

26th May 2020

COVID-19 and data centres: Bulletin NINE

This Bulletin pulls together developments since the end of April. Useful links are included in each point and at the bottom.

1. [Latest from government on quarantine exemptions](#)
2. [Quarantine – overview of operator views](#)
3. [Interaction with government looking ahead](#)
4. [Our COVID-19 Data Centre Dossier now online!](#)
5. [Notes and actions from operator-DCMS calls](#)
6. [Protecting mental health and wellbeing – links and observations](#)
7. [Planning for recovery – operator actions and views](#)
8. [Key worker testing – further updates](#)
9. [Supply chain – starting the conversation](#)
10. [Useful links](#)
11. [Contacts](#)

1 Latest from government on quarantine exemptions

As covered in our circular of 23rd May, Government announced quarantine measures for international travellers arriving in the UK. The full press notice is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-announces-new-public-health-measures-for-all-uk-arrivals>

Our team at DCMS has successfully obtained an exemption for essential data centre workers. We are very grateful both for their advocacy on our behalf and to members for submitting input. The relevant passage is: ***“a person involved in essential maintenance and repair of data infrastructure required to reduce and resolve outages, or in the provision of goods and services to support these activities”***. You can find the full list of exemptions here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules>

2 Quarantine – overview of operator views

Ahead of policy announcements on quarantine for people travelling into the UK from abroad, we worked with operators and government to build a picture of the implications of quarantine for data centre operations, projects and capacity. We collated views from operators on the impacts that quarantine might have on critical functions, customer services and expansion plans. This is only a collation of inputs to help guide government thinking and to inform policy makers. It is not advisory or comprehensive and is just a snapshot as circumstances and responses will change in line with policy announcements. See our notes here: [Quarantine: challenges to operators](#)

3 Continued interaction with Government (DCMS)

Over the past two months, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed a close level of cooperation between the sector and government when government recognised how dependent we are on data centres. From mid-March, activity focused on addressing urgent priorities: ensuring that operators were included in the key

workers list, establishing a dedicated team within DCMS to ensure the sector was factored into policy, and informing Government decisions on issues like lockdown exemptions, testing and quarantine. Now the dialogue is moving to longer term issues: the dedicated team in DCMS has a 12 month remit to learn about the sector and establish whether current government support structures are right and to identify any measures needed to ensure the future security and resilience of the UK's data infrastructure. They will then make recommendations on:

- whether any transformative changes are needed to government support for the sector, both in terms of residence but also in terms of competitiveness.
- What government should be doing to support not just the economic viability of the sector but also enable the sector to continue to support the UK economy.

As we enter this new phase, we have captured progress to date and priorities looking forward in this position statement: <https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/17656-data-centres-and-covid-19-position-statement>

4 Our COVID-19 Data Centre Dossier!

We are aware that there are documents, circulars, updates, notes, document drafts, position papers and bulletins flying around at ever increasing speed so we have pulled these together into a dossier. The original purpose of this was to provide quick links to relevant information for the DCMS team in a structured form but we are actually finding that this has become a useful library of COVID-19 related material relevant to data centres. This dossier is now available on the website, both on our main data centre pages under the “useful resources” tab, and from our COVID-19 information hub.

<https://www.techuk.org/focus/programmes/data-centres>

<https://www.techuk.org/covid-19-information-hub/data-centres>

Be aware the content will continue to change as new documents are added and drafts online for review are updated.

[illegible]

5 Regular Operator calls with DCMS

We have held weekly calls with DCMS since mid-March to discuss developments. These will become fortnightly as we start the next phase of our work with government. Calls are usually held at 9.30 on Friday mornings, kindly hosted by 4D Data Centres. Access details will be in the email circular the day before. Do get in touch if you are not receiving these. Meanwhile, all call notes are available (see links below) from our website:

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 22 May

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 15 May

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 7 May

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 1 May

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 24 April

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 17 April

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 9 April

Notes from Operator-DCMS catch-up call 3 April

6 Protecting mental health and wellbeing – links and observations

We collected together some of the actions being taken within the sector to protect the mental health of our workforce. These observations are prefaced by links to formal resources and guidance on mental health and

wellbeing provided by third parties. This information, from specialist organisations such as the Mental Health Foundation, HSE, ACAS and WHO should be your first port of call.

This document is not advisory, it is just a summary of different approaches being applied across the sector. Its purpose is simply to help operators struggling with these issues access information, benchmark themselves informally and share experiences. <https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/17652-data-centres-and-covid-19> or link directly to the document [Mental Health](#)

7 Planning for recovery – operator actions and views

To date there are no reports of significant data centre outages resulting from COVID-19, but operators do not see this as cause for complacency: on the contrary, this is a time when careful planning and relentless vigilance are essential. Recovery also presents operators with a number of challenges. Many of the measures taken involve additional cost or contribute to a growing backlog. Operators must also recover operations to meet the new normal – without necessarily knowing what it is yet - and ensure they can prosper in the changed business conditions that our post-COVID world may impose.

These notes provide an overview of the approaches that operators are taking during this new, finely balanced, phase: our collective recovery towards something resembling normality. They summarise actions and procedures and identify issues. Useful links are included at the end. As with other material on this site. These are informal notes, collating observations and do not constitute guidance or a formal position statement. [Recovery Planning](#)

8 Supply Chain – starting the conversation

Supply chain resilience is a concern for government, operators and of course, suppliers. We have started a three-way dialogue to identify potential pinch points and vulnerabilities, and whether any elements of the supply chain would benefit from collective activity. Our first activity is to coordinate views. Currently:

- Operators want to know where the pinch points are in supply and manufacturing, whether commodity or equipment prices are likely to rise, and whether there will be a shortage of contracting staff if there is a spike in demand as restrictions are relaxed.
- Suppliers want to understand what supply issues operators are most concerned about, whether operators are getting orders in early for longer lead-in items, what shortages they are experiencing and whether these relate to replenishing inventory or whether they have got to the stage of impacting functionality.
- DCMS want to understand which pinch points could present risks to critical infrastructure, whether government interventions could help and if so, what form they might take.

This work will be one of the main threads of activity moving forward and will be part of our review of sector resilience.

9 Key worker testing – a moving target

We have kept members updated on testing developments as they have unfolded. Back at the end of April, we circulated the Government's information pack for the self-referral system. This is for testing key workers (those who are symptomatic or living with those that are symptomatic) and the objective was to get frontline staff who are quarantined but not infected back to work. Since then testing has been rolled out

further. If you are an operator, contractor or supplier working within data centres and need an information pack please get in touch with me: emma.fryer@techuk.org and you can find more information here: <https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/17427-data-centres-and-covid-19-key-worker-testing>

10 Round up of useful links

- **DCMS Data Infrastructure Resilience Team mailbox:** COVID-data-resilience@culture.gov.uk for queries from data centre operators, customers and suppliers. They understand the critical role that data centres play and are ensuring that this is understood across government.
- **techUK information hub:** Don't forget that we are trying to group as much information as possible into the data centre COVID page here: https://www.techuk.org/covid-19-information-hub/data_centres This is a section of [techUK's COVID-19 information hub](#). Which covers broader developments relevant to the tech sector at large.
- **Impact of COVID-19: Insight from 5 regional CEOs:** <https://www.cbre.com/report-download?PUBID=47672a9d-9a8f-48c3-9d8f-af09f2ef6857>
- **Updates from Uptime:** Uptime Institute has also published [helpful bulletins](#) on resilience measures taken by operators.
- **Sample corporate guidance on PPE and other precautions:** <https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/17563-data-centres-and-covid-19-more-on-ppe>

Operator statements

- Digital Realty: <https://www.digitalrealty.com/coronavirus-statement>
- Equinix: <https://www.equinix.com/lp/equinix-coronavirus-statement-to-customers-and-partners/>
- Equinix: <https://blog.equinix.com/blog/2020/03/26/covid-19-protecting-our-critical-ibx-data-center-infrastructure/>
- 4D Data Centres: <https://www.4d-dc.com/insight/4d-data-centres-covid-19-latest-response-plan-statement>
- UKCloud: <https://ukcloud.com/hub/news/ukcloud-confirms-readiness-to-support-public-services-in-responding-to-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>
- LINX: <https://www.linx.net/linx-response-to-covid-19-coronavirus-threat/>
- VIRTUS: <https://virtusdatacentres.com/general/covid-19-statement>

Useful URLs

- WHO guidelines: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
- Latest govt advice: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>
- Testing: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#essential-workers>
- PHE: [decontamination in non-healthcare settings](#)
- Social distancing in the workplace: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sectorguidance>
- Uptime bulletins: <https://uptimeinstitute.com/covid-19-minimizing-critical-facility-risk>

For further information on techUK's data centres programme see our programme overview:

<https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/272-data-centre-programme-overview>

Or visit our website <https://www.techuk.org/focus/programmes/data-centres>

11 **Contacts**



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