

COVID-19 and Data Centres

Update and actions from call 9th April



1. [Update from DCMS](#)
2. [Review of DCMS questions for the sector](#)
3. [Questions and points from operators](#)
4. [ACTIONS](#)

1 Update from DCMS

Key workers: Key worker policy has not changed and not likely to change imminently, so the current state of play is likely to continue for the time being. Isolated incidents will be resolved and work is being done through the Home Office to ensure that police are applying policy consistently in terms of stopping movement. Data centre staff are protected key workers so should be able to access sites without issue. Presenting an email or letter to this effect should be sufficient.

The list of critical roles had been very useful and would be very useful and was being shared with Cabinet Office and DfE to ensure coordinated policy around access.

Construction: the construction side was more complex, but the list of projects submitted had been very useful. The current policy was largely unchanged: construction was allowed to continue with guidance on social distancing reiterated: [updated guidance](#) covering construction had been issued on 8th April. It was important that employers followed best practice in implementing those policies so that construction could continue.

The devolved administrations had taken stronger lines when interpreting policy and feedback suggested that access had been a problem in some cases. If operators encountered issues they were asked to alert DCMS via the mailbox: and this would be followed up. It was important to have information on construction projects in case policy changed suddenly: knowing about them meant that they could be factored in.

Mailbox: the DCMS mailbox would remain open over the holiday weekend to handle any urgent queries from operators: COVID-data-resilience@culture.gov.uk

2 DCMS Questions for the sector

DCMS had submitted a list of questions to techUK. The answers would help them build up an understanding of the sector which in turn would help them anticipate the impact of policy changes and enable them to advocate effectively in cross departmental discussions. It would also help them to join the right dots across government. In response to COVID-19 a lot of new teams had been set up very quickly to address specific challenges in addition to existing teams. For instance there was a senior construction board, an economic task force, a public service task force and a CTO group.

Operators worked through the list of questions to identify the best approach. The first question, providing information on footfall and journey modes, had been answered and a draft was already on the website.

A preliminary draft infographic had also been prepared explaining how the internet worked. It was agreed that this set the right level: government policy teams were generalists and did not have specialist technical knowledge, so information needed to be pitched to the level of an intelligent lay reader.

Members defined how each question would be tackled. Some would be answered best with infographics, some could be answered using existing collateral and others needed clarification to identify whether answers needed to be indicative, quantitative or qualitative. The list of questions is available [here](#): and will be updated to show progress weekly. A dossier of answers, references and other collateral will be added to the website, accessed from the DC COVID-19 pages here: https://www.techuk.org/covid-19-information-hub/data_centres

Government support: Operators were asked what kind of government support they were most likely to need to ensure business continuity. Operators highlighted priority for gasoil (diesel) supply, facilitating large movements at short notice to deal with disaster recovery scenarios and smoothing supply chain issues. This dialogue to continue.

3 Operator Observations and two way Q&A

Typical faults: Operators felt that faults should be viewed two ways; what are the typical faults that happen in a data centre and what are the typical external issues/faults that data centres are there to protect customers from?

Rapid fault escalation: there was the potential in a data centre environment for small faults to escalate very quickly if they were not addressed – for instance cooling provision, where temperatures could rise in the data hall very fast if cooling failed. This to be accommodated in res

Key suppliers and key supplies: operators discussed supply lines: the situation varied. Most had existing inventory and redundancy in terms of spares but there were shortages here and there, especially in short-order, lower value commodities.

Filters: Operators discussed the use of filters and felt that since filters were unlikely to be effective in removing particles able to carry COVID-19 there was no point in replacing them more frequently.

PPE and temperature: Operators wanted to compare notes on practical issues such as whether they were issuing PPE and if so, to whom, how they were managing mixed groups of workers and whether temperature was being recorded on entry. A circular would be sent out asking these questions and answers would be anonymised, aggregated and shared.

4 ACTIONS

- Work to start immediately on answering the questions.
- Questions on faults and on supply chain to be prioritised
- Operators to submit, share or provide links to any collateral that would be useful in answering the questions.
- Questions on PPE to be circulated and responses aggregated and shared.

Next call date: Friday 17th April

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