

COVID-19: Information and guidance for clinics



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Introduction

As the situation with the current COVID-19 pandemic develops, LawWorks is doing its utmost to keep everyone healthy and safe in the workplace while also minimising the disruptions to day-to-day operations.

The following will be kept under regular review and updated.

We are closely monitoring the fast-moving situation. Pro bono clinics, as with all services, are being affected by the pandemic, both in terms of demand (i.e., people looking for information and advice), and how clinics operate and manage risks. Some clinics have decided to temporarily suspend face-to-face advice sessions, and LawWorks have received several inquiries from clinics about best practice.

This information is intended to help you decide what steps your clinic may need to take in light of the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It draws on the best available advice and guidance, including links to the latest best practice and information from the NHS and Public Health England, and decisions by policy makers. The guidance is designed to:

- Help you to develop and enhance your clinic's response:
- Enable you to continue to provide a service to your community, including alternatives ways to deliver services.
- Prioritise health and safety and protect and support staff, volunteers, beneficiaries and service users
- Support the clinics network and signpost to the most appropriate sources of expert information to help clinics manage through the crisis

Your clinic

The response of each clinic may be partly shaped by institutional setting, and emergency protocols, policies and guidance that will be directly relevant to that setting. For example there is government advice on [social care](#) and [educational settings](#) you may want to consider if they apply to your organisation. By institutional setting we mean:

- If your clinic is attached to a law school and university, then the university's policies may provide a response framework, including on human resources issues, student welfare, risk assessment and a crisis recovery plan. Many Universities are now moving to remote learning and assessment. Universities UK have published specific guidance:
 - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - information for universities](#)
- If you are attached to an advice agency or other charity, then it is likely that the parent charity, or its relevant membership body, will have detailed materials about operating services through the crisis (see next section - Voluntary Sector resources).
- If your clinic is attached to a law firm you might find the Collaborative Plan's guidance useful [forthcoming]

Sources of information and advice

If you are looking for trusted, up-to-date information, some sources of information you should look the following websites:

- [Government & Public Health England information](#)
- [NHS Guidance](#)
- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [Centre for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Your local authority may also have information specific to your area

Voluntary sector resources, information and guidance

Many clinics are part of wider networks in the voluntary sector, and many organisations and umbrella bodies are shaping and sharing good practice, and ideas on how to manage through the crisis. We especially recommend looking at the NCVO's guidance.

- [National Council of Voluntary organisations](#)
- [CABlink](#) (for Citizens Advice Clinics)
- [AgeUK guidance](#)

Your clients

In all that clinics and partner organisation do to respond to the situation, the needs of clients should always be first and foremost, and many clients may come from groups with disabilities or other vulnerabilities which may put them at greater risk. Here are some of the resources that you may want to look at in relation to particular client groups:

- [Dementia](#)
- [Multiple Sclerosis](#)
- [Parkinson's disease](#)
- [Motor neurone disease](#)
- [Homeless people](#)

The response and resources in the justice sector

The courts, regulators and professional bodies have produced sector specific information that may be relevant:

- [HMCTS rolling guidance](#)
- [Prisons and detention centres](#)
- [Law Society](#)

The response of funders

Charity funders are acutely aware of the pressures on the sector. An alliance of funders from across sectors has come together to sign a joint statement pledging to offer support to civil society groups affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

- [Funders statement on COVID-19](#)

Operational issues

Ultimately, the decisions as to how to maintain clinics' services at this time are for clinics; however, we do urge clinics to adopt safe approaches for all clinic staff, volunteers and clients and follow the latest [guidance and recommendations from Government and Public Health England](#). Please note that Government advice is that [businesses and workplaces should encourage work at home wherever possible](#).

Since the virus is highly contagious and there is currently no vaccine, in addition to considering the advice and information referred to above you might consider the following practical steps.

Hygiene and people in the clinic premises

If you are maintaining a physical clinic, this may be obvious, but it cannot be stressed enough that hygiene is key to help prevent the spread of COVID-19: Please refer to Public Health England Guidance, [especially guidance on handwashing](#). The following posters, materials and resources can be displayed.

- [Handwashing advice - public information materials](#)

Social distancing

If you are maintaining a physical clinic you should look at the latest guidance and advice on social distancing

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults

Relying on virtual / remote communication where possible

There are now many options that enable people and organisations to work and interact remotely. If have decided not to continue with a physical clinic and/back office support, and are considering remote working arrangements, you might want to consider the following.

- Telephone advice [links to any good practice sources]
- [Skype clinics](#)
- Other [video conferencing facilities](#) [further links to come]
- Document sharing tools [To be updated]

Training and events

Most organisations are having to review their training offer and requirements in this period. LawWorks for example is only providing training that can be run remotely and safely, for example podcasts and online training, and have cancelled all live face –to-face evening training sessions.

Please follow the [latest advice from the Government](#)

Here are some tips for running online events as an alternative

- [How to shift your conference online in light of coronavirus](#)

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If you have any comments or suggestions to include in this guidance please email info@lawworks.org.uk