



ADVICE FOR BIDs

(Please bear in mind that the situation is changing rapidly and all advice is given based on information available at that time)

Many organisations have been providing useful health-related advice on COVID-19 to BID teams. However, in the last few days, we have received an increasing number of enquiries from members which fit under the broad title of “what does this mean for BIDs?” We thought that it would be useful to share some thinking.

WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BIDS TAKE?

Contact Information

Nominated Point of Contact

- It is advisable for all BID team members, including your Boards, to have a single point of contact.
- Anyone exhibiting the symptoms (at home or in the office) should then remain in contact with the nominated person.
- Daily updates to staff are important.

Contact and Personal Details

It is advisable for the nominated point of contact to have:

- everyone’s private emails, mobile and home numbers
- information on any pre-existing health issues
- access to diaries

Staffing & Office

Will staff be paid?

This will depend on your own policies, although government have confirmed that statutory sick pay is available from day 1.

Staff travel (overseas)

- if applicable, it is advisable that the nominated person knows where staff may be going before their last day.
- they should be contactable throughout their period of travel and as soon as they return to the UK from abroad.
- if they return with cough or cold symptoms, they should follow the self-isolation guidelines.

Someone displaying symptoms

- anyone with cough or cold symptoms should be at home for a minimum of 7-days.

Meetings in the office with external guests

- It is advised that all ‘meetings’ are held via telephone or video-conference.

Cleaning & Washing

- The office cleaning regime should be reviewed to include deep-cleaning if necessary. It is prudent to engage back-up cleaners in the event that your normal cleaning company cannot operate.
- If the office remains open, every room should contain tissues.
- On every arrival into the office, hands should be washed.



Public transport and gathering places

- Staff may be advised against use of public transport and should follow government guidelines on gathering places such as pubs, restaurants, theatres etc.

Homeworking

- Where possible, working from home is now advised, but it is very important that BID teams remain available to businesses and, as far as possible, work as normal.

Corporate events (including courses)

- It is advised that these are cancelled, and staff advised against attending.
- Public events
- Where possible, it is prudent to cancel public events. It is also prudent not to commit to any new events.

Street staff

- Special measures may need to be considered for street staff who may need to remain on duty whilst businesses continue to operate. New risk assessments should be carried out and insurances reviewed.

Business Continuity & Tasks

Likely Economic Impacts

Government are continually reviewing the measures that they may need to take, but the early signs are that the economy will face a significant shock. This will affect many BID levy payers.

Government assistance

In the budget, the Chancellor announced measures including:

- SMEs can ask for time to pay tax bills.
- retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with a rateable value (RV) of less than £51,000 will pay no business rates in 2020/21 if they apply.
- pubs with a RV of less than £100,000 receive a £5,000 reduction on business rates if they apply.
- new small business grants are available.
- a new Coronavirus Business Interruption Scheme may guarantee some business loans up to 80%
- sick pay can be claimed from Day 1.

The Chancellor Announced Further Measures Including:

- a business support package of £330bn.
- small businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors (less than RV of £51,000) can apply for interruption insurance cover of up to £25,000.
- a potential support package for airlines, airports, and others.
- a 3-month 'mortgage holiday' for borrowers, as required.
- the pre-announced business rates exemption is matched by government backed loans with interest free periods.
- all retail, hospitality and leisure operators will not pay business rates for the year 2020/21.
- small hospitality, retail and leisure operators may be eligible for cash grants of up to £25,000.

BID Levy Collection

Current guidance is that BID levies will be invoiced by councils in the normal way and that demands for payment will apply. Under the BID Regulations, BIDs cannot raise or adjust invoices themselves and the levy rules, as described in the BID Proposals, must be strictly adhered to.



Assistance for Businesses on BID Levy

A cautious approach should be adopted to applying any blanket relief on BID levy to businesses suffering hardship who should, instead, be steered towards the governments' alternative assistance measures (as above). Individual hardship cases may be considered but BID Boards should have a transparent process in place for this if approached.

What is the Likely Impact on the BID?

Aside from the health risks to staff, the most likely impact will be financial. Boards should immediately be reviewing budgets, upcoming commitments to spend and levels of financial reserves.

Will the BID Still Receive Levy Money from the Council?

As long as a BID has an operating agreement (or similar) with the council, it should expect the contractual obligations to be met. Any BIDs adopting a 'chargeable day' levy collection approach may see the likely effects of non-payment more quickly; for those on 'daily charging', the likely effects may take longer to be evidenced and a more cautious approach to budgeting should be adopted. You should check the operating agreement and check carefully the payment agreement – some BIDs have set payment frequencies with their council (e.g. 25% of invoiced levy each quarter and a balance based upon overall collection in Q4) whilst others rely on monies collected being passed to them.

What Contingencies Should we be Taking?

If a BID's financial reserves are likely to be depleted because, for example, businesses are paying levy more slowly and/or non-payment is increased, the Board must take urgent action to review cashflow, thereby prioritising payments to existing creditors and staff.

Will BID Ballots Still Go Ahead?

So far, the cancellation of council and mayoral elections in May has not affected BID ballots. Therefore:

- renewing BIDs – will need a ballot date within the last 365-days of their existing term.
- new BIDs – if Notice of Ballot has been served, the ballot date is confirmed; for those who have not yet confirmed a ballot date, consideration should be given to deferring current timetables.

If we Need to Delay our Renewal Ballot, Can we Extend Our Term?

The answer is currently 'no', although Bb will be requesting that government permits existing BIDs to extend their term by up to 12 months.

Should BIDs be Changing Project Delivery?

One of the main benefits of BIDs is that they should not be bureaucratic and able to adapt quickly to the changing needs of businesses, particularly if they have an alteration provision within their BID Arrangements. Therefore, BIDs are advised to review project delivery to best support businesses during this time.

Can Board Meetings be Held Remotely?

Yes, and they should go ahead, arguably more frequently than normally scheduled and as required. As long as the number of Directors joining by conference call/video conferencing etc is in line with the quorum provisions within the company Articles, the meetings can proceed, decisions can be made, and minutes should be produced.

What Should BID Boards Particularly Focus Upon?

- the welfare of staff and contractors
- budgets and cashflow
- the changing needs of BID businesses



What Other Risks Should BID Boards be Planning For?

This largely depends upon local circumstances. However, it is best practice for all BID Boards to establish and constantly review and update a register of risks, each measured separately by their likelihood and impact.

GENERAL ADVICE

What is Coronavirus?

It is a virus similar to a cold or flu, and so difficult to treat, although symptoms may be able to be alleviated in some instances. The strain now affecting the UK and other countries around the world is COVID-19 which is new and for which there is no antidote.

What are the symptoms?

COVID-19 primarily affects your lungs and airways. Early symptoms are tending to be:

- a dry cough and/or
- high temperature or fever

How does it spread?

It is new and so no-one can be 100% sure. However, it appears to be spread from one person to another (e.g. cough, sneeze, touch etc.)

Why is there such concern?

Because it has spread so rapidly and is tending to have a higher mortality rate than, say, a cold or flu; and because it is new, so little is known about it and there is no presently known cure.

What is current medical advice?

Do:

- wash your hands with soap and water often (20 secs min)
- always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- self-isolate for 7-days if you have signs of a cough/cold and live alone
- self-isolate for 14-days from the first day of symptoms if you live with others
- contact 111 (a) during self-isolation if symptoms worsen significantly, or (b) after 7-days if symptoms are not better

Don't:

- touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

What about other government advice?

- avoid all unnecessary travel
- avoid high risk areas/communities
- avoid large gatherings

What are the other (non-medical) impacts?

- At this stage, it is primarily the inevitable economic impacts, signalled by recent falls in stock markets, slower trading in shops/restaurants, together with business failures etc.
- Self-isolation may introduce other consequences (e.g. loneliness, shortage of provisions etc.).



Is anyone at particular risk?

Yes, it is thought that the following groups have a heightened risk:

- a) elderly (over 70s) and/or
- b) those with pre-existing health conditions that could affect the respiratory system (e.g. cardiovascular, asthma etc.)

What if I am not in a higher-risk group?

If you contract the disease, you are likely to recover fully and relatively quickly. The advice is to self-isolate in order that you do not contaminate others, particularly those in the higher-risk groups.

What is the policy of the UK government aiming to achieve?

- a) reducing fatalities
- b) slowing the virus down
- c) boosting the NHS provision
- d) reducing risk of a dramatic peak

(SOURCE – BRITISH BIDS)