



COVID-19 -SUPPORTING OUR CLIENTS

INTRODUCTION

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) were informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. By 12 January 2020 it had been announced that a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) had been identified in samples obtained from cases and that the initial analysis of virus genetic sequences suggested that this was the cause of the outbreak(1).

By mid-March 2020, the alarming levels at which the virus had spread around the world had led the Director General of the World Health Organisation to express deep concern and declare the situation as a global pandemic(2).

In response to a rising death toll across the country; the UK was placed into lockdown on the 23rd March 2020 by Central Government in a bid to slow the spread of the virus to protect the National Health Service and ensure it could cope with the influx of casualties.

What did this mean for our clients?

For many of our clients, with critical and statutory services to deliver, they faced the challenge of balancing safety with necessity and had to think fast to adapt their ways of working to comply as far as possible with the Government's safety guidelines and still deliver those critical services to their vulnerable clients.

Our Police Authority clients not only had to protect the health, safety and welfare of their own employees but also execute their Category 1 responder role under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. They had to quickly upskill themselves on the new Coronavirus Act 2020 and Health Protection Regulations 2020 which came into force on the 26th March in order to be able to enforce these correctly.

In addition to their normal duties; Fire and Rescue Services have been supporting other agencies by undertaking extra activities including transporting samples for COVID antigen testing, delivering food and medicines to vulnerable individuals and transferring known and suspected COVID-19 patients to and from the Nightingale Hospital.

Local authorities have been on the frontline in the response to the crisis, coordinating action at a local level and keeping the 'wheels turning'. To deliver safely they have had to deviate from prescribed strategies and put in place new temporary processes to maintain a continuum of service delivery and enable them to respond to dangerous defects on the highway, provide social care support and empty our bins as well as many other services.

How did we respond and support?

At the start of the lockdown, we reached out to all of our clients to advise them that we were still operational and here to support and advise them. Whilst we were unable to deliver classroom in-person training we could still conduct reviews and claims analysis work remotely and a number of clients took advantage of these services. By far the greatest volume of activity in the last quarter has been responding, without delay to client enquiries on COVID related matters.

Examples include:

- Revised highways inspection, maintenance and repair procedures
- Redeployment of staff to support critical functions
- COVID-19 Risk Assessment support/critique
- Advice on volunteers making and supplying face masks
- Health and Safety in relation to homeworking
- Pest control temporary response plans during COVID
- Establishing and operating temporary mortuaries
- Wide ranging policy cover enquiries to the RMP Account Directors and Underwriters.

As expected, many of our clients had the same or linked queries and so we collated our responses and produced guidance documents on these topics for the benefit of all clients. This included: Highways, Redeployment, Fraud, Homeworking and Ergonomics & Display Screen Equipment.

Opportunities arising from the Crisis

Homeworking has become an accepted 'norm' with many employees striking a genuine work life balance with the removal of a daily commute. Our clients have risen to the challenge of critical service delivery and in enforcing new regulations at a local level. Communities have rallied in support and volunteers, agencies and organisations have worked together for a common purpose. As restrictions begin to ease, our clients are turning their thoughts to a phased and staggered return to the workplace and we have shaped two new COVID related products to support them through that journey.

In Risk Control, the pandemic has enabled us to accelerate our virtual training capability and through the use of technology have a virtual presence 'on site'. We have thought 'outside the box' and redesigned our service delivery model to provide a seamless client service. We have produced more guidance documents in this quarter than ever before and have introduced new products before our clients have even reached out for them.

What does the future hold?

The last few months have been unprecedented times for all of us. It could lead to permanent changes with more homeworking, potential asset release to raise funding, safer workplaces and better protected employees and a more agile working environment. We have been pleased to play our part in supporting our clients through this difficult time.

What do our clients say?

"thought provoking and useful!" A local authority client about our new COVID products and services.

"guidance notes were excellent and provided the foundation internally for our own action plans"

A police authority client about our COVID return to work guidance note and checklist.

"it's good to know that you are reaching out to us with this practical support" A local authority client about our guidance and new COVID products.

References

1 Public Health England, 2020. COVID-19: epidemiology, virology and clinical features (Updated 13 May 2020). [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-background-information/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-epidemiology-virology-and-clinical-features>. Accessed on 14th May 2020.

2 The Guardian, 2020. WHO declares coronavirus pandemic? [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/11/who-declares-coronavirus-pandemic>. Accessed on 14th May 2020.



ASHLEY EASEN | DIRECTOR RISK CONSULTING

P: +44 (0) 1245 772237
M: +44 (0) 7825 365090
E: ashley_easen@gbtpa.com

Gallagher Bassett International Ltd
Halford House, 2 Coval Lane, Chelmsford CM1 1TD

www.gallagherbassett.co.uk