

Written 2 August 2021

BUSINESS NEWS NORTHERN IRELAND

Welcome to our round up of the latest business and Covid-19 news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

Covid-19 update

Last week, The Executive gave further consideration to a number of proposed relaxations to the Covid-19 restrictions and received further advice from health and scientific advisers.

The Executive has decided the following changes to social distancing:

- In relation to retail and shopping centres, the regulations will move from a requirement for 2 metres to 1 metre. This will ensure consistency in regulations with other indoor settings such as hospitality and indoor attractions
- For outdoor venues, the guidance will continue to note the health benefits of 2 metres social distancing. However, the guidance will further advise that social distancing requirements are strongly advised but are not a requirement. Where possible, a minimum of 1 metre should be maintained and ideally 2 metres.

Audiences are now permitted to return to performances at Concert Venues, Theatres and Other Indoor Venues (seated). Live music is permitted for rehearsals and performances, with no restriction to background or ambient levels of volume.



Up to ten people from no more than three households are allowed to meet in a home. If one household has ten members, the maximum is increased to 15 from no more than three households. The requirement for the wearing of face coverings in places of worship, during

acts of worship, will be moved from regulations into guidance only. Face coverings will still be legally required when entering and exiting the building and will be strongly advised whilst singing or moving around the premises. There were also some relaxations for MOT centres.

See: [Executive decisions on relaxations to Covid-19 restrictions – 26 July 2021 | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#) and also: [Statement on Executive decisions – 29 July 2021 | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Managing your business's risk of cyber attack

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) early warning system helps organisations investigate cyber-attacks on their network by notifying them of malicious activity that has been detected in information feeds. This is a free NCSC service designed to inform your organisation of potential cyber-attacks on your network, as soon as possible. The service uses a variety of information feeds from the NCSC, trusted public, commercial and closed sources, which includes several privileged feeds which are not available elsewhere.

The system filters millions of events that the NCSC receives every day and, using the IP and domain names you provide, correlates those which are relevant to your organisation into daily notifications for your nominated contacts via an early warning portal.

Organisations will receive the following high level types of alerts:

- **Incident Notifications** – This is activity that suggests an active compromise of your system.
For example: A host on your network has most likely been infected with a strain of malware.
- **Network Abuse Events** – This may be indicators that your assets have been associated with malicious or undesirable activity.
For example: A client on your network has been detected scanning the internet.
- **Vulnerability and Open Port Alerts** – These are indications of vulnerable services running on your network, or potentially undesired applications are exposed to the internet.
For example: You have a vulnerable application, or you have an exposed Elasticsearch service.

Early Warning does not conduct any active scanning of your networks itself, however some of the feeds may use scan derived data, for example from commercial feeds and is available for all UK organisations who hold a static IP address or domain name.

See: [Early Warning - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

The impacts of EU exit and coronavirus (COVID-19) on UK trade in services: July 2021

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have produced a report recently produced a report showing a noticeable change in UK trade, much of which is likely to be due to the fall in

world trade and disruption to global supply chains as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and global recession. There may also be some impact from EU exit and related uncertainty, although it should be noted that these are only initial post-transition period estimates; it is too early for any conclusions to be reached about longer term trends or impacts. We will need to wait for further analysis as the Pandemic unfolds. Key points highlighted are:

- UK service exports and imports have declined since Quarter 1 (January to March) 2019, with trade with EU countries falling more than trade with non-EU countries.
- The share of total service imports from EU countries fell by around 9 percentage points to 37.9% in the two years to Quarter 1 2021, while the share of total service exports fell by around 1.3 percentage points to 36.5% over the same period.
- The proportion of businesses citing coronavirus (COVID-19) as a challenge increased in mid-2021 compared to the beginning of 2021, while the proportion citing EU exit fell over the same period; this is also reflected in the results of the International Trade in Services Survey, which suggests coronavirus had a bigger impact on falling trade in services.
- Service types that are reliant on the movement of people, such as travel, transportation, manufacturing, maintenance and repair, and construction were impacted most by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Exports of legal, accounting and management services to non-EU countries increased in Quarter 1 2021 when compared with Quarter 1 2019, driven by trade with the United States, while exports to the EU fell over the same period.
- EU imports of financial services fell to 25.3% of world total financial services in Quarter 1 2021 compared with Quarter 1 2019, while the composition of exports remained stable.

See: [The impacts of EU exit and coronavirus \(COVID-19\) on UK trade in services - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/external-trade/articles-and-commentaries/the-impacts-of-eu-exit-and-coronavirus-covid-19-on-uk-trade-in-services)

Can you be a climate leader?

The UK Government has announced the first 'One Step Greener' Climate Ambassadors and launched a nationwide search for climate leaders

People from across the country will have the chance to showcase their stories at the major climate summit COP26 in Glasgow, as the search for everyday climate leaders gets underway.

In the lead up to COP26, the UK Government is calling on people from all walks of life to join the 'One Step Greener' movement on social media by sharing how they are doing their bit for the environment, championing climate leaders in their communities, and inspiring others to follow their lead. Whether big or small, one or many, green steps around the country can culminate in a large collective impact in helping make the UK a more sustainable and greener place.

See: [Nationwide search for climate leaders launched - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Fostering Hydrogen Collaborations in South Korea

South Korea is leading the way in the global hydrogen market and with a free trade deal now in place, opportunities for UK SMEs to contribute technical expertise and gain market access are available.

South Korea's hydrogen market is set to almost double in size from £9.1bn in 2020 to £17.3bn by 2030. Ulsan alone is projected to attract \$4.8 billion in hydrogen investments by 2030, as it aims to become the largest Hydrogen Hub in Northeast Asia.

Innovate UK is bringing together UK SMEs and Korean hydrogen experts from across government, academia and business, to foster pioneering collaborative ventures in a series of events commencing Autumn 2021.

See: [Fostering Hydrogen Collaborations in South Korea Webinar Tickets, Tue 14 Sep 2021 at 08:00 | Eventbrite](#)

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) are publishing new resources to support food businesses preparing for upcoming changes to allergen labelling

From 1 October 2021, the requirements for labelling on prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) foods will change in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The new labelling requirements will help protect consumers by providing potentially allergen information on the packaging.

Any business that produces PPDS food will be required to label it to show the name of the food and the ingredients list. This includes emphasising within the ingredients list any of the 14 allergens used in the product, as required by food law.

FSA are providing a webinar which will give background to the new allergen labelling changes, also known as Natasha's Law. They will help small and micro food businesses to better understand what PPDS is, how it effects food businesses and how you can ensure you are compliant with the new regulations from 1 October 2021.

See: [FSA explains PPDS changes for businesses | FSA explains PPDS changes for businesses \(fsaevents.co.uk\)](https://fsaevents.co.uk)

EU Exit - UK Government publishes NI Protocol Command Paper

The UK Government published a [Command Paper\(external link opens in a new window / tab\)](#) last week which sets out a proposed way forward and longer term foundation to support traders moving agri-food goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. The UK Government is seeking to agree significant changes to the Northern Ireland Protocol, so that it delivers on its intended objectives to minimise disruption on the ground and protect the Good Friday Agreement.

[Further information here](#)

COVID-19 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT NEWS

Below is our weekly roundup of changes to government support information generally and for businesses, employers and the self-employed.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – Update

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been extended until 30 September 2021. From 1 August 2021, the government will pay 60% of wages up to a maximum cap of £1,875 for the hours the employee is on furlough.

Claims for furlough days in July 2021 must be made by 16 August 2021.

[How to report grant payments in Real Time Information](#)

Find out [how to report Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grant payments on Real Time Information submissions](#).

[Tax Treatment of the Coronavirus Job Retention Grant](#)

Payments you have received under the scheme are to offset the deductible revenue costs of your employees. You must include them as income when you calculate your taxable profits for Income Tax and Corporation Tax purposes.

Businesses can deduct employment costs as normal when calculating taxable profits for Income Tax and Corporation Tax purposes.

Individuals with employees that are not employed as part of a business (such as nannies or other domestic staff) are not taxable on grants received under the scheme. Domestic staff are subject to Income Tax and National Insurance contributions on their wages as normal.

See more here: [Claim for wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme update

The online service for the fifth grant is now available.

You can claim the fifth grant if you think that your business profit will be impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) between 1 May 2021 and 30 September 2021. You will need to confirm that you meet other eligibility criteria when you make your claim. You should make your claim on or after the personal claim date HMRC has given you.

See: [Check if you can claim a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

VAT deferred due to coronavirus

Businesses that deferred VAT payments due between 20 March 2020 and 30 June 2020 were able to either:

- pay in full by 31 March 2021
- join the online VAT deferral new payment scheme by 21 June 2021 to spread payments of deferred VAT over smaller, interest free instalments
- contact HMRC to make an arrangement to pay by 30 June 2021

Information about the VAT deferral penalty has been added. Businesses could be charged a 5% penalty or interest if they did not pay in full or make an arrangement to pay HMRC by 30 June 2021.

Any deferred VAT outstanding after 30 June 2021 will be treated as debt and may be subject to a [penalty](#). If you are unable to pay and need more time, find out what to do [if you cannot pay your tax bill on time](#). If you have made an arrangement to pay and need to discuss this with HMRC, call the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) helpline](#).

See: [VAT deferred due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Upcoming events for Ards and North Down businesses

Ards and North Down Borough Council are providing a range of social media and online marketing events over the coming months.

Events include:

- Fundamentals of digital marketing and social media
Thursday 5 August 2021, 09:30 - 12:30
- A beginner's guide to Facebook for business
Friday 13 August 2021, 09:30 – 12:30
- A beginner's guide to Instagram for business
Friday 20 August 2021, 09:30 – 12:30
- Positive influencing skills
Thursday 30 September 2021, 09:30 – 16:30
- Hootsuite – streamlining your social media
Tuesday 5 October 2021, 09:30 – 12:30
- Canva – online design made easy
Tuesday 12 October 2021, 09:30 – 12:30

All events are free of charge. [Book your place now](#).

Safety guidance for close contact services

Guidance and checklist to help those providing close contact services such as hairdressers, barbers, beauty, tattoo, sports and massage therapy, to continue to operate safely.

From 26 July, close contact services can operate without appointments and have overlapping appointments.

The Department for the Economy (DfE) has published guidance and a checklist to help close contact services to operate safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. This information aims to help businesses to ensure they are operating safely and within Northern Ireland legislation.

Close contact services are defined as including hairdressing, barbering, beauty, aesthetics, nails, make-up, tattoo, tanning, spa, sports and massage therapy, well-being and holistic locations, dress fitters, tailors and fashion designers.

What the guidance covers

The guidance is also designed for those who provide mobile close contact services from their homes and in other people's homes, delivering the close contact services detailed above in allied sectors such as the arts or entertainment, those in retail environments, as well as those studying hair and beauty in vocational training environments.

Topics covered by the guidance include:

- thinking about risk
- keeping your clients and visitors safe
- who should go to work
- social distancing for workers
- cleaning the workplace
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings
- workforce management
- inbound and outbound goods

[Access the working safely guidance for close contact services.](#)

Working safely checklist

A close contact checklist template accompanies the guidance and aims to guide businesses through the process of providing a service within an environment that is safe for staff and customers.

[Download the checklist for providing close contact services \(PDF, 447K\)](#)

Tourism NI business support helpline

Tourism NI has set up a dedicated telephone line service and online enquiry facility to support the Northern Ireland tourism industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism NI

strongly encourages people to get in touch with any queries - call 028 9592 5313 for help and advice.

Opening hours

Monday – Friday, 10:00 – 13:00

If you are calling outside these times, you can leave a message or [complete their contact form online](#) and someone will contact you as soon as possible.

See: [Coronavirus: Tourism NI business support helpline \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](#)

£1.6M Covid-19 support scheme for pig producers

A new Covid-19 support scheme worth £1.6million, for pig farmers who were affected by the impact of the pandemic on international pigment markets from the spring of last year, has been announced. Applications to the Scheme can now be made through the DAERA website and must be submitted by 12 August 2021.

See: [Poots announces further £1.6M Covid-19 support scheme for pig producers | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

£1.2M Covid-19 support scheme for sheep farmers

A Covid-19 support scheme, worth £1.2million, is now available to sheep farmers who were affected by a fall in the global price of wool during the pandemic. Applications to the Scheme can now be made on the DAERA website and must be submitted by 12 August 2021.

See: [Poots announces £1.2M Covid-19 support scheme for sheep farmers | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

£2M Covid-19 support scheme for potato growers

A further Covid-19 support scheme worth up to £2million for farmers growing potatoes for the processing supply chain has been announced. Applications forms for the Scheme are now available on the DAERA website and must be submitted by 18 August 2021.

See: [Poots announces £2M Covid-19 support scheme for potato growers | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Seasonal agricultural workers to avail of exemptions from Covid-19 travel restrictions

Migrant workers arriving into Northern Ireland via the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme will now qualify for exemptions from the Covid-19 related travel restrictions.

The exemptions are as a result of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) submitting a request to the Department of Health (DoH). The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Pilot Scheme for 2021 will permit seasonal agricultural workers, who have an offer of employment to carry out specific activities in edible horticulture on a named farm, to claim an exemption from post-arrival testing and self-isolation when undertaking the exempt activity, if they have travelled from an amber list country. They will be able to avail of an exemption from self-isolation while working as long as they undertake Lateral Flow Device tests on days 2, 5 and 8 following arrival.

See: [Seasonal agricultural workers to avail of exemptions from Covid-19 travel restrictions | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk/seasonal-agricultural-workers-to-avail-of-exemptions-from-covid-19-travel-restrictions/)

International Travel

From 2 August there will be a pilot roll out of the expansion of the amber vaccinated arrivals policy to include people vaccinated in any of the EU27 (except France); EFTA countries (Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein); and the European microstate countries (Andorra, Monaco, and Vatican City) and the United States.

In relation to arrivals from the United States, it was agreed that the policy approach will be that: only people fully vaccinated with FDA-approved vaccines in the US rollout, who can present a CDC card as proof of vaccination, would be included. A requirement to prove residency in addition to the CDC card for US arrivals was agreed, to mitigate against fraud.

For more information and other measures see: [Statement on Executive decisions – 29 July 2021 | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/statement-on-executive-decisions-29-july-2021/)