children of key workers (which will be defined by Government shortly but is likely to include health workers, police officers and delivery drivers) and vulnerable children (those with social care workers and health plans in place), the situation is escalating and may change even more rapidly in the coming days.

Our first call to Government and both public and private sector clients is to keep sites operational wherever possible. We are working on providing cross-industry Standard Operating Procedures that will meet the requirement to avoid social contact while protecting the workforce as much as possible. We anticipate that it will be relevant to sites of all sizes and include guidance on welfare facilities, canteens, entry procedures, and cleaning arrangements.

We recognise that for many specialist and small companies work has already stopped in hospitals and other workplaces that have closed their offices, as well as in the domestic sector where many households are now in self-isolation.

We are working closely with the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) and Mark Reynolds, Chief Executive of Mace, is speaking directly to the Secretary of State on our behalf, setting out the support required for the construction sector. As well as the Standard Operating Procedures to protect the workforce, we will also be producing guidance on Statutory and Industry Sick Pay and contract terms, including information on force majeure.

These are exceptional times and we fully support the decisions by **CITB and CSCS** to extend the expiry dates for training certificates and skills cards.

- The majority of the workforce should have a Site Safety Plus certificate or CSCS card that is in date, so sites should continue to expect to see these. Any exception to accept cards beyond their expiry date should only be applied to individuals due to renew their card since mid-March, and the expired card or certificate should still be relevant for their occupation.
- Arrangements to catch up on renewals will be put in place in due course.

CITB has also:

- Confirmed it is prioritising the processing of grant claims in order to pay grants as early as possible. It has also suspended the 20-week claiming rule which will allow employers to claim grants later owing to the disruption.
- Updated its [website](#) which sets out the current position on a range of issues including grants, apprenticeships and Site Safety Plus.

Further information on accessing the **loans and grants** announced by the Chancellor will be available next week, but in the mean time we can confirm:

- The loans will be provided by banks signed up to each particular scheme and your first point of contact should be your usual bank or an [accredited lender](#).
- The [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme \(CBILS\)](#) will offer up to £5 million per business with the Government covering the first six months of interest payments.
- The Small Business Grant will offer up to £10,000 per business. This will be administered by local authorities which we understand will contact businesses directly, although local authorities do not yet have information from central Government on how to operate the grant.

We know that **insurance** is an issue for many businesses. The Treasury has confirmed it will stand behind those businesses that have business interruption insurance policies which include pandemics, but will have excluded COVID-19 because it is such a new virus. However, many small businesses will still not be insured through business interruption policies because as most are dependent on damage to property and will exclude pandemics.

HMRC will extend 'time to pay' arrangements for companies affected by coronavirus and companies should call the dedicated helpline on 0800 015 9559.

Finally, we understand that **ports in China** are now re-opening and shipping supplies. However, due to the recent lockdown, many containers are in the wrong locations. In normal circumstances it takes up to two weeks for goods to arrive in the UK.

Businesses should continue to follow the most up-to-date [Government guidance](#) and members can contact [Build UK](#) via email with any construction-specific queries. We cannot guarantee to respond to every message; however, if we are aware of sector-specific issues we have the opportunity to address them collectively.

If any guidance is superseded as the situation develops, we will adjust our activities accordingly. Please follow Build UK on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for the latest updates.