

**To: Business & Operational Continuity Committee**

Dear member,

Please find below the meeting note from Tuesday's Business & Operational Continuity Committee.

Thank you,

**1. Welcome and presentation from our speakers, Matthew Swindells and Dr Harpreet Sood.**

- Matthew Swindells (MS) and Dr Harpreet Sood (HS) joined the committee to share their reflections on the lifting of restrictions, their key considerations for the government's roadmap, and for businesses when looking at returning staff to work. MS began by sharing recent data which shows week on week decreases to both viral infections and hospitalisations in the UK. This was noted as a clear reflection of how well lockdown was working.
- HS spoke to the impact and the increasing information that is being gathered on the effects of 'long COVID', or PCS (Post-COVID Syndrome). He shared that from experience, PCS is having an impact on an individuals' ability return to work and the suggestion is to support those affected by offering the ability to take a phased return to work.
- On vaccinations, although the success of stopping serious illness has been very effective, data is still being gathered around the efficacy on limiting the spread of the virus. As for staff taking the vaccine when invited to, their key message for employers is to encourage staff by supporting them in taking the vaccine, building trust and confidence around the vaccine process and sharing the right information.
- With respect to the impact on workplaces, both MS and HS shared that they foresee a continued need for social distancing measures in offices. Members noted the impact this will have on returning staff to the office in any large number as their capacities will be significantly lessened whilst they continue to adhere for COVID safe guidelines. For staff who will return to the office, MS and HS encouraged the use of testing, alongside continuing other COVID safe measures to support staff and build their confidence as to the safety of the office.

*Q&A with members*

- Members discussed the side-effects of the COVID vaccine and the impact that may have on organisations if the vaccine was to be offered on-site by employers. HS shared that extreme side-effects lasting beyond 24-48 hours were very rare. It was discussed that mitigating actions could be put in place, such as phased vaccination programmes and pre-approved leave for employees.
- On testing, members discussed whether the government offer of LTR testing is perceived as beneficial given the number of other COVID-safe measures firms have put in place. MS and HS noted that taking up the government's offer of testing is a sound recommendation, and alongside other COVID safe measures will remain a significant part of the governments reopening plan.
- Members discussed the areas of the roadmap and reopening which are seen to be the most at-risk. MS and HS shared that based on what happened in 2020, lifting

restrictions in the summertime is not deemed to be a high risk. Rather, they saw the risk sharpening as we enter the autumn period and this year's flu season, coupled with increased mobility and restrictions being lifted on international travel.

## **2. Visits to customer or supplier sites from 17 May**

- With the 17 May signalling the change in COVID restrictions to once again permit 'the Rule of Six' indoors, members discussed whether this would allow visits to customer sites. MS and HS shared their perspective and noted that on a strict reading of rule, this would allow such visits. MS recommended that this be pre-agreed and not include more than one person from an organisation. There should be a better understanding of what might impact this as the next phase of the roadmap is reached, and firms should keep apprised of the government guidance.

## **3. E-signatures – the current position.**

- Members discussed their current positioning on the use of e-signatures and particularly the different methods of verification of authority. Some members shared their current practices and offered to share those with the member who raised the question offline. If members are able to support further with this agenda item please can you contact Lorraine to be put in touch with the appropriate member.

## **4. AOB**

- As discussed at a previous meeting, UK Finance has undertaken a governance review of the BOCC, as part of that we have revised the terms of reference for this committee. Members can find these attached and comments or amends are welcome by COP, 25 March, **ACTION**.
- On the governance review, UK Finance has received sufficient nominations for the Chairmanship and will be reporting back on the process at the next call on 30 March.
- Our next meeting will take place at 3-4pm on 30 March and members will be joined by representatives from the City of London. They will be speaking to members about the return to office, the current guidance available to support firms decision-making and the testing programme.