

25 March 2020

COVID-19 Data Centre FAQs

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Are data centres classified as CNI in the UK?

Not by default. Individual sites are designated CNI depending on their functions. Those that are CNI will know they are. However, Government is considering the criticality of data centres and whether this should be formalised in some way in future.

Are data centre workers classified as Key Workers?

Yes, those running Data Infrastructure were designated key workers. See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

There relevant passage is:

Utilities, communication and financial services

This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

The situation is unclear in Scotland as there are different tiers of key workers and this is causing confusion.

Does Key Worker status mean that staff will automatically be allowed to travel and given access to sites in the event of a full lockdown?

Key worker status means that those working in data centres (staff, contractors, vendors, construction teams) are allowed to travel to work so that sites can continue to operate and that they qualify for childcare and their children can attend school. However, operators may apply their own access controls, for instance limiting visitor numbers to reduce routes for infection.

Should staff carry letters of authorisation?

To date (25 March) there has been no formal request but this may be a sensible precaution. Staff working for contractors and suppliers to data centres may benefit from a formal letter confirming that they are engaged in tasks supporting data infrastructure. Such letters should only be issued to staff who need to be onsite – there has been public pushback in other sectors where key worker status has been misinterpreted. In time, these may need to be supported by letters of authority from customers.

How are operators measuring temperature on entry to site?

This is what we have heard from operators: This is the scanner being used to gauge temperature http://www.visiofocus.com/index_EN.html and here is the process:

Any person entering DC MUST use the sanitizer located at the entrance, then Security personnel pass to him the scanner (through slit in the glass).

Person must point to his own forehead (without touching the skin) and Security personnel can read the value on the forehead.

Nobody writes down any value: values are only READ

If temperature is UNDER 37.3° people are allowed access to the DC

Are data centre operators restricting customer access?

In some cases, yes. Some are restricting numbers and others are allowing customers by appointment only. This is to reduce footfall in the data centres. There is an obvious balance between customer access and limiting routes for infection / contamination (see above). This varies by operator.

What is government doing?

DCMS has established a dedicated team for the data centre sector: **The DCMS Data Infrastructure Resilience Team**. They understand the critical role that data centres play and are ensuring that this is understood across government. The team is expecting questions and has already established a mailbox: COVID-data-resilience@culture.gov.uk for queries from data centre operators, customers and suppliers.

Where can I find out more?

For the latest updates visit our [COVID-19 information hub](#) where there is a designated area for data centres. You can also join our data centre mailing list which sends out regular bulletins, and listen in on our regular operator catch-up calls. Please email lucas.banach@techuk.org or emma.fryer@techuk.org techUK has also set up a COVID-19 taskforce for information exchange across the whole tech sector: covid19.taskforce@techuk.org.

What are other operators saying?

Here are some sample operator statements

Digital Realty: <https://www.digitalrealty.com/coronavirus-statement>

Equinix: <https://www.equinix.com/lp/equinix-coronavirus-statement-to-customers-and-partners/>

4D Data Centres: <https://www.4d-dc.com/insight/4d-data-centres-covid-19-latest-response-plan-statement>

Other useful URLs

WHO Guidelines: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Latest Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>
PHE: Decontaminating non healthcare environments: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
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>

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