

MHRA services during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) response

Following the Prime Minister's statement earlier this week on the UK's coronavirus response and the government advice to work from home where possible, a large proportion of our workforce is working from home.

The [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control](#) is continuing essential laboratory activities on site although there will still be a proportion of staff working from home where possible.

This should have little to no impact if you wish to contact us. We are available through telephone and email and therefore you should not be affected.

If you are writing to us please do so by email if possible, or contact us by telephone, as we will have infrequent access to physical mail sent into the office.

If you were due to have a meeting with us, whether in person or via video or teleconference, please contact the meeting organiser in the first instance.

If you have any questions or are unable to reach someone at the MHRA, please email info@mhra.gov.uk

See our [guidance on COVID-19 for all our latest information](#).

A message for our stakeholders from Tom McCormack



Picture of Tom McCormack

The health and wellbeing of our stakeholders, customers, partners and of course our MMO colleagues is our priority in these exceptional times.

We are following the Government's advice on social distancing, with most MMO colleagues now working remotely. We are working to continue our support to our customers and stakeholders through our digital and telephone services.

Please continue to contact us on-line, by email, telephone or as necessary by post.

Our message is, please keep in touch, and let us know if you have any concerns.

The main ways to contact us are:

Our full contact details can all be found on our [home page](#) – under contact the MMO

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[Online isolation notes launched – providing proof of coronavirus absence from work](#)

Isolation notes will provide employees with evidence for their employers that they have been advised to self-isolate due to coronavirus, either because they have symptoms or they live with someone who has symptoms, and so cannot work.

As isolation notes can be obtained without contacting a doctor, this will reduce the pressure on GP surgeries and prevent people needing to leave their homes.

For the first seven days off work, employees can self-certify so they don't need any evidence for their employer. After that, employers may ask for evidence of sickness absence. Where this is related to having symptoms of

coronavirus or living with someone who has symptoms, the isolation note can be used to provide evidence of the advice to self-isolate.

People who need to claim Universal Credit or [Employment and Support Allowance](#) because of coronavirus will not be required to produce a fit note or an isolation note. More details on coronavirus and claiming benefits can be found [here](#).

The notes can be accessed through the [NHS website](#) and [NHS 111 online](#). After answering a few questions, an isolation note will be emailed to the user. If they don't have an email address, they can have the note sent to a trusted family member or friend, or directly to their employer. The service can also be used to generate an isolation note on behalf of someone else.

The isolation note service has been commissioned by NHSX and built by NHS Digital.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, said:

It is absolutely vital we do everything we can to ease the burden on our healthcare professionals, allowing them to spend as much time as possible with those patients that need them most.

Digital isolation notes will provide reassurance to those self-isolating and their employers while also reducing the pressure on our NHS, so they can continue doing all they can to protect the people of this country and save lives.

The isolation note service can be accessed via the [111 online coronavirus service](#) or [NHS.UK/coronavirus](#) as well as via the NHS app.

[New Build Developments: Delivering gigabit-capable connections](#)

Government is clear that the provision of gigabit-capable connectivity to new build developments is a crucial element of meeting our ambitious broadband targets. The Government has therefore secured commitments from network operators, outlining their commitment to work with housing developers on providing gigabit-capable connections to all new build developments across the UK.

- Contribute a minimum amount to the cost of connection, that will be at least £500 and in some cases as high as £1,400

- Work with developers to ensure premises which cannot be provided with a gigabit-capable connection within the above overall cost envelope can be connected with the next best technology that could be provided within the cap
- Openreach has published a new price structure that reduces the costs developers pay for connecting two premise developments from £3,100 to £2,000, bringing all developments of two premises or more within our proposed cost cap
- Openreach have also publicly committed to connect all new build developments over 20 premises for free, reducing this from their current offer of 30 premises

These commitments alongside the amendments to the Building Regulations 2010 to require all new build developments to have gigabit broadband outlined in the [consultation response](#) will ensure that 99% of all new homes will be able to be built with gigabit-capable broadband.

We have also had initial and positive discussions on similar commitments with smaller network operators and will seek to formalise more commitments and publish them here in advance of this legislation coming into force.

The UK completes training of Somali National Army battalion in Baidoa

The first battalion of the Somali National Army (SNA) 8th Brigade has graduated from infantry training at the UK-supported training facility in Baidoa, the capital of Southwest State in Somalia. Over 400 SNA soldiers have been trained over 12 months forming the first battalion.

Through the training provided by British military personnel, the Somali National Army (SNA) troops learnt about gained skills in offensive and defensive operations, basic command and control, checkpoints, leadership, live firing, combat first aid, the law of armed conflict, human rights and gender, among other skills that will help them conduct effective security operations in the country.

The UK through the Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) is also supporting Somalia to strengthen its security institutions and governance through the provision of training facilities. At the graduation ceremony, the UK handed over a military barrack that will house up to 450 Somali troops and act as the military headquarters for the 8th Brigade in South West State.

The first company of SNA troops graduated in April last year and this year's graduating troops mark the third company to have successfully completed training in South West State. The soldiers are expected to boost the national army numbers as they battle alongside African Union forces against Al Shabaab.

Speaking during the graduation of the first UK trained battalion, the British Ambassador to Somalia, Ben Fender said:

The UK is helping to develop the core of a strong professional army that can keep Baidoa and its surrounding areas safer. We have already seen our trainees achieve vital operational successes and we are delighted to be investing for the future through the new barracks.

The UK is supporting Somalia to strengthen its security institutions and governance to deliver effective operations. One way to do this is through the provision of crucial infrastructure such as barracks. "The ambition was to complete a full Brigade of three Battalions (nine companies) within a year. We have also supported the construction of an excellent training facility as well as a barracks and a firing range that is now able to train a new company every eight to ten weeks.

President of Southwest state, Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed 'Laftagareen' said:

The new company will help the Somali National Army to conduct effective operations in the region to counter Al Shabaab.

The Commander of British Forces in Somalia, Colonel Tony Casey said:

Today marks a special day as it is the culmination of a number of activities we have undertaken in support of Somalia's security sector reform to help promote long-term stability and security for the benefit of all Somalis. We are excited that the new trainees will move to a new UK supported military barracks. The UK also handed over vehicles, uniforms and equipment to support SNA to operate

in the most effective manner.

The graduation ceremony was presided over by the British Ambassador to Somalia Ben Fender and attended by South West State president Abdiiaziz Mohamed Laftagareen, Somalia's Minister of Defence Hassan Ali Mohamed, State Minister Abdullahi Hamud and senior civilian and military officials from the Federal Government and Southwest State.

During the event, the troops demonstrated their newly-acquired skills.

In August last year, the UK opened the Baidoa Security Training Centre (BSTC) including a firing range to support the Somali National Army and promote long-term stability and security in Somalia.