



## COVID-19 BRIEFING FOR SME'S ISSUED AT 1800 hrs 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2020

### OVERVIEW

The Coronavirus Bill 2020 has become an Act of Parliament and therefore is now part of UK law. It delivers a huge range of powers that the Government can exercise to help keep us safe during the current Covid-19 emergency. Although Parliament has risen early to protect not only MP's and Peers but also the thousands of people who work there, MP's of all Parties will have continuing telephone and electronic access to Government Ministers, ensuring that matters can be reviewed quickly and advice updated as circumstances change and evolve over the coming days and weeks.

As in the last edition, this briefing is in two sections; the first deals which shops and businesses are allowed to continue trading and the second has some useful tips on Wi-Fi and internet issues.

### SHOPS & BUSINESSES

A number of businesses have asked us if they are allowed to remain open under the recently introduced Government rules. Essentially, the rules apply to shops and other places where there is likely to be close contact between people who are not all living in the same household. There are also a number of important exceptions, such as food shops and pharmacies.

Rather than write a very long briefing here, we strongly suggest that you look at the full Government list and advice, which can be accessed via this pdf link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875304/240320\\_Revised\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875304/240320_Revised_Guidance.pdf)

### WI-FI & INTERNET

The media Regulator Ofcom has issued some advice to help improve domestic internet speeds. It comes as millions of people have to work remotely and rely on streaming services in their homes. This has put pressure on broadband providers, with BT's Openreach reporting a 20% surge in internet use. The Government has said that reliable internet speeds were "crucial" as the UK battles Covid-19.

Ofcom's advice ranges from the seemingly obvious, like downloading films in advance rather than streaming them when someone else may be trying to make a video call, to the less expected such as these:

- Keep your internet router switched on
- Position your router as far as possible from other devices that may interfere with the signal, such as on a table or shelf rather than the floor
- If you're carrying out video calls or meetings, turning the video off and using audio will require much less of your internet connection capacity
- Try starting calls at less common times rather than, say, on the hour or half hour
- For the best broadband speeds, use an Ethernet cable to connect your computer directly to your router rather than using Wi-Fi
- Where possible, try not to use a telephone extension lead, as these can cause interference which could lower your speed
- Do not use a microwave oven at the same time as you use Wi-Fi (yes, strange but true!)
- Devices that can interfere with router signals include: cordless phones, baby monitors, halogen lamps, dimmer switches, stereos and computer speakers, TVs and monitors.

Ofcom also advised making calls on a landline where possible, citing an increase in the demand on mobile networks. The Regulator also suggested disconnecting other devices when they are not in use.

**We will issue further advice and guidance Bulletins as the Covid-19 situation develops.**

Henry Boyle  
1800 hrs 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020