

26 March 2020

COVID-19 and data centres: Bulletin THREE

Last week we published our first [position statement on Covid-19](#), followed by a [second bulletin on 23rd March](#). These covered preparations the sector was taking and the issue of key worker status for data centres respectively. After what can only be described as fervent lobbying, DCMS acted swiftly and decisively and “Data Infrastructure” appeared in the [list of key workers](#) published by Cabinet Office and the Department for Education on Thursday 19th March. While this ensures childcare while schools are closed, it does not in itself guarantee access for facilities staff in the event of tighter restrictions on movement or a full lockdown so we are continuing to work closely with DCMS.

This Bulletin pulls together developments since Monday 23rd March.

DCMS team up and running

In our last bulletin we reported that DCMS had 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.

techUK information hub

techUK is continuing to work closely with DCMS and will provide a two-way conduit for information-collating industry information to aid government decision making and communicating policy and other developments out to the data centre operators, suppliers, customers and other sector stakeholders. For the latest updates visit our [COVID-19 information hub](#) where there is a designated area for data centres (an unlikely shade of pink at the bottom).

Critical staff access / movement

As you will guess, our immediate focus is to ensure continued access for critical staff in the event of tighter restrictions on movement without compromising government objectives. We have submitted a list of key roles thanks to excellent input from members. Primary concerns are that the highly outsourced nature of the industry mean that many critical staff are not on payroll but work for contractors, suppliers and other third-party providers. Operators are particularly worried about construction projects and the knock-on effects of delays. There was also a concern about the increasing criticality of support services like cleaning, especially between shifts. We have made these issues clear.

Government will also need to get a feel for numbers of staff and travel patterns and we have to prepare justifications for different categories of staff, so we are scratching our heads on how we provide indicative figures. Some operators are already restricting customer access and are seeing reduced footfall as a result.

We are expecting information from Government imminently on what will be required in practice by critical facility workers should restrictions on movement tighten to a full lockdown. We anticipate a combination of government-issued ID, letters of authority and possibly some further means of authentication, but at the moment this is speculation. Government may also be considering a temporary CNI designation for data

centres. Meanwhile many operators and subcontractors have already issued their staff with letters of authority and this is looking like a very sensible precaution.

In the meantime we have issued a list of Frequently Asked Questions here:

<https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/17135-covid-19-and-data-centres>

International comparisons

Our counterparts in the Netherlands, the DDA, have been collecting information from across Europe on COVID responses and we are summarising that information into a short single document. This will compare CNI status of data centres in different countries, current restrictions on movement and the processes in place by which critical workers are identifying themselves to those policing movements. We should have this ready by Friday, so look out for it.

Risk timelines

DCMS asked us to think about risk timelines which we did. Treasury has also been in touch asking about medium to long term risks and what mitigating action (if any) can be taken now. We discussed this on our Monday call and are trying to structure our thinking. If you haven't already done so, please have a look at the two ideas tabled so far and provide feedback to myself and tom.henderson@techuk.org. The draft document is [here](#).

Catch up calls

We are continuing to hold operator catch-up calls at least once a week to compare notes, and bulletins will be issued each time we have something to report. Next call is scheduled for 9.30 on Friday, access details will be circulated in the communication.

Contacts



Emma Fryer
Associate Director, techUK
Tel: 01609 772 137
Mob: 07595 410 653
emma.fryer@techuk.org



Lucas Banach
Programme Assistant
Tel: 020 7331 2006
Lucas.banach@techuk.org

About techUK: techUK is the UK's leading technology membership organisation, with more than 850 members spread across the UK. We are a network that enables our members to learn from each other and grow in a way which contributes to the country both socially and economically. www.techuk.org

Further information

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>

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>