



## **Guidance and Resources for Advice Services and Organisations COVID-19**

### **Contents – last updated 2 June 2020**

Key sources of information (you should read these first) .....	2
Your feedback – new section! .....	3
Introduction and background.....	5
Social distancing and face-to-face advice.....	6
Action to take as social distancing and other COVID-19 measures are modified .....	6
Remote working and provision of advice.....	10
Outreach, home visits and residential care.....	11
Managing, monitoring, understanding and reporting on COVID-19 impacts.....	11
Coronavirus support for benefit claimants.....	12
Coronavirus support for employees .....	12
Coronavirus support for businesses .....	12
People with underlying health conditions or requiring health care for other reasons	12
Pregnancy and maternity.....	12
Treatment for addiction and/or substance misuse .....	13
Mental health.....	13
End of life care .....	13
Disabilities .....	13
People facing social welfare problems, whose circumstances or experiences make them vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 disruption .....	13
Shocks to household income.....	13
Housing and homelessness.....	14
Employment .....	14
Domestic abuse .....	14
Immigration status.....	14
Fuel poverty .....	15
LGBTQ+ .....	15
Criminal justice .....	15

Guidance and updates from regulators, funders, commissioners, the justice system and other stakeholders.....	15
Financial Conduct Authority .....	15
Insolvency Service .....	15
UK Finance .....	16
Funders and commissioners.....	16
Justice system and courts.....	16
Data protection.....	16
Safeguarding .....	17
AdvicePro and COVID-19 .....	17
Insurance cover .....	17
Software platforms, tools and training for working remotely .....	17
Working from home as an adviser.....	18
Scams, misinformation and cyber security .....	19

### **Key sources of information (you should read these first)**

Tell us what you are doing and learning, and what your questions are via [influencing@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:influencing@adviceuk.org.uk)

- NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> is a key source of information.
- England: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>  
Other guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>
- Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/> the [COVID-19 framework for decision making](#) and <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/>
- Wales: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus> and <https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice/covid-19-support-business>
- Northern Ireland: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Your local authority: sign up for their updates about COVID-19.
- NCVO’s helpful guidance at <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/coronavirus> and <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/coronavirus/contingency-planning-and-financial-implications>

- <https://www.adviceuk.org.uk/member-services/members-area/> for this briefing links to Croner HR advice line and toolkit, including information on health and safety at work. We have also produced and will be updating further detailed AdviceUK Funding Updates.
- This from Bates Wells <https://bateswells.co.uk/campaigns/coronavirus/> (very helpful on issues such as charity governance, commercial property etc) – sign up for their regular newsletter, they are releasing regular updates targeted at charities.
- Must-have for advisers, [sign up to this helpful e-mail update service](#) on COVID-19 issues produced by Expert Advice Team at Citizens Advice
- For in-depth, regular and well-informed updates on employment law see <https://www.danielbarnett.co.uk/site/mailling-list/mailling-list-signup/>
- Charity Finance Group resource hub: <https://www.charitytaxgroup.org.uk/news-post/2020/coronavirus-information-hub-charity-tax-finance-professionals/>
- World Health Organisation’s guidance at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Information in other languages: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/news/coronavirus-information/>
- Taking care of your mental health and wellbeing: Every Mind Matters <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/> and <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>
- Useful resources from the [Litigant in Person Network](#) in areas such as remote working, service design, using new technologies to provide advice, as well as core resources on work involving courts and tribunals – [sign up here](#).
- LexisNexis is giving registered charities free access to LexisLibrary and LexisPSL until August 2020. They invite organisations who would benefit from access to LexisNexis to sign up here: <https://www.lexisnexis.co.uk/products/Incomplimentaryaccess.html>

### **Your feedback – new section!**

Tell us about your experiences and the support you need via [influencing@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:influencing@adviceuk.org.uk) – as we talk to funders and other stakeholders, it is important for us know what is happening on the ground. Join our LinkedIn group at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12382401/>

#### *The experiences of advice services*

Most members responding are still operating, but have moved from face-to-face service provision to remote delivery, typically via telephone advice, and to a lesser extent via online video conferencing and e-mail. A minority of members responding

have furloughed staff and suspended services. The following themes are beginning to emerge strongly across a cross-section of the 200+ member responses we have received to date:

- Concerns around recruiting, training, supporting and supervising staff.
- The challenges involved in establishing contact with existing clients who have 'disappeared'.
- Concerns about future capacity to provide advice, given the expected increase in demand in 3-6 months' time.
- Breathing space measures and COVID-19 disruption leading to reduced demand for advice, particularly in relation to welfare benefits, debt and housing. Increased demand for employment related advice.
- Cashflow issues as some income streams have reduced and reserves are being depleted as a result.
- Problems with contacting government departments, particularly in providing authorisation to act on behalf of clients and the difficulties of undertaking casework remotely.
- Benefits associated with cloud-based case management systems.
- AdviceUK members serving marginalised groups and communities have been particularly adversely affected by COVID-19 impacts.

### *The experiences of clients*

The impacts of COVID-19 have varied very significantly by client group, with AdviceUK members reporting the following issues:

- Women experiencing domestic abuse facing increased difficulty in accessing advice and support during lockdown.
- Prisoners and changed regimes in prisons affecting access to advice.
- Increased demand for advice from students, for example in relation to student accommodation and arrangements for examinations and assessments.
- Challenges faced by those who are digitally excluded or who face language barriers.
- Difficulties of establishing contact with clients that have long-term health conditions.
- Increased demand for advice from people on employment issues, particularly those in precarious or exploitative employment situations.
- Increased stress on clients and resultant impacts on mental health.
- Increased foodbank use.
- Increased levels of enquiries from households who have not previously experienced financial hardship or needed to navigate the welfare system.

## Introduction and background

We are updating this briefing regularly – make sure you are using the latest version (see date last updated in the contents section above). Do also make sure your AdviceUK membership is up to date, so we can continue to provide you with support.

We encourage you to follow official guidance from trusted sources, and to counter misinformation. Please feedback on omissions, inaccuracies, or items for inclusion in any future versions of this briefing. Do also share any resources or approaches you have found helpful: we'll be sharing these in the members' area on our website and via the [AdviceUK LinkedIn group for members](#) as well (please join if you are on LinkedIn!).

The purpose of this briefing is to help AdviceUK members consider, manage and respond to the impacts of COVID-19 on their organisations and the individuals and communities they advise and support. AdviceUK members, together with other civil society organisations, are playing a vital role in helping people navigate this public health crisis.

Given the wide range of potential impacts, we have assumed that AdviceUK members will particularly need to consider the impacts of COVID-19 in relation to:

- Advice and support given through face-to-face channels, directly impacted by social distancing measures.
- Advice and support given to people whose health status means that they are more vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19, for example, those with respiratory conditions, weakened immune systems or in poor mental health.
- Advice and support given to people facing social welfare problems, whose circumstances or experiences mean that they are particularly exposed to the impacts of disruption associated with COVID-19, for example, poor housing or no housing, loss of income from precarious/self-employed work/sector-specific redundancies/reduced hours, and pre-existing problem debt.
- Impacts on your organisation's workforce, operations and income streams.
- Demand for advice on housing and homelessness issues.
- Demand for advice from people experiencing abuse, for example domestic abuse.
- Demand for advice on social welfare care and health issues.
- Demand for advice arising from relationship breakdown.
- Demand for advice on education, such as special educational needs (SEN).
- Demand for advice on immigration and consumer issues.
- Demand for advice on discrimination issues.

## Social distancing and face-to-face advice

Follow the guidance that is currently in force, and note that this guidance varies depending on whether you are in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. It is increasingly being tailored to sector specific needs:

- England: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
- Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/> and the [COVID-19 framework for decision making](#)
- Wales: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>
- Northern Ireland: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

Plan for social distancing measures to be in force over the coming year, but to be increasingly modified and targeted in relation to different issues and situations.

## Action to take as social distancing and other COVID-19 measures are modified

The UK Government and devolved administrations are now modifying their guidance and setting out how guidance will be modified in the future. Emergence and transition from 'lockdown' to a 'new normal' is already proving to be slow and complex. Guidance now varies on a UK nation, regional and local basis, and in relation to different parts of society and areas of life and work. AdviceUK is considering how this affects social welfare advice organisations and different groups of AdviceUK members – please let us know of any specific questions you have. The following steps may be helpful:

- Try to make contact with existing or past clients and others in the communities you serve: find out what is happening in their lives; what support they may need; and how your work relates to things that are important to them. We think it is particularly important to understand what communication channels and support networks people have available to them, how they are using them, and any barriers they face. Don't assume that people will – or won't – use different communication channels or support networks in a given way.
- Whenever possible, try to have informal conversations with your clients about how they and others are using different communication channels and support networks. Think about what this might mean for your own work (for example, communicating over the phone, via SMS, social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, support networks such as local foodbanks etc).
- Start pulling together information and reports for funders and other stakeholders about how COVID-19 is affecting the communities you serve.

Make sure your monitoring systems (including reports from systems like AdvicePro) are starting to collect data that you can use to evaluate and evidence your work – do get in touch if you want help in this regard.

- Internally, make sure you have clear frameworks and communication channels in place for consulting your workforce and taking decisions, including governance arrangements with trustees and other governing bodies: you may need to use these frameworks at short notice. A first step is to set out how you will communicate with staff, volunteers and trustees, how decisions will be made (for example, to reopen suspended services or create new ones), and when different people in your organisation will meet to discuss, plan and take decisions.
- Regularly consult employees about health and safety arrangements and record these discussions: use the most appropriate guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19> For advice services that are delivered face-to-face, the shops/branches and offices and contact centres parts of the guidance are probably the most relevant. The guidance on working in homes may be relevant to some member organisations. Any face-to-face advice provision should be considered very carefully, given the challenges involved. Contact us if you would like to discuss particular scenarios.
- If you have agreed to furlough staff, think ahead in relation to people starting work again, rotating members of staff on furlough and so on. It is unlikely that suspended services and/or furloughed staff will be able to start working again without advance preparation.
- Think about how you manage sick leave and sick pay: if people are faced with the choice of losing income or coming in to work, they may decide to come in to work even if they feel unwell.
- Think about how you manage annual leave: recent extensions to the furlough leave scheme mean that you need to consider your policy on requiring furloughed staff to take annual leave to avoid backlogs of annual leave entitlement building up: see <https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/coronavirus/faqs/furlough> and contact us if you want to discuss further (Daniel Barnett list discusses this amongst other issues).
- Think about your organisation's capacity to address issues such as access to, and use of premises, and service redesign. If you are thinking about continuing to give advice in person, face-to-face, you will need to do some work on reconfiguring (and perhaps redesigning and re-equipping) that space, or considering new approaches such as setting up pop-up advice venues.
- Explore the possible costs of such work and finding suppliers, for example, in relation to setting up protective screens or mobile hotspots, or use of mobile printers and scanners.

- If you have a reserves policy, AdviceUK suggests making additional provision for short-notice service reconfiguration and redesign costs that are likely to arise as social distancing and other COVID-19 measures are modified. You may be able to get emergency funding from local community foundations and other funders, but even rapid response emergency funding will typically come with a lead time of at best several weeks, and likely between 1 and 2 months.
- Think about how you can assess the health needs of your workforce and identify those who may be clinically a) vulnerable or b) extremely vulnerable. Think about how you can manage this information safely in line with data protection principles and guidance currently in force (<https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/>).
- Assess the caring responsibilities and household circumstances of your workforce (considering data protection as above), so you can identify any potential issues: for example, concerns that people may have about infecting a vulnerable member of their household, or the limitations people may face in terms of childcare, looking after an elderly relative or other caring responsibilities.
- Many AdviceUK member advice services and organisations work with clients who are more likely to be clinically vulnerable or very vulnerable. Similarly, members report that clients facing social welfare problems are (unsurprisingly) more likely to be experiencing poor mental or physical health. You may need to begin to consider how you can advise people who are self-isolating or shielding, or how you can reconfigure existing home visiting arrangements. This is likely to be a major task, contact us if you would like help.
- Gather any evidence you can of unmet need or demand for advice and support and how people are getting advice and support currently.
- Develop your relationships with local support groups and other stakeholders, and monitor emerging learning on community responses to COVID-19 (such as <https://localtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Briefing-1-220420-V2.pdf>)
- Be aware of upcoming key dates in areas relevant to your work: be aware of key dates in areas such as possession proceedings and ready to monitor changes as breathing space measures, concessions to protect clients and suspension of 'business as usual' comes to an end. We anticipate that this will result in spikes of demand for advice and support (and a need to contribute to wider social policy and campaigns work).
- Learning log: AdviceUK has seen a number of member organisations successfully use simple learning logs to capture and share key learning as they navigate new situations or set up new ways of working. We can share examples with you.

- Practically, for any service provision, minimise the time that people spend near to each other. Avoid drop-in arrangements that need people to wait together in a shared area. It may be easier to provide advice by appointment, perhaps by allocating people appointments on the day or at short notice, or alternatively operating a virtual waiting list or queue where people can be texted or messaged when an adviser becomes free, or when the client before them goes in to see the adviser.
- Avoid wasted visits, for example situations where people visit without information that is required for advice or support to be given.
- Minimise needs for shared physical use of equipment such as computers, keyboards, photocopiers, scanners, telephones, tablets, pens, notebooks and so on. Using laptops and a paperless approach to file management as much as possible will be helpful. It could include provision of individual headsets to those using a shared phone, or call forwarding to individual mobile phones. Cloud-based client and case management systems (to which documents) can be uploaded can potentially minimise the need for shared use of paper files.
- Where equipment or items need to be shared, provide handwashing and hand sanitising facilities and give guidance on how the risk of transmission from the use of shared items can be minimised, for example, by cleaning.
- Consider the use of transparent screens between clients, reception staff, advisers and other support staff.
- Health and safety risk assessments will need to be carried out. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19> <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/social-distancing-coronavirus.htm> and other guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance#guidance-for-non-clinical-settings> including issues such as cleaning of non-clinical settings, use of premises etc.
- You will be best placed to understand how to design your advice service as social distancing measures are modified if you understand what is predictable about the typical journeys, end-to-end, of a client coming to, through and away from your service. Don't forget to think about how people find out about your service in the first place, and how people might need to get to a physical or virtual location to meet with an adviser. Don't forget the journeys that advisers and other support staff will need to take for the service to operate effectively. Begin to map out these journeys now – it will be easier to modify your plans in response to different scenarios rather than create plans from scratch. This mapping will help identify points in journeys that may be impacted by whatever public health measures are in force at the time (for example, how will people find out about your service if they can't visit the local community centre as normal?).
- Communicate clearly at key points in these journeys with clients, advisers, reception and support staff about what they need to do, for example, what

people need to do if they feel ill, or have had contact with someone who may be infected.

- Pilot new arrangements on a phased basis to pick up any issues: put resources in place to troubleshoot emerging issues; and be prepared for things to take much longer than you expect!
- Pay particular attention to measures to protect people who are 70 or over, have a long-term condition, are pregnant, or have a weakened immune system. Seek to establish communication channels that can reduce or eliminate the need for people to undertake activity that contributes to COVID-19 transmission: don't just consider the actual advice-giving interaction, also consider related activities.
- Digital inclusion and digital poverty: in the same way that washing machines, cookers, or access to electricity and heating have been viewed for some time as essential items and services, we think that it is now – more than ever before – essential to think about digital inclusion and poverty. It may be helpful to think of digital inclusion from at least 4 perspectives: devices (up-to-date, secure and supported smartphone / tablet / computer); connectivity (including mobile data / home broadband connection / other internet access); accessibility (such as language barriers, support for those with visual or hearing impairments); and digital skills and confidence (the ability to make effective use of digital resources and services, assuming the preceding elements are in place). See <https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/our-work/digital-inclusion/what-digital-inclusion-is>
- It may be possible to find funding to provide clients who do not have internet-enabled devices and/or internet connectivity: see sites such as <https://www.techradar.com/uk/news/best-budget-smartphone> for details of smartphone models. Once a smartphone has been purchased, it is possible to get good SIM only deals on a PAYG basis, without tying people into a contract. Consider whether you can initiate conversations with local charities that make direct grants for individuals to cover the costs of devices/mobile data bundles, or incorporate some of these costs into funding applications.
- Ensure you have correct contact details for clients with existing cases and agree how you will stay in touch. Don't forget options such as phone, text and post for those who may not have access to the internet or be confident in using a computer or smartphone.

### **Remote working and provision of advice**

Consider particularly how you can help people who may be self-isolating: giving people advice and support over the phone; writing to people (where risk of transmission is low if appropriate hygienic measures are used, see <https://www.royalmail.com/>); or using online conferencing. Past feedback from

members working remotely suggests that people are more likely to have access to smartphone apps such as WhatsApp, Skype or Facebook Messenger than software that is designed to be used on a laptop or desktop computer. It may be helpful thinking through with people how they stay in touch with you and what support may be available to them from the community from sources such as foodbanks.

### **Outreach, home visits and residential care**

Follow the guidance in force and seek to establish remote communication channels with the host organisation and person needing advice or support. Be particularly careful when working in care and health settings, following relevant guidance such as <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-social-care-guidance> for social care.

### **Managing, monitoring, understanding and reporting on COVID-19 impacts**

AdviceUK encourages you to monitor COVID-19 impacts on your organisation and advice services. Tell us via [influencing@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:influencing@adviceuk.org.uk) about significant impacts that you are experiencing so we can represent your needs effectively. Actions to take:

- Consider how you can continue to advise people as additional social distancing measures are introduced: act on current guidance.
- Consider your organisation's financial position and whether or not you may need to take up government support (listed above in key sources of information).
- Prepare or upgrade your organisation's ICT infrastructure: voicemail; website; online collaboration and conferencing; mobiles for staff working from home.
- CIPD and ACAS have useful guidance on HR considerations, including working from home: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/emp-law/health-safety/coronavirus-factsheet> and <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>
- Opportunities to work collaboratively with other stakeholders: organisations should focus first on creating infrastructure for communication, decision making, and collaborative action, and understanding what external partners are doing. If you are involved in an advice forum or network, check that it is linked in to other stakeholder initiatives and planning: local authority; civil society (for example the local CVS, see <https://navca.org.uk/>; and local foodbank networks, see for example <https://www.trusselltrust.org/>).
- Signposting to advice and support provided by other partners locally.
- Options for how your organisation can respond to changing demand for practical support, information and advice in the event of adverse economic impacts or disruption. These could include price rises, shortages, local employers laying people off, or increased pressure on public services.

- Arrangements to monitor COVID-19-related impacts (for example using [AdvicePro](#) to capture information on demand and identified needs).
- Asking clients, or particular groups of clients, about their experiences.
- Providing information, training and guidance on recommended hygiene and social distancing measures.

### **Coronavirus support for benefit claimants**

Rightsnet: Daily updates and links to benefit regulations:

<https://www.rightsnet.org.uk/covid19>

See also <https://www.rightsnet.org.uk/forums/viewforum/42/>

CPAG: <https://cpag.org.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/> for specifics on Universal Credit.

Sign up for DWP's Touchbase:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/touchbase-dwp-news-about-work-working-age-benefits-and-services>

Face-to-face assessments: claimants on disability benefits will no longer be required to attend face-to-face assessments. The change also covers health checks for Universal Credit, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/face-to-face-health-assessments-for-benefits-suspended-amid-coronavirus-outbreak>

### **Coronavirus support for employees**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-employees>

### **Coronavirus support for businesses**

A range of extra support and measures are being put in place to help organisations affected by coronavirus, see <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support> including <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/job-retention-scheme-calculator>

### **People with underlying health conditions or requiring health care for other reasons**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

### ***Pregnancy and maternity***

Maternity Action <https://maternityaction.org.uk/> has useful COVID-19 resources and is hosting special webinars on rights at work and benefits for pregnant women and

their families. To participate, e-mail with your contact details, organisation and job title to [webinars@maternityaction.org.uk](mailto:webinars@maternityaction.org.uk)

### ***Treatment for addiction and/or substance misuse***

See <https://www.collectivevoice.org.uk/blog/treatment-and-recovery-services-and-covid-19/>

### ***Mental health***

See <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

### ***End of life care***

Coronavirus is generating increased concern around end-of-life care on issues such as not being treated for coronavirus because of pre-existing health conditions, being admitted to hospital and being given life-sustaining treatments against one's wishes, making living wills and so on. See

<https://coronavirus.compassionindying.org.uk/making-decisions-about-treatment/>

### ***Disabilities***

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-video-service-for-deaf-claimants-accessing-universal-credit> for new, free, BSL video service for deaf claimants accessing Universal Credit.

## **People facing social welfare problems, whose circumstances or experiences make them vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 disruption**

### ***Shocks to household income***

See <https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/coronavirus-and-your-money> for general information and guidance.

Debt Camel provides interesting and helpful insight into trends in the debt advice sector, see <https://debtcamel.co.uk/blog/>

If you don't provide debt advice yourself, consider being able to signpost or refer people to services. Find AdviceUK members, Law Centres and local Citizens Advice who can undertake debt advice and casework locally.

Connect people with organisations that are authorised by the FCA to give debt advice on a not-for-profit basis. The following networks of debt advice providers may also be of interest: Money Advice West <https://www.moneyadvicewest.org.uk/>; EMMA <https://emma.uk.net/services/>; and Debt Free London <https://www.debtfree.london/>. Organisations like National Debtline <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/> and Business Debtline

<https://www.businessdebtline.org/> may also be able to help. The Money Advice Liaison Group (<http://malg.org.uk/>) has [published a list of creditor e-mail addresses](#) for money advisers during the coronavirus crisis.

### ***Housing and homelessness***

See [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/coronavirus](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus) and <http://www.homeless.org.uk/covid19-resources>

We are gathering information from AdviceUK members who would normally support / are interested in supporting tenants in possession proceedings: the 25 June date marking the proposed end of the current suspension of possession proceedings is approaching and we are seeking to influence future arrangements (contact us via [influencing@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:influencing@adviceuk.org.uk) for more information)

### ***Employment***

See <https://www.danielbarnett.co.uk/site/mailling-list/mailling-list-signup/> for regular, in-depth updates.

### ***Domestic abuse***

See <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-information/family-law/> from Rights of Women and <https://learning.elucidat.com/course/5e875ae4d0715-5e8c6417dfc28> for a useful guide (aimed at union reps but helpful for those who may be encountering domestic abuse issues in new situations).

### ***Immigration status***

See <https://www.gov.uk/help-eu-settlement-scheme> for details: applications taking longer than usual; telephone calls not being taken and postal route has been suspended. Applications can still be made online using the EU Exit ID Document check app. Some grant-funded support organisations may have had to suspend services, others are seeking to provide support in other ways.

See <http://www.asaproject.org/resources> for useful factsheet briefings, including Factsheet 20 which addresses COVID-19 specifically.

See <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students> for international students.

See <https://www.freemovement.org.uk/> for various updates regarding recent developments.

### ***Fuel poverty***

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-agrees-measures-with-energy-industry-to-support-vulnerable-people-through-covid-19>

Free e-learning available for advisers: <https://www.nea-training.co.uk/e-learning-solutions/>

### ***LGBTQ+***

See <https://www.akt.org.uk/> for resources for lgbtq+ young people 16-25 in the UK who are experiencing homelessness or living in a hostile or abusive environment.

### ***Criminal justice***

<https://www.clinks.org/our-work/coronavirus-covid-19>

See also <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice> for latest updates.

### **Guidance and updates from regulators, funders, commissioners, the justice system and other stakeholders**

#### ***Financial Conduct Authority***

Please give any feedback on coronavirus impact on your FCA-regulated work to [ConsumerInsight@fca.org.uk](mailto:ConsumerInsight@fca.org.uk) (please make sure to copy in [influencing@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:influencing@adviceuk.org.uk)). The FCA has given specific information for different types of FCA-regulated firms at <https://www.fca.org.uk/firms/information-firms-coronavirus-covid-19-response> and some updates about delays to its workplans over the coming months. Submission deadlines for regulatory returns have been extended, see <https://www.fca.org.uk/firms/regulatory-reporting/changes-regulatory-reporting-30-june-2020> (the extension announced applies for submissions that are due up to and including 30 June 2020). The FCA advises that any firm should contact the Supervision Hub (Contact Centre) to inform the FCA that the firm will not be able to submit in time. The FCA also notes that its regulatory activity will take into account the current situation. See <https://www.fca.org.uk/consumers/coronavirus-information-personal-loans-credit-cards-overdrafts> for information for consumers.

#### ***Insolvency Service***

Sign up for [e-mail updates here](#). Recent updates have been sent about Debt Relief Orders fee payments by BACS and the importance of quoting both the DRO application number and the applicant's name when making a BACS payment. [Protocol guidance on IVAs](#) was released on 17 April 2020.

## ***UK Finance***

See <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/covid-19> including comprehensive guidance for those customers who are in self-isolation but who still need and want to pay for essential goods <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/covid-19-making-payments-safely-lockdown>

## ***Funders and commissioners***

Many funders and commissioners are responding directly: get in touch with your current funders (starting by visiting their website if they have one) if you need help or are wondering about current programme delivery.

See <http://covid19funders.org.uk/> for a large group of funders that are seeking to coordinate their response to COVID-19. Check here if you are concerned about current funding, [http://covid19funders.org.uk/news\\_updates/](http://covid19funders.org.uk/news_updates/) has details about funding that is becoming available.

See <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2020/03/26/new-procurement-guidance-in-response-to-covid-19-implications-for-charities/> for charities delivering contracted services.

See <https://www.grantfinder.co.uk/coronavirus>

See <https://londoncommunityresponsefund.org.uk/guidance/> - emergency grants for London-based organisations.

Not getting AdviceUK's funding updates? Let us know via [influencing@adviceuk.org.uk](mailto:influencing@adviceuk.org.uk)

## ***Justice system and courts***

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice>

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service>

See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

## ***Data protection***

See <https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/> and do consider (and pass on information to colleagues) about data protection when working from home <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/working-from-home/>

As people move to new ways of working, there is a significantly increased risk of personal data breaches, for example, e-mails or letters being sent to the wrong e-mail or postal address. Remind colleagues to be particularly careful about checking in advance with clients about preferred communication channels. E-mail and postal

addresses should be checked carefully before sending. Wherever possible, do not send sensitive or confidential information in unencrypted e-mails. Explore the use of passwords to encrypt this information as file attachments, or alternatives such as secure messaging.

### ***Safeguarding***

For adults: <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/safeguarding-adults>

For children: <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/safeguarding/children> and <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/coronavirus>

### **AdvicePro and COVID-19**

As part of the ISO27001:2013 certification both ACM and hosting provider Brightsolid have Business Continuity plans in place. AdvicePro's functionality is not affected: as a web-based application, all subscribing organisations will be able to carry on recording and reporting on their data even during a shutdown or when they cannot access their main place of work. Within ACM and Brightsolid, staff are also able to work remotely, so the helpdesk will continue to function as normal even when staff are working from home. If all staff are working from home, we will advise our customers to email rather than call. See <https://www.advicepro.org.uk/> for more information or to find out more about the software.

### **Insurance cover**

Check insurance cover that you have in place, and ensure that you maintain appropriate levels of cover even when services are not operating, or, in the worst case, cease operating. For example, in relation to professional indemnity insurance, you are likely to be insured for claims that are made against you in a particular period. There is nothing to stop claims arising (being made against you) when the service is not operational. Similarly, check your cover related to employers and public liability and any cover you may require in relation to office contents and property/premises. Even if they are not being used as normal, they may still represent a risk to which you are exposed. See <https://www.adviceuk.org.uk/products-and-services/insurance-financial/> for details of AdviceUK insurance products and related services.

### **Software platforms, tools and training for working remotely**

Organisations like Charity Digital (<https://charitydigital.org.uk/> and <https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/coronavirus-what-your-charity-needs-to-do-to->

[prepare-7189](#)) give helpful advice, including information on software that is being made available free of charge to help charities respond:

- Charity Digital Exchange <https://www.charitydigitalexchange.org/> and donated licences for a wide range of digital products, including online collaboration products such as Asana and licences for cloud-based products from vendors such as Microsoft  
[https://www.charitydigitalexchange.org/partner\\_catalogues/Microsoft%20Cloud](https://www.charitydigitalexchange.org/partner_catalogues/Microsoft%20Cloud)
- Charity Digital Article <https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/coronavirus-tech-offers-available-to-charities-7209> (will be updated regularly)
- Charity Digital blog on how tech can keep your charity working  
<https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/coronavirus-how-tech-can-keep-your-charity-working-through-a-pandemic--7215>
- Zoom <https://zoom.us/pricing>
- Skype, some AdviceUK members already use Skype to give face-to-face advice remotely. Skype for Business is being replaced with Microsoft Teams.
- Go To Meeting <https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb>
- Slack <https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/> see also <https://slackhq.com/>
- Microsoft Teams <https://products.office.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>
- PowWowNow <https://www.powwownow.co.uk/>
- <https://theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk/> hub for free digital and numeracy courses to build your skills and those of your workforce.

### **Working from home as an adviser**

Let us have your feedback on what works and your experiences to date:

- Where possible, communicate with clients and find out how they want to communicate with you: be aware of potential risks around issues such as domestic abuse or changed family / household situations.
- Consider how clients may be able to use platforms like WhatsApp to send photos of key letters: secure messaging is better than unencrypted e-mail, but sensibly balance the risks of communicating via e-mail with not communicating at all.
- Set up a generic e-mail, or if possible, secure web form where clients can send information and securely upload documentation: consider how your organisation might be able to help people submit information.
- Keep good case notes and records: a cloud-based system like AdvicePro is particularly well-suited to remote access.
- Make good use of any spare time in the coming months (caveat: we recognise that many readers may be overwhelmed with additional work,

changed duties and different ways of working at the moment). If there are opportunities to catch up on other things, let us know and we will do our best to support you, for example in areas such as reviewing policies and procedures, thinking about future income generation.

- Conference calling may offer possibilities if people being advised only have access to a phone: see providers such as <https://www.powwownow.co.uk/conference-call>

### **Scams, misinformation and cyber security**

Please encourage people to be on their guard against misinformation and scams. It is likely that unscrupulous individuals and groups may try to take advantage of the situation using techniques such as phishing e-mails, links that expose people to malware and so on. Full Fact <https://fullfact.org/health/what-are-symptoms-coronavirus-disease-covid-19/> has helpful resources to counter disinformation. Websites such as <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/advice/> the <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/> network and <https://www.gov.uk/report-suspicious-emails-websites-phishing> give helpful advice and information on scams.

The National Cyber Security Centre, <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/> gives helpful guidance on cyber security issues, and has provided specific guidance on cyber security during the COVID-19 pandemic, covering issues such as home working and video conferencing services for individuals and organisations.