

## Practical advice for businesses dealing with COVID-19

The UK Government has already launched a number of emergency initiatives to help businesses deal with the impact of Coronavirus. However as the crisis unfolds, not only have new measures been put in place as further implications reveal themselves, but the emergency measures initially introduced have been updated, or had their remit widened to cover different sectors or business size. For example, the Job Retention Scheme has been updated and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan (CBIL) Scheme expanded, but also issues around data security have emerged following the mass transition to working from home.

This is the second of our specific briefings updating our Family Business clients and wider network of the measures available to assist owners and directors of companies through this crisis. We are working through many of these issues with families at the moment and we hope this bulletin provides helpful and practical insight to you.

We have therefore put together some practical advice around key issues we believe that businesses are already facing or likely to face over the coming months:

- Employment
- Bank lending
- Corporate and insolvency concerns
- Data Protection and Commercial

Our intention is to continue to provide updates on core topics and others that may arise as and when we have further practical information to share with you. We have a dedicated hub on our website and you can access that [here](#).

We hope that these updates are helpful. If you think there are any steps we can take to improve these updates or provide further information please do let us know. We are very keen to hear from you and update and further enhance the support we are offering.

Below is a summary of each of the articles attached to this email. You can click through to read the full article.

### Employment

Given the deepening economic uncertainty caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, many employers will be forced to explore means of mitigating, where possible, the financial consequences of the crisis. The UK Government has recognised this and introduced a package of support to help both employers and employees through the crisis.

**The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** is a ground-breaking government initiative, under which employers can access a grant to cover the wages for employees on "furlough". However, initial guidance left us with as many questions as answers, so on 4 April the UK Government produced an update to its guidance. Amy Wren and Alice Yandle detail the changes introduced by this update. [Read here](#).

**Holiday entitlement** can be tricky to manage in a crisis, particularly when so many people will have had holiday plans disrupted by Coronavirus. Kathleen Heycock and Alice Yandle from our Employment team explore the potential consequences of this and the implications to business and individuals of new legislation on carry-over of holidays recently introduced by the government. [Read here](#).

**Statutory Sick Pay** can now be paid not only to those who are displaying symptoms of Coronavirus, but also to those who live with someone who has symptoms (whether they are fit to work or not). In this note, Amy Wren explains the new regulations on Statutory Sick Pay. [Read here](#).

### Bank lending

**Expansion to Government lending scheme for SMEs.** The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme has now been expanded to include larger SMEs which were not previously eligible for Government funding. Simon Ward, Suzanne Coticelli and Peter O'Connell detail the changes and the additional beneficiaries' in this update for businesses. [Read here](#).

**Government equity funding for businesses.** Simon Ward asks if the CCFF and CBILS funding measures go far enough in their efforts to keep business afloat for the longer term, and raises the question of whether now is the time for Government to open up access to equity funding. [Read here](#).

### Corporate and insolvency concerns

**General Meetings.** This article, by Richard Lane and India Benjamin, explains the adjustments that Boards of Directors need to consider in respect of holding shareholder meetings under the new Stay at Home Measures recently brought in by the Government. [Read here](#).

**Changes to Wrongful trading.** On 28 March the Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, announced proposed changes to the UK insolvency laws in order to address the unique circumstances arising from the Coronavirus pandemic. The details of the legislation are still awaited, so we are currently in an unusual period where we know some retrospective changes are proposed but, as of April 1, are not yet in effect. In this article, Corporate partner David Fletcher steps into the unknown to give businesses some clarity on where the changes are likely to take place and how they are likely to affect businesses. [Read here](#).

### Data Protection and Commercial

**Data and Remote Working.** With so many of us now working remotely, this raises issues about data security and the increasing reliance on technology platforms to keep businesses and organisations running. In the first of two articles exploring these issues, Ian De Freitas and Tom Rudkin focus on data security considerations for individuals and businesses. [Read here](#).

**Updates from the ICO.** At an uncertain time for all organisations, data protection may not at present be your principal concern, with business continuity taking precedence over privacy law compliance. In this update, Alan Baker and Lucy Sharp explain how the ICO has recognised this shift in focus and issued new guidance in response. [Read here](#).

**Contract Terms and Disputes.** Attention is now turning to whether businesses and their suppliers, customers and commercial partners can continue to perform their contractual obligations in spite of the fundamentally different situation in which they find themselves and, if not, what consequences flow from that.

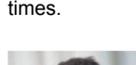
These events shine a spotlight on contractual small print such as force majeure clauses that perhaps provoked little thought in more normal times. As Ben Longworth and Paul Jones explain in this update, they may now be critical to business survival. [Read here](#).

We are living through a complex, and fast developing situation, and this brings with it much for individuals and businesses to think about. Clearly there is no "one size fits all" approach, since the types of issues faced will depend on the specific nature of your business.

We hope that this bulletin has provided some practical guidance, as we continue to support our clients' efforts to mitigate the difficulties they may face during this time.

Please note, this bulletin does not constitute legal advice and the position is moving rapidly. It is recommended that the latest government guidance is checked as this is changing daily. If you require further information on anything covered in this bulletin, please contact [Richard Lane](#) or your usual contact in the firm. Further information can also be found on our website and we will be providing further updates on some additional resources we will be making available shortly.

Please do stay safe and well. We are here to help work with you during these difficult times.



**Richard Lane**  
Partner

### Guidance for dealing with COVID-19

We have created a COVID-19 guidance hub. This is updated daily with content tailored for our clients and their needs.

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