

[Defence Electronics and Components Agency COVID-19 update](#)

DECA will remain operational in line with Government guidance throughout the COVID-19 emergency to deliver key Defence and National Security outputs, support overseas operations (where possible), and MOD contingency plans held at readiness to provide Military Assistance to the Civil Authorities.

Our Business Continuity planning is based on our ability to support those tasks which are critical to Defence and National Security interests in these challenging times, with DECA seeking urgent assistance from our customers to determine which of their products fall into these categories. We are currently contacting our customers to establish which tasks are critical so that we can plan and resource accordingly while at the same time complying with Government advice on home working for those non-critical activities or where people can operate remotely.

We also appreciate that, as the on-going situation continues to develop, critical tasks will emerge and priorities will change and we will keep our customers updated to reflect this. To remain updated with our ongoing support to defence, please [subscribe](#) to receive updates.

[Government announces new action to prevent modern slavery in its supply chains](#)

The [statement](#), which is published to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, outlines action being taken to ensure that taxpayers' money does not line the pockets of criminals who exploit vulnerable workers.

Thousands of businesses are currently required to publish annual modern slavery statements under the Act.

To lead the way for the public sector, the UK government has now published its statement which assesses the risk of modern slavery across around £50 billion of its annual spending. Individual ministerial departments will publish their modern slavery statements from 2020/21.

The government has also consulted on strengthening the requirement for large businesses to publish their modern slavery statements – including extending this to public bodies – and has committed to developing a registry for modern

slavery statements.

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins said:

As we acknowledge everything this government has achieved for victims of modern slavery over the last five years, I am proud that we are taking this unprecedented step to show how we are tackling slavery during procurement.

We are committed to targeting perpetrators and safeguarding victims of this horrific crime, both domestically and globally.

Cabinet Office Minister Lord Agnew said:

As a government, we are committed to driving out modern slavery in all forms, so it is crucial that we make sure it's nowhere to be seen in the supply chains which helps provide our vital public services.

I am also delighted that across government, we will be publishing our own modern slavery statements, so people can see the work we are doing to fight this terrible practice.

The statement sets out the government's efforts towards eradicating modern slavery from its supply chains, including direct engagement with around 400 suppliers on implementing effective modern slavery due diligence and delivering training to more than 250 government commercial staff.

The government has already announced plans to deliver greater social value through its commercial activities, that will incentivise businesses to become more responsible and sustainable.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 continues to be a landmark piece of legislation, which gives law enforcement greater powers to tackle modern slavery and improved essential support for victims.

Measures in the Act included:

- introduction of the statutory defence for victims who were compelled to commit criminal offences
- creation of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians in England and Wales to advocate on behalf of trafficked children
- creation of the role of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to encourage good practice in tackling modern slavery and the identification of victims.

Earlier this week the government published [statutory guidance for safeguarding victims of modern slavery](#) that sets out the support available to victims and the process for determining whether someone is a victim.

The number of live police operations has increased thanks to the provisions under the Act, from 188 police operations in December 2016 to at least 1,810 in February 2020. In the year to September 2019, the police recorded 6,544 offences of modern slavery, an increase of 53% compared with the previous year (4,268 offences).

Dame Sara Thornton, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, said:

Five years ago, the Modern Slavery Act introduced ground-breaking new measures to improve the protection offered to victims and survivors of modern slavery and to bolster the law enforcement response against perpetrators of this devastating crime.

However, protecting victims and prosecutors is not enough. We need to do much more to tackle the structures that allow exploitation to thrive. Ensuring that businesses, public services and government are doing all they can to prevent trafficking from taking place in their supply chains is vital.

I welcome the publication of the government modern slavery statement and this commitment to continue taking a world-leading approach to tackling modern slavery.

COVID-19 – ARRANGEMENTS FOR SERVICE OF WRITS, MOTIONS & OTHER COURT DOCUMENTS

In light of the current situation, there will be no staff based in the office at Victoria Quay for the next few weeks. Accordingly the Office of the Advocate General is, until further notice, unable to accept service of any writs, motions for specification of documents, other motions and applications or other court documents which would normally be sent by post to the Victoria Quay address.

We will however accept service of all such documents electronically. Please send all communications to DivisionASolicitors@advocategeneral.gov.uk and they will be acknowledged as soon as possible.

Please note this does not supersede any existing agreed electronic service arrangements which may be in place with private practice firms handling UK Government litigation in Scotland.

The arrangements set out in the document relating to service on the service of documents page on this website are superseded meantime.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on our services

We will continue to operate as close to normal as possible in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We would like to apologise to anyone who might be affected by a slower-than-usual service.

Impact on our services

Our Business e-services, which receive the majority of all applications, are running as normal. In these unprecedented circumstances all other services are facing varying degrees of disruption and there may be some delays. However, we are working hard to minimise disruption and are prioritising the services that allow property transactions to continue as normal.

We anticipate minimal disruption to:

- bankruptcy searches
- Find a property
- land charges searches
- local land charges searches
- MapSearch
- official copies of documents
- official searches of the index map
- official searches of part
- official searches of whole
- Property Alert

We anticipate that some of our services will be affected by the current situation with some applications taking slightly longer than our usual service standards.

We anticipate moderate disruption to discharge updates.

We are working hard to ensure our most important services continue. As a result services which have less impact upon the normal operation of the property market are likely to experience more significant disruption. We anticipate that we will be unable to meet normal service standards for these services.

We anticipate more significant disruption to:

- register create applications
- register update applications

Cancellations

We have extended all current cancellation dates until further notice. We will update you once we resume normal service and at that point we will send warnings of cancellation again, giving you four weeks to reply to our requests for information (requisitions).

Extensions

We will aim to grant any request to either extend a notice period, or allow a further period for making an objection, for any reason related to the coronavirus. However, there are some circumstances where we will not be able to do so including where:

- in some cases, the Land Registration Rules 2003 prescribe a period or a maximum period – while we cannot extend the maximum period, we may be able to delay determining the application concerned to allow for late responses
 - an example of where we might do this would be to allow for a late objection to an application for the entry of a restriction (s.45(2) and r.92(9))
- the registrar serves notice of an application to cancel a caution against first registration (s.18(4) and r.53) or to cancel a unilateral notice (s.36(3) and r.86) on the expiry of the prescribed period, which cannot be extended beyond a maximum number of days, the registrar is obliged to cancel the caution or unilateral notice in the absence of an objection
- the period for serving counter notice to an application for registration as proprietor by a squatter under [Schedule 6](#) to the Land Registration Act 2002 cannot be extended (para.3 of Sch.6 and r.189) – counter-notice is ineffective once the notice period has expired: paragraphs 3(2) and 4 of Schedule 6
 - rule 189 deals with the notice period for giving counter-notice: no provision is made for the period to be extended

Evidence of identity

We will no longer reject applications where identity evidence is not provided. Instead we will now raise a request for information (requisition) so the application does not lose its priority.

More time to access PDF downloads

We know many of our business customers have only limited access to their systems at the moment. We have therefore temporarily extended the time you have to [access your organisation's PDFs on the portal](#).

Documents for applications completed on or after 16 March are now available free of charge for 90 days from the day they were completed, instead of the usual 30 days. This includes completed registrations and documents for

guaranteed queries such as official copies and official searches.

Register, title plan and document views that are in your download area will also benefit from the extended time.

Land Charges applications

We have changed our practice to allow most Land Charges applications to be made by email, through attaching PDF copies of application forms and any supporting evidence. Only customers with a variable Direct Debit account will be able to do this. A new paragraph 6.1.3 has been added to [practice guide 63](#). The change does not extend to those applications that can already be made through the portal or Business Gateway. Practice guide 63 contains full details.

Expedite an application

We apologise if your application is affected by this necessary prioritisation of work. If you feel that your application is urgent, you can ask us to expedite it using Application Enquiry in the HM Land Registry portal. If we approve your request, we will process your application sooner. [Find out how you can expedite your application](#).

Telephone service

Our Customer Support Centre is not answering telephone calls until further notice. You can [send us a message](#) using our online form.

Visiting our offices

We have temporarily suspended our service that allows you to make appointments to visit us in person. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience.

View land and property information by post

You can apply by post to view information we hold about property and land.

Apply by post for:

You will be temporarily unable to visit our offices to have your identity verified using forms ID1 or ID2, or submit an application for registration in person.

You can have your identity verified by a solicitor, barrister, or notary public if they are still available at this time. Get more information, including a video, on our [identity verification requirements](#).

You can continue to [get in touch with us or use a guide that may answer your question](#). We will respond as quickly as we can.

Keeping you up to date

In response to questions raised by our customers as a result of coronavirus, HM Land Registry continues to review its practice, policy and procedures regularly including, for example, the use of electronic signatures and also the lodgement of incomplete applications.

We will update customers if we revise our guidance.

You can follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

[Change to Plan 1 Interest Rates](#)

From the 7 April 2020, the interest rate applied to all Plan 1 Income Contingent Repayment (ICR) student loans will reduce from 1.75% to 1.1%.

The Department for Education has confirmed the change following the decrease to the Bank of England base interest rate from 0.25% to 0.1% on 19 March 2020.

Plan 1 borrowers will continue to repay 9% of their earnings over the repayment threshold. The repayment threshold for Plan 1 ICR loans remains at £18,935 (increasing to £19,390 on 6 April 2020).

For more information on repaying your loan visit: [Repaying your student loan](#)