

[SLC restores partial customer contact services](#)

We have been working hard to continue providing our core student finance services for those applying for academic year 2020/21, for current students expecting summer term payments, for customers in repayment and for the universities and colleges we work closely with.

In response to Government guidance on the COVID-19 pandemic we took the decision to temporarily close our contact centres to enable us to change the way our services are delivered. To start to restore customer contact services, we have enabled a team of colleagues working remotely to support a core team of critical office based workers.

Partial customer contact services are now available, however we anticipate our telephone lines will be very busy. We will continue to work to restore more of our services over the coming days and weeks.

We are prioritising urgent student finance cases and we request that before calling us customers visit the Frequently Asked Questions which are available for [Prospective Students](#), [Current Students](#) and [Customers in Repayment](#).

Customers can also contact us on Twitter [@SF_England](#), [@SF_Wales](#) or [@SLC_Repayment](#) for help with funding and repayment queries.

New and returning students in [England](#) and [Wales](#) can continue to apply for student finance. [Information is also available online for customers who have questions in relation to recent applications for funding for academic year 20/21.](#)

We are processing Maintenance and Tuition Fee payments for existing students as normal. Students will shortly receive an e-mail or SMS to confirm their payment is on its way.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused and trust you understand the reasons for these changes and the importance of the measures we are taking in the current circumstances.

Will I still get my next student finance payment?

SLC can confirm that students will receive their scheduled or next instalment of their Maintenance Loan at the planned start of their summer term, regardless of whether their university or provider has made alternative arrangements for teaching.

Can I still apply for student finance?

If you're studying at the moment or you'll be starting a full-time, undergraduate course after 1 August 2020, you can apply online for student

finance as normal.

Will you still take student loan repayments if I can't work due to COVID-19?

We are still collecting repayments but it's important to remember that you'll only make repayments to your student loan once you're earning over the repayment threshold for your repayment plan type. This means that if you stop working, or your income drops below the threshold, your repayments will stop too. [Find out about the repayment thresholds for Plan 1, Plan 2 and Postgraduate Loans.](#)

I have recently graduated. Can you confirm when my repayments will start?

You will become eligible to repay in the April after graduating from your course. You will then only repay once your earnings reach the threshold for your plan type. No action is required at this point.

When will full service be restored?

We will continue to work to restore our customer contact services by enabling colleagues to work remotely in support of a core team of critical office based workers. However, as a predominately office based organisation with 3,500 employees across 4 sites, this will take some time.

Our Contact Centres in [England](#) and [Wales](#) are open between 10.00 – 17:30 for funding and repayment queries.

Our [@SF_England](#) and [@SF_Wales](#) social media teams are available to answer questions about your funding.

Our [@SLC_Repayment](#) social media team will be available to answer questions in the coming days.

We will continue to provide further updates for customers here and on our social media channels.

[International engagement with the Republic of Moldova](#)

- 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.

[Support for modern slavery victims affected by coronavirus](#)

Individuals supported through the modern slavery victim care contract will be allowed to stay in government-funded safe accommodation for the next three months, as the government steps up [measures to protect the vulnerable from coronavirus](#).

Through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) individuals are able to access support including accommodation for at least 45 days if found to be potential victims.

Where they would ordinarily be assisted to move on from their accommodation, this temporary change will ensure that these individuals remain safely in accommodation.

These changes will take immediate effect.

The Home Office has announced this suspension to ensure the safety of vulnerable victims in line with official advice.

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins said:

The safety of modern slavery victims and the frontline staff supporting them remains a top priority.

By taking this decisive action we will ensure that vulnerable people continue to have access to safe accommodation.

The advice is clear that we all need to stay at home to save lives and protect the NHS.

The NRM will continue to take referrals of potential modern slavery victims and those referred will be provided with the support they require, including accommodation.

The government is working with partners so victims can get the support they need. Support workers continue to provide essential support services remotely where possible, to comply with social distancing measures.

The government also continues to work with The Salvation Army, the primary

provider of support, on reviewing processes and policy to maintain the services they provide to modern slavery victims during this time.

Director of Anti-Trafficking and Modern Slavery for The Salvation Army, Kathy Betteridge, said:

The Salvation Army is working closely with our partners and the Home Office to quickly adapt our existing operations so that victims of modern slavery continue to have the best care possible, to keep them safe and help them continue their recovery despite the challenges we face in the light of coronavirus.

We are already making available new safe houses on a regular basis. We have plans to ensure we continue to have the capacity to accommodate new victims needing support, which will contribute to the additional capacity now required following the government's decision to restrict clients moving on from our network of safe houses.

Birmingham pair given suspended prison sentences for selling medicines online illegally

Egle Bunkute, 31, originally from Lithuania was sentenced to 14 months' custody suspended for two years and ordered to complete 100 hours of unpaid work in the community.

Edvinas Ivanauskas, 26, also from Lithuania was sentenced to 44 weeks' imprisonment suspended for two years and ordered to complete 100 hours of unpaid work.

The sentencing on Friday 3 April followed a three-year investigation by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) into the illegal sale of medicines through their website.

MHRA investigators along with officers from West Midlands Police, executed a number of search warrants in March 2017, seizing initially nearly 27,000 tablets and vials with a street value of more than £21,000.

Bunkute and Ivanauskas eventually admitted to supplying or intending to supply containing prescription only and unauthorised medicines after further investigations by the MHRA uncovered thousands of photographic records of the transactions.

The medicines were sent illegally to addresses in the UK, EU, the USA, Canada and Australia. The postage costs for posting these medicines was in excess of £105,000.

Officers also found social media messages between the pair discussing the medicines and ways to avoid detection which clearly showed they knew they were involved in the illegal supply of the medicines.

The business at the centre of the illegal supply of medicines was operated through the website www.uk-rxcart.com which was shut down in 2017 by the MHRA.

The pair were selling Tadalafil used for the treatment erectile dysfunction, Proloxa and Dapoxetine (premature ejaculation treatments) and Nolvadex/Tamoxifen which are used to treat breast cancer.

Egle Bunkute was also sentenced for offering to supply Human Chorionic Gonadotrophin, a growth hormone and class C controlled drug.

They both pleaded guilty to the offences at earlier hearings.

Tariq Sarwar, Acting Head of MHRA Enforcement Group said:

It is a serious criminal offence to sell prescription only medicines without a prescription and to sell unlicensed medicines, we will continue to work relentlessly with regulatory and law enforcement colleagues to identify and prosecute those involved.

Those who sell medicines illegally are exploiting vulnerable people and have no regard for their health. Prescription-only medicines can be extremely strong and should only be taken under medical supervision as they may have potentially dangerous side effects

Criminals selling medicines illegally show a blatant disregard for your health, and only care about making money.

Notes to editor

Egle Bunkute (female), aged 31 (DOB 15/01/90) of, Galton Tower, Civic Close, Birmingham, West Midlands, B1 pleaded guilty to:

- Offering to supply an unauthorised medicinal product contrary to regulation 46(1) and 47 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012, between 10/10/2014 and 29/03/2017 (this relates her involvement with www.uk-rxcart.com and the fact it was advertising and supplying unauthorised medicines)

- Supplying prescription only medicine not in accordance with a prescription given by an appropriate practitioner contrary to regulations 214(1), 255(1)(a) and (5) of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012, between 10/10/2014 and 29/03/2017 (this relates to her involvement with www.uk-rxcart.com and the fact it was selling prescription-only medicines)
- Offering to supply a quantity of Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG) a controlled drug of class C to another in contravention of section 4(1) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 contrary to section 4(3)(a) of and Schedule 4 to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, between 10/10/2014 and 29/03/2017 (this relates to the fact that one of the prescription-only drugs supplied was HCG, a controlled drug of class C)

Edvinas Ivanauskas (male), aged 26 (DOB 31/07/93) of Lighthorne Avenue, Ladywood, Birmingham, West Midlands, B16 pleaded guilty to:

- Selling or supplying or offering to supply an unauthorised medicinal product contrary to regulation 46(1) and 47 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012, between 1 October 2015 and 29 March 2017. (This relates to the fact EI was involved in the supply of unauthorised medicines, principally though delivering and collecting such drugs from Mailboxes Etc)
- Possessing an unauthorised medicinal product contrary to regulation 46(3) and Regulation 47(1) of The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 which covers the unauthorised medicinal products found in his possession on 28 March 2017, the day of his arrest
- Supplying prescription only medicine not in accordance with a prescription given by an appropriate practitioner contrary to regulations 214(1), 255(1)(a) and (5) of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012, between 1 October 2015 and 29 March 2017

LLWR makes second donation of personal protective equipment to fight COVID-19

LLW Repository Ltd (LLWR) has made a second major donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support the NHS's battle against COVID-19 in Cumbria.

Following an initial donation of 560 all-in-one protective suits to LLWR's local North West Ambulance Service Station in Egremont last week, the company has delivered an even larger consignment to the Cumbria Local Resilience Forum at Lillyhall.

A further 733 protective suits, 1,800 pairs of gloves and 89 face masks and respirators were handed over at the Forum's Distribution Centre. Gary Cunningham, LLWR's Head of Operations, thanked members of the company's workforce who turned out at the Repository Site to support this effort, adding: "The suits we donated to NW Ambulance Service last week were operational stock. "But this latest donation required us to think very carefully about how much more PPE we could provide, while retaining enough to deal with any emergency that might arise at LLWR. "The team had to comb the site, checking every building and storage area to confirm our PPE inventory was correct before separating out the majority of it ready for donation."

As with LLWR's initial donation to the NW Ambulance Service, the PPE was delivered by Martin Walkingshaw, Deputy Managing Director. He said: "A key part of our response to COVID-19 is to help other organisations deal with the pandemic wherever we can.

"The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has given us their complete support on this, and we knew there was more PPE at the site we could safely offer up. "Gary and the team did a fantastic job and we're all pleased to be able to support the Cumbria Local Resilience Forum and their team at the Lillyhall Distribution Centre."

Martin added: "The need for PPE in Cumbria is urgent – any local businesses or suppliers who have PPE to donate need to contact the County Council as soon as they can via email MAST@cumbria.gov.uk". The Cumbria Local Resilience Forum is a multi-agency partnership comprising representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, Environment Agency and others, helping lead the response to the pandemic in the county.