

Civil servants to lead the way in returning to offices

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Steve Barclay, has tasked departments across government with ensuring their offices can return quickly to full occupancy following the lifting of work from home restrictions in England.

The Civil Service will lead the way in a return to office working, with Ministers working with their Permanent Secretaries and departments to put in place measures to monitor office use and get people back to normal, pre-pandemic arrangements, with clear Ministerial expectations put in place.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said:

Now we are learning to live with COVID and have lifted Plan B measures, we need to move away from a reliance on video meetings and get back to the benefits of face-to-face, collaborative working.

I'm grateful to the Civil Service for managing the challenges of the last two years. It is important that we now see the maximum use of our office space being made from next week, as we build a strong recovery after the disruption of the pandemic.

The Civil Service has played a leading role in helping the country tackle the pandemic, with many front-line workers and office staff remaining in their places of work throughout the pandemic and many more working from home.

Following the removal of Plan B measures, it is however vital that more staff return to the office so they can once again benefit from collaborative working in their public service delivery – this is particularly important for the learning and development of new members of staff, who have joined the Civil Service during the pandemic.

The Minister's call for government departments to enable a return to full capacity has been reiterated by the Cabinet Office's Permanent Secretary and Chief Operating Officer of the Civil Service, Alex Chisholm, who has written to leaders across Whitehall asking them to support a significant and swift return of staff to the workplace.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will also raise the issue at Cabinet next week, where he is expected to urge Ministers to make sure their offices are working at full capacity at the earliest opportunity.

It is expected that Civil Servants and other office workers returning to the office will bring economic benefits for businesses across the country, with sandwich shops and the hospitality sector due to see a dramatic increase in

footfall.

To allow the transition back to office working, measures have been put in place in government buildings to reassure staff. These include increased ventilation and improved cleaning routines. Department leaders will also ensure all safety guidance is followed at all times.

There is no government requirement or recommendation for employers to limit capacity in the workplace.

Government Chemist contribution recognised as ACMD publishes advice on CBD products

Cannabidiol (CBD) is a non-psychoactive cannabinoid present in the cannabis plant (*Cannabis sativa* L) along with many other cannabinoids that may either exhibit psychoactive or non-psychoactive properties.

CBD plant extract or plant isolates have gained salience as an ingredient in food supplements and in some cosmetic products, and there has been a proliferation of such products, available online and on the high street.

As an isolated substance, CBD is not a controlled drug. However, the process of extracting or isolating CBD from the cannabis plant may co-extract the other cannabinoids and products.

CBD edible products are now regulated as novel foods. They must also be compositionally safe and correctly labelled. Wide variation in compliance with CBD label claims has been recorded and the presence of controlled cannabinoids is a known risk.

In addition, the 'controlled drug' content 'threshold' of one milligram in a product or preparation referred to in the Home Office Drug Licensing Factsheet – Cannabis, CBD and other cannabinoids was presenting difficulties in interpretation and analysis.

To address these issues, the Government Chemist has been undertaking a number of CBD-related projects:

When the ministerial commission asked the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) to specify which controlled cannabinoids should be controlled and set an unavoidable trace level for each of these within consumer CBD products, the Government Chemist was able to feed his findings into the ACMD's [consumer cannabidiol \(CBD\) products: call for evidence](#).

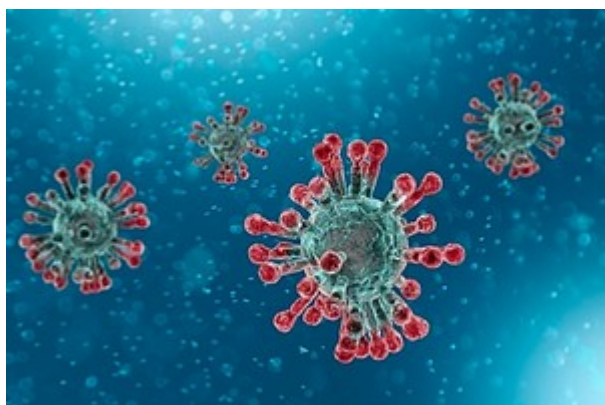
ACMD has now published its advice on consumer cannabidiol (CBD) products making several recommendations. Read the report and accompanying letters:

The Government Chemist was pleased to note the citation to his work in the [letter](#) from the ACMD Chair to Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Justice for “providing the main evidence for the practical capacity for the analytics industry to test” for such products.

The Government Chemist will continue to work with UK regulators and other stakeholders to help take the ACMD’s recommendations forward.

For more information about the work mentioned in this page or the work the Government Chemist does contact:

[UKHSA therapeutic technical briefing published](#)



The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has started publishing regular [technical briefings](#) on the development and effectiveness of therapeutics used to treat patients with COVID-19 in the UK.

Thanks to the success of the vaccination programme, the number of people in hospital or suffering from severe disease has been greatly reduced. There are a number of effective therapeutics in use in the UK to treat those who still encounter serious illness as a result of COVID-19.

The surveillance programme to support the rollout of novel therapeutics will examine the level of access to various treatments, the extent to which emerging mutations and variants may affect efficacy, and the ongoing picture of clinical outcomes.

Updates and early data will be published regularly.

Published 21 January 2022

Last updated 31 January 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 31 January 2022

Updated to reflect that the therapeutic technical briefings will no longer be published on a fortnightly basis due to a change in operational requirements. We will continue to provide regular updates and a new technical briefing will be published in due course.

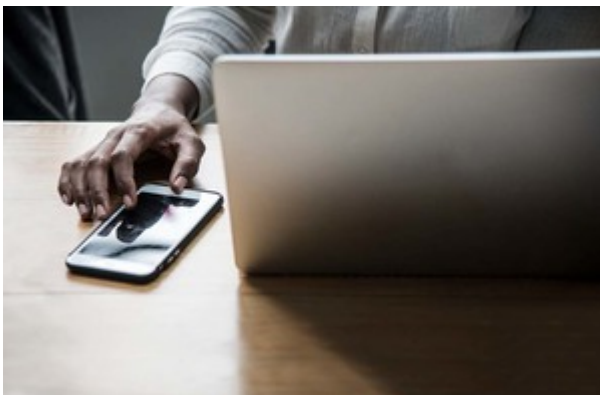
2. 21 January 2022

First published.

[Planning Inspectorate Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Update 21 January 2022](#)

News story

Coronavirus: Latest position on casework arrangements for the Planning Inspectorate



Following the government announcement that [England will fully return to Plan A on Thursday 27 January](#), we have [updated our guidance](#) to reflect these changes.

Graham Stallwood (Director of Operations) has [written to chief planning officers at local planning authorities \(LPAs\)](#) to remind them that they need to prepare to host events reflective of the restriction changes.

From 13 September 2021, [LPAs resumed the pre-pandemic practice of facilitating face-to-face casework events](#) while also providing a virtual option in case pandemic restrictions change. In December, with Plan B being put in place, [we wrote to LPAs advising them that they needed to have preparations in place to run events virtually](#).

Now that restrictions are being lifted, we expect that events will be able to

run as they did in the autumn, whilst continuing to ensure the safety of staff and participants.

Our latest position on casework arrangements is:

- site visits will continue and inspectors will adhere to government guidance on the use of face coverings
- hearings and inquiries are being arranged by local planning authorities and order making authorities (except for national infrastructure where the applicant is the organiser)
- hearings and inquiries are entirely in person, entirely virtual or a mix of the two
- where participants (including the Inspector) need to present their evidence or participate virtually this will need to be facilitated by the local planning authority, order making authority or national infrastructure applicant arranging the hearing or inquiry
- where in-person events or elements are planned, the local planning authority, order making authority or national infrastructure applicant arranging the event must be prepared for the hearing or inquiry to be held fully virtually at short notice and without postponement
- it is the responsibility of the local planning authority to ensure there are adequate safety measures in place as per government guidance

We want to continue to ensure that casework can keep moving while keeping our staff and customers safe. To help us, customers are requested to:

- inform us as soon as possible if they are unable to attend, or feel that it is unsafe for an inspector to attend, a site visit for any reason
- use the appeals casework portal for new appeals
- use the appeals casework portal for making comments on appeals
- email/ ring their case officer directly
- avoid posting written correspondence to Temple Quay House if possible – this delays the process

We are continuing work on developing a new operating model for events. Our goal is to build a sustainable model for the future that:

- is accessible for all parties involved and offers opportunities to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in our events
- ensures we maintain our values of fairness, openness, impartiality and customer focus
- meets our public sector equality duty responsibilities
- meets our environmental policy requirements

We expect to share our new operating model in spring 2022.

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Recruitment starts for new SMC commissioners

Press release

The Equality Hub is recruiting for new Social Mobility Commissioners.



Equality Hub

Today (Friday 21st January) the Government's Equality Hub will begin recruitment for up to five new Social Mobility Commissioners.

The move comes following the expiry of previous Commissioners' tenures at the end of October 2021.

Last year, Katharine Birbalsingh CBE was appointed the new Chair of the SMC, and Alun Francis OBE as the Deputy Chair. The new Commissioners will work alongside the new Chair and Deputy, forming a new board that will meet regularly to drive forward the work of the Social Mobility Commission (SMC).

The SMC is an independent body which seeks to put forward solutions to issues that are holding people back from achieving their potential in the United Kingdom. Following the Minister for Women & Equalities' 'Fight for Fairness' speech in December 2020, the Commission moved into the Cabinet Office, allowing it to advance key action on social mobility issues from the heart of government.

Recruitment for the roles begins today and closes 18 February 2022. Those appointed will be expected to fulfil a number of roles, including:

- actively engaging with the business of the Commission, contributing their knowledge and experience in order to shape and enhance its work;
- commenting on and contributing to the Commission's major research reports and publications, including its annual report which is laid before Parliament;
- building and maintaining effective working relationships with the Chair and Deputy Chair, the other Commissioners, and the Secretariat, to ensure that the Commission works effectively to fulfil its remit;
- acting as an advocate for the social mobility and the levelling up

agendas, helping to drive a culture of change both within and outside government and building effective relationships with relevant stakeholders; and

- acting as a representative of the Commission, espousing its values and work.

The time commitment is one to two days a month (12 to 24 days per year) for Commissioners.

Notes to Editors:

More details can be found on the [HMG Public Appointments page](#)

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