

## COVID-19 - Guidance for businesses and the inevitable disruption to come



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*This article intends to provide businesses with some current guidance in the ever-changing climate following the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak and Government restrictions in place. What does this mean for business and, in particular, lottery operators in how draws are managed?*

### What's happened?

The Government have put in place emergency measures as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. Almost every business is affected as all individuals have been advised to work from home unless it is absolutely necessary and essential that they leave their home.

### What does this mean?

As a result of this, businesses face unprecedented challenges to continue to operate and ensure employee safety whilst remaining the least disruption to ensure commercial consistency. Government advice appears to be updated and rapidly moving and it is important that businesses check this on a daily basis.

There is currently an emergency legislative bill going through the House of Commons that we expect to receive Royal Assent immediately. This, amongst other emergency measures, sets out amendments to the Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) regime and protection for commercial tenants as follows:

- SSP will be paid from day 1 rather than day 4. This will apply retrospectively from 13 March 2020;
- SSP will be fully reimbursed by the Government to the employer (that employs fewer than 250 employees) for up to two weeks to ensure that individuals are encouraged to stay at home whilst they experience symptoms;
- Commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of coronavirus COVID-19 will be protected from eviction. The Government have specifically confirmed this is not a rental holiday and tenants are still liable for rent.

In addition to the bill, there are a number of schemes that have been set up the Government as a result of the restrictions placed on individuals and businesses because of the coronavirus outbreak. To summarise, these are as follows:

- Protection of income for employees under the 'job retention scheme'. HMRC will reimburse 80% of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month. This is currently being set up by HMRC and we continue to review any news on this in the near future;
- Schemes regarding grants and loans for businesses;
- VAT and income tax deferral for all businesses;
- Business rates cut for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure businesses or small business rate relief/tapered relief businesses.

The full support for businesses guidance is available on the following Government web page:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19)

[19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme](#)

### What's next?

The Government are providing daily updates and also publish emails to any changes to advice online at the [gov.uk/coronavirus](http://gov.uk/coronavirus) webpage. Please keep checking this page for any changes to advice for employers and, if you are unsure about something, contact the Lotteries Council or Woods Whur for further assistance. These are unprecedented times and the details in the guidance provided by the Government is changing daily to ensure clarification and avoid confusion.

In the meantime, businesses may wish to review their insurance cover terms and conditions to ascertain whether this disruption is covered under its relevant commercial insurance.

### FAQ's

What happens if everyone is working from home and we have to complete our lottery draw on-site?

The lottery must still be operated and run in a fair and open way, in accordance with the licensing conditions and codes of practice. The current restrictions do not waive operators' obligations and duties of being a responsible operator in accordance with a licence provided by the Gambling Commission. There has been no announcement as to relaxation of this and therefore if the draw cannot be completed with the relevant people there and in accordance with the game's relevant terms and conditions then the draw must be suspended. Communication of this to players and payment must be managed accordingly.

What if someone is displaying signs of illness and continues to come into the workplace, can we send them home?

Yes. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to protect employees' health and safety. There is guidance issued by the Government specifically for employers and employees and employers should be asking employees that are displaying symptoms to read that guidance as it may affect others in the household (i.e. if someone else within the house is experiencing symptoms then the household should remain in self-isolation for 2 weeks). Please note the Government advises that no employees should be at work if they are able to work from home, without symptoms.

How will this affect the Gambling Commission and contact with them?

The Gambling Commission have published a press release and confirm they are now working remotely. The Account manager details you have on your e-services platform will still be the same and, if you need to make contact, you should do so by email or leaving a message on the telephone, which has been in place before the restrictions were put in place. Details can be found at <https://www.lotteriescouncil.org.uk/news/140-gambling-commission-covid-19>