



# BOCC Minutes – Tuesday 31st March

TO: **Business & Operational Continuity Committee**  
**Incident Management Communications Group (for info)**

**Please find below a summary of yesterday's (31<sup>st</sup> March) Business and Operational Resilience Continuity Committee (BOCC) call. Representatives from 95 UK Finance member firms were on the call.**

The agenda of the meeting was:

- To discuss and share members current operating stance, highlighting any issues or challenges impeding service provision;
- Discuss operational solutions to the problems with call centre staffing and high call volumes;
- Discuss member's operationalisation of the authorities key workers designation and the reported challenges with respect to 3<sup>rd</sup> party/outsourced suppliers, particular with respect to Scotland;
- Gauge with members whether there had been any impact on UK service provision of the lockdown in India; and
- Discussion as to whether firms have considered their leave arrangements for this year.

1. **Members operating stance and impact of service provision:** With the exception of branches and call centres, members reported very significant and continuing progress on getting as many staff as possible to WFH. Nearly all firms reported very high WFH rates across most parts of their business, with many achieving compliance in excess of 90%, and one smaller retail firm reporting that were now at 100%. With respect to traders, most trading floors are near empty, with only algo traders, staff requiring very high spec machines, or those with poor home broadband connectivity still on-site, with even those staff were being regularly challenged to justify their presence in the office. One firm reported that they now ask staff to drive into work rather than take public transport, and that they had also mothballed several of their London offices.

Firms reported improved internet connectivity despite the large numbers of staff WFH, however they continue to employ strategies to minimise stress on the system, including restricting video conference and staggered working hours. Some members advised that they were being pressured by their recovery site providers to reduce their dependency and presence to nil at these sites to prevent community transmission of COVID-19, which firms were resisting. It was noted that several recovery site providers were claiming that activating their site arrangements for pandemic was not covered by their contracts and thus they were not allowed to use the site. This was being heavily resisted by firms.

2. **Branches:** Members are generally not providing any PPE for staff (facemasks, gloves etc) as a policy however all reported that they have erected perspex barriers at customer service counters and employed social distancing measures within the branch. Most firms (but not all) are now restricting branch opening hours, with the most common time being

10am-2pm (some firms are restricting teller service from 11am-1pm). Firms that are restricting hours are doing so in view of protecting staff from exposure and in response to reduced foot traffic into branches. Firms are generally implementing these policies centrally, rather than leaving it to individual branches to decide, and are aiming to continue to provide at least minimal branch service across geographic location (i.e. trying to ensure customers do not have to travel more than 20 miles (for example) to access a branch).

Subsequent to the call, several smaller firms that bank cheques at the larger settlement banks reported their frustration with long wait times and seemingly arbitrary decisions by some branches to close their doors despite long lines of customers outside. *“Whilst in the queue the bank closed their doors and told us the counter service closes at 1pm but the advertised hours on the website were 2pm”*. These may be isolated cases, so I will approach some members separately to query how closely adhered to their stated opening times are, and whether branches are being given discretion.

- 3. Call centres:** All firms reported very high call centre volumes, with several advising this is their most significant operational challenge. WFH rates are much lower here due to technology limitations and lack of supporting infrastructure in people’s homes (CPUs, screens, phones capable of integrating with the call management systems etc). One large firm that had addressed at least some of these issues conducted a WFH test last week, with 20% of their staff WFH. This was a success, the biggest benefit being that it allows people who are self-isolating but still well enough to work (or not sick at all). Other firms are implementing similar work-arounds, but all are conscious of the need to continue to smoothly serve customers during this exceptional time. Firms are making every effort to implement social-distancing in these offices through the moving of desks, intense cleaning etc.

Firms discussed staffing strategies they are employing to meet this exceptional demand. Most advised they were moving staff internally and from teams that have seen a downturn in call volumes due to reduced economic activity. No firm saw any benefit in approaching recently returned staff and asking them to return due to the time it would take to retrain such persons. Of more benefit would be the authorities emphasising that people should call their bank as a last resort, and instead avail themselves of the significant on-line and digital resources.

- 4. Operationalisation of the authorities key workers designation and the reported challenges with respect to 3rd party/outsourced suppliers:** Discussion centred on how to treat 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers who are not FCA or PSR regulated firms but are nevertheless critical to firm’s service provision. Several bank and non-bank members advised that they were working with 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers to identify critical staff, and in several cases were providing those staff members with letters that had either a company letterhead or the logos of both companies. One firm, which is itself a critical supplier to many firms, reported that *their* suppliers were now asking for help. It was envisaged that over time, many suppliers of suppliers may also seek support.

Members reported continuing challenges in Scotland, with numerous reports of the children of designated key financial workers being turned away at schools despite having a letter. More action in this area is required to bring Scotland into line with the rest of the UK.

- 5. India:** With India now dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 virus, there has been increased media interest in any effects this will have on service provision here in the UK. I reported to members the outcomes of the Outsourcing Working Group call last week which, with some exceptions, reported no significant disruption, although many firms had had to

enact BCP plans. Several firms reported the closing of call centres in India was impacting their call centres but aside from that impact had been minimal. Members felt this issue was now addressed.

6. **Leave arrangements:** Members discussed how firms were thinking of treating staff leave arrangements. The group was advised that the government released statement on 27/03/2020 (link is [here](#)) where they state that "*The regulations will allow up to 4 weeks of unused leave to be carried into the next 2 leave years, easing the requirements on business to ensure that workers take statutory amount of annual leave in any one year. This will mean staff can continue working in the national effort against the coronavirus without losing out on annual leave.*

If you have any questions, queries or issues you would like raised or to discuss for next week's call, or you would like information about any of UK Finance's activities, please don't hesitate to get in touch.