

Engineering new normals

Throughout our organisation we're having to rapidly adapt to new 'normals', whether this means unexpectedly working from home or getting used to new ways of working to maintain social distancing in the workplace.

For some, like Sellafield Ltd's Product Development Manager Mark Taylor and his team, it's often a bit of both.

What would a 'normal' day at work look like to you before the Covid-19 pandemic?

The Product Development department is part of the wider Engineering & Maintenance directorate, focussed on a range of activities including rapid prototyping, testing and innovation to make commercially-available solutions that help us manage the UK's nuclear legacy.

A lot of my time is spent coaching other engineers and speaking to a wide range of colleagues from across the business to understand their problems and how we can help. As a result, my time is split between office working and being on plant or in our workshops.

For the last year we've been concentrating on developing our capability, including the growth of a 3D print hub that came online just before the lockdown.

How have things changed for your team in recent weeks?

In terms of production we've switched to fully supporting Sellafield Ltd's response to Covid-19, transforming parts of our workshop into a production line to manufacture face shields for the NHS and helping to ensure quality control based on a number of designs, using different manufacturing techniques.

As with many teams across our organisation, the major change for us is that lots of our people are now working from home or having to approach things very differently when they come in to work.

What has it meant for you personally?

It's meant working with an even wider range of stakeholders than I normally would, from the multi-agency support team and the NHS to areas of the business I don't usually work with.

I'm avoiding going into the workplace where possible, meaning I'm working from home most of the time. When I do go into the workplace, I'm careful to observe the measures we've put in place to maintain social distancing; like making sure we stay 2m apart and setting up in separate offices in groups of two.

It takes some adapting to, but we're used to strict safety rules and procedures at Sellafield. I find it's often the simple encounters that are the most difficult – you realise how far 2m is when you have to pass someone on the stairs or in a narrow corridor.

How are you finding the changes?

This is obviously a situation none of us saw coming but the rapid response from our organisation and industry has been amazing. I'm really grateful that my team and I have the opportunity to lend our brains, hands and equipment directly to the response effort and that hundreds of colleagues are doing the same. From our graduates and contractors to people on industrial placements, everyone is pulling together to give their support wherever they can.

The things I miss are the people, seeing the iconic Sellafield skyline each morning and just walking through the workshops watching things being made every day.

We're all still getting used to the technological and psychological challenges of working from home – video conferencing will never replace face-to-face contact – but this definitely has some advantages. Having the time and space to think, away from the day-to-day distractions, has been a great experience. I'm also spending a lot more time with my family and now my dog gets to join me in my office. I'll certainly consider working from home more often in the future.

As a team we're also finding that, with much of our project work on hold, we have more time for the things we often don't get around to. Normally it can be difficult not to get immersed in the details of the projects we're involved in – we're engineers after all – but we now have some space think more strategically about the improvements we'll make once we get back to the office.

Every day has its challenges but it's important to look for the positives and appreciate just how far we've come and how much we've achieved in such a short space of time.

Lord Hodge: Technology and the Law

News story

Technology and the Law. The Dover House Lecture 2020. Lord Hodge, Deputy President of The Supreme Court, 10 March 2020.



Lord Hodge, Deputy President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, delivered the 2020 Dover House lecture on the evening of 10 March 2020.

The text of his lecture, titled “Technology and the Law” is available for [download as a PDF](#).

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[Multi-million support for vulnerable children during COVID-19](#)

Vulnerable children most at risk of neglect, violence or exploitation will benefit from extra support to keep them safe during the Coronavirus outbreak.

More than £12 million will be spent on 14 projects across the country to tackle the increased risk some children and young people are facing as they stay at home to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. This will include money to pay for individual support for families at risk of domestic abuse, community volunteers to work with families, and continued support for teenagers at risk of exploitation.

The money will benefit children in care and care leavers, and will be used to also support vulnerable children’s mental health and to provide practical and emotional help. This includes a package of funding to give young people in some project areas unlimited data on their phones for three months so they can stay connected and prevent them suffering from isolation.

The funding builds on the Government’s work to protect vulnerable children and young people’s wellbeing, that includes working with schools, social workers and local authorities to encourage them to continue attending school wherever appropriate.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

I will always put the care and safety of vulnerable children first, especially at this time as they face unique challenges due to COVID-19. For many of these children, social distancing measures may present additional risks, whether from neglect or abuse at home or from strangers online.

We are working hand in hand with all the professionals supporting these children to prioritise their wellbeing during these unprecedented times. These new projects will prevent children suffering from isolation or exploitation as the country continues to respond to COVID-19.

The £12 million package includes work on:

- **Adolescent exploitation:**

For teenagers across North London who experience multiple risks, bringing together NHS, social care, police, criminal justice and third sector services under one roof – a “child house” to support children and families affected by child sexual abuse and exploitation

- **Domestic abuse support:**

Through a domestic abuse programme in Newham that works with whole families, to reduce the chances of it from happening in the first place through early intervention, and where a designated social worker will work intensively with families if risks escalate

- **Children in care:**

Various programmes around the country to build lasting support networks for children and families in the care system including foster parents, to prevent social isolation at this time, as well as finding homes for young people leaving care;

- **Mental health support:**

Families in Camden will receive a range of services from which families choose the ones they want to rely on, including mediation, mentoring, family therapy and youth support

Chief Social Worker for Children and Families Isabelle Trowler said:

It's never been more important for children and their families to receive the support they need. In the true spirit of dedicated public service it is so heartening to see these projects adapting and continuing to deliver services in times of unprecedented

challenge.

Education is a strong protective factor for many vulnerable children and young people, which is why the Government is also ensuring there is a place in nursery, school or college for them.

Alongside this, the Government has also set out significant support for services benefitting these young people and their families, including:

- Additional funding of £3.2 billion for local authorities, helping them meet additional demands including within children's social care services at this time;
- £1.6 million to expand and promote the NSPCC's helpline, offering advice and support on how to raise concerns about children at risk;
- £8 million from the [Adoption Support Fund](#) to help families under pressure as a result of the outbreak;
- Better data sharing between all safeguarding partners, making sure the NHS, police, social workers, school nurses and health workers have the information they need to protect children at risk of abuse;
- New teams of Department for Education and Ofsted staff leading work around the country to gather data on vulnerable children's attendance at school or other settings, providing a overall picture of the risks facing these children so that councils can follow best practice;
- Tackling the barriers that many of them face, providing laptops and tablets for children with social workers and care leavers to help them keep in touch with the services they need;
- Providing continued funding for free school meals, so that eligible children benefit from this even if they are not in school; and
- More than £33 million for the Staying Put programme, supporting young people leaving care to continue living with their foster parents past age 18 and preventing the risk of becoming homeless, and a further £9 million to provide personal adviser support for care leavers through to 25, helping them into employment, education and training.

This comes after the Education Secretary asked local authorities to ensure that no one has to leave care during this difficult time.

Part of the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, the funding announced today builds on investment worth almost £270 million since 2014, driving innovation and sharing best practice to improve outcomes for children by increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of children's social care services.

[Response to 9 April direction from](#)

Secretary of State for Education

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

£17m government package to protect freight routes to Northern Ireland

- New scheme will support ferry operators on 5 routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- UK government continues to work closely with NI Executive and the aviation industry to agree funding to protect air passenger services between NI and GB

Vital ferry routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland have been safeguarded, thanks to a multi-million-pound government scheme to help ensure critical freight can continue to move into and across the Union.

The package, worth up to £17 million, is being funded by the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive and will be made available to operators so that they can continue running freight services on five sea routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced today that further funding, worth tens of millions of pounds, will also be made available to support more routes across the UK, subject to discussions with operators.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Essential supplies are continuing to flow well, but operators are facing challenges as fewer people travelling means less capacity to move goods.

Today's action will help ensure we have the freight capacity we need across the UK. This funding will help ferry operators protect our supply chain and maintain the flow of critical goods across the Irish Sea and throughout the Union.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, said:

This is excellent news for Northern Ireland and the connectivity of the entire United Kingdom.

Although this coronavirus outbreak has reduced travel demand, this support package from the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive will ensure that essential ferry routes are kept open and vital transport links across the entire UK are safeguarded – guaranteeing the continued supply of critical goods, such as food and medical supplies.

I am pleased that a further support package is also being developed to help ensure crucial air passenger services to and from London, Belfast City Airport and City of Derry Airport are maintained. And we will continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive to help deliver that.

In addition to the funding announced today, the Department for Transport is working closely with the wider transport sector and devolved administrations to monitor the situation on air routes which are vital in helping maintain transport links across the union.

The Secretary of State for Transport also confirmed that the Department has been working with the Northern Ireland Executive to develop a support package which will ensure passenger flights from Belfast and Derry-Londonderry, to Great Britain are maintained during the pandemic.

The Department is in discussions with the relevant airlines, airports and the Northern Ireland Executive to finalise this package guaranteeing lifeline air passenger services remain in operation.

All operators on the following 5 routes between GB-NI are in the scope of this scheme:

- Cairnryan-Larne
- Heysham-Warrenpoint
- Heysham – Belfast
- Liverpool – Belfast
- Cairnryan-Belfast

The funding package for maritime freight services to Northern Ireland is for

up to 2 months. It is time-limited to help maintain services during the Covid-19 crisis. It will be made available only to roll-on, roll-off freight operators, which move freight by transporting haulage vehicles across sea routes.