

Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance note: HR and staffing

As a sector we all value our staff and aim to provide safe working environments, fair pay and secure employment. These are unprecedented times and many social businesses across Wales will wish to ensure their employees are protected from infection and also supported if they are required to self-isolate or if they become ill.

Unfortunately, some social businesses may also be facing difficult decisions in relation to their employees. Some may need to consider short term closure or reduction in hours for employees, and possibly potential threats of redundancies for some.

This briefing note is intended as a means of signposting you to useful information and resources relating to HR and staffing concerns during this pandemic. We may update this briefing regularly as more information and advice becomes available.

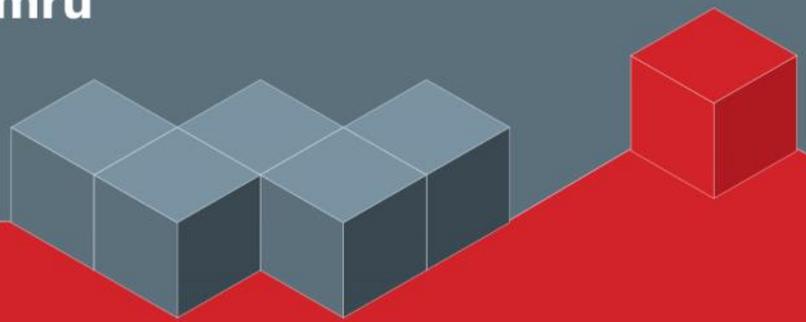
Many of the links in this document are to external websites; we share them in good faith but we have no control over their content or accuracy.

Events are moving quickly and we are working as a team to develop specific tools, advice and resources that will become available soon so please watch out for our email updates and check on our website <http://wales.coop/covid-19> and <https://businesswales.gov.wales/socialbusinesswales/covid-19-support-your-social-business> regularly.

We would also welcome any feedback on what issues are most urgent for you and your social business. Please email us and let us know: sbwenquiries@wales.coop

Protecting employees and procedures for dealing with COVID-19 (self-isolation, sickness, sick pay)

- For those businesses that remain open, please refer the new Welsh Government legislation (the Coronavirus Regulations) in relation to physical distancing in the workplace, specifically maintaining a distance of 2 meters between persons within a workplace setting, when and wherever possible to do so: <https://gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-maintain-physical-distancing-workplace>
- Information on UK Government Statutory Sick Pay Support and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on the Business Wales website: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/support-employees>
- ACAS: advice on HR for employees and employers, including procedures, sick pay, contracts, holiday and laying off staff. <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>



- They are also running a coronavirus advisory webinar on several dates and you can book a place by going to their website: <https://www.acas.org.uk/webinars>
- ACAS also have a general a guide to setting up and managing homeworking: <https://archive.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4853>
- With the latest announcement from Welsh Government regarding state school closures, this guidance from ACAS on parental leave may also be helpful: <https://www.acas.org.uk/parental-leave>
- Our friends at WCVA are giving daily updates on COVID-19 and you can sign up [here](#). They have also released a very informative coronavirus statement: <https://wcva.cymru/coronavirus-statement/>
They have included a useful link to their sister body in England, NCVO – see below.
- NCVO have regularly updated advice on many aspects of keeping staff safe, sick leave and also many other areas such as contingency planning, insurance and governance: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/coronavirus>
- Co-operatives UK have produced a very helpful guidance note on protecting employees from infection, leave and pay, business continuity planning as well as all the key external advice: <https://www.uk.coop/hrpackage/coronavirus>

Guidance on reducing staff levels and threat of redundancies

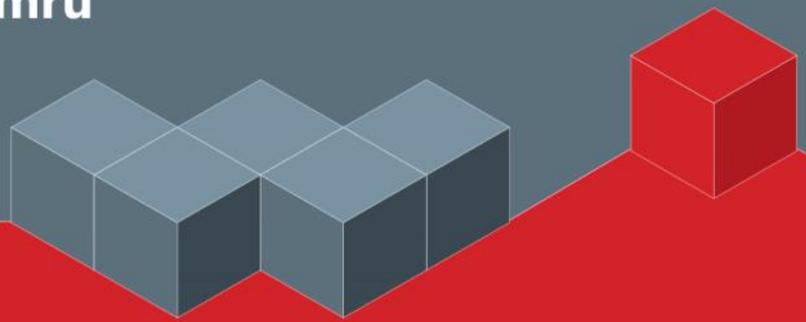
Please refer to our guidance note on the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for detailed information on support available for businesses furloughing their employees: <https://wales.coop/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/WCC-Coronavirus-Job-Retention-Scheme-002.pdf>

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme information on the Business Wales website: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/support-employees>
- ACAS provide best practice guidance on closure, lay-offs and short-time working via their coronavirus advice for Employers & Employees: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>
- ACAS – additional guidance on Layoffs and short time working: <https://archive.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1639>
- A useful Business News Wales article on furlough leave and the Job Retention Scheme: <https://businessnewswales.com/furlough-leave-update-the-job-retention-scheme/>

HR and Employment Law – sources of up to date legal advice

- ACAS website has information and advice on legal issues relating to employment: <https://www.acas.org.uk/>





- One of our Social Business Wales external providers, Perspective HR, have produced some very helpful advice on employment law matters and COVID-19. They have also outlined some frequently asked questions and scenarios from an employment law perspective: <https://www.perspectivehr.co.uk/blog/>
- Co-operatives UK can also provide comprehensive HR legal advice service to their members, if you are a member of Co-ops UK: <https://www.uk.coop/developing-co-ops/hr-services/hr-law>

Engagement and team working:

- The latest guidance from Public Health Wales can be found here: <https://covid19-phwstatement.nhs.wales/>

There are new rules from UK and Welsh Government requiring everyone to stay at home and avoid contact with others. There are a few exceptions, which are detailed in the statement above and also in Welsh Government's full guidance here: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

These measures are effective now and everyone must comply with them.

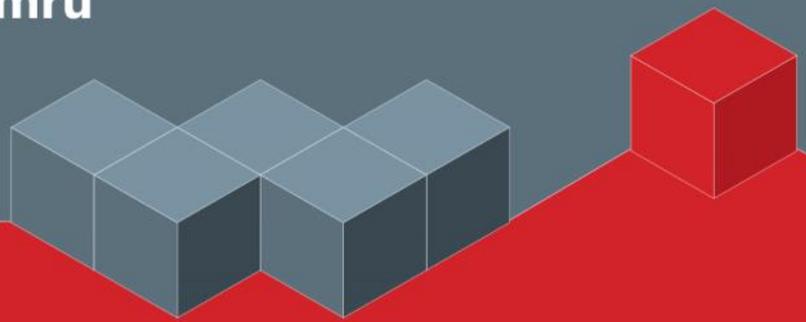
Here are some useful sources of guidance on how to continue communication and engagement with staff during this period.

Keep in touch with teams remotely:

- Microsoft teams: for Office 365 users <https://teams.microsoft.com/start>
- Slack: team discussion on any device <https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/>
- Zoom: for online meetings, webinars and conference calls <https://zoom.us/>
- Some clients have told us that they have switched to WhatsApp to support their discussions and decision making in order to act quickly regarding suspending activities, cash flow, shutting down, contingency plans, etc.

Articles on remote working during the pandemic:

- BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200312-coronavirus-covid-19-update-work-from-home-in-a-pandemic>
- Forbes article on being a remote leader: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonwingard/2020/03/13/team-working-at-home-because-of-coronavirus-heres-how-to-lead-them-effectively/#7387d4b43162>



Decision-making and critical staff approaches:

It's important to identify staff that are business critical (for example this could be the Finance Officer) and to develop a plan of how you will operate if this person becomes ill.

Ensure there is a clear line of command to allow operational decisions to be made quickly. Develop a basic plan on how decisions will be taken if a key person such as Chair or CEO is taken ill. Ensure that members of the Board of Directors of your business are engaged with this process.

Mental Health support:

Sources of information to help you take care of yourself and staff:

- ACAS <https://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace>
- Mental Health Foundation: quick reference links for those needed to seek help immediately <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/getting-help>
- They have also produced this useful article: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
- Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse7b25d>
- Time to Change Wales <https://www.timetochangewales.org.uk/en/>
- WHO (World Health Organisation): https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8

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If you want to talk to one of our Business Advisers give us a call on 0300 111 5050 or e-mail sbwenquiries@wales.coop **and we can arrange a call back.**