

## Priority sector list

April 2020

### **Priority Sectors During COVID-19: Setting the Context**

Instructed by the Northern Ireland Executive and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NI Engagement Forum (the Forum), a collaboration of business bodies, trade unions and key statutory bodies, has compiled an agreed list of sectors and industries deemed to be providing priority goods and services in the immediate future

The COVID-19 pandemic is primarily a public health crisis and in responding to it, the **number one priority should also be the protection of lives** and responding to it will require everyone taking action to protect lives

This guidance must be treated as a live document; it is intended to enable those businesses operating within the named sectors, and importantly those that form part of the extensive supply chain supporting the continued provision of a priority goods and services, to continue to do so.

The Northern Ireland Executive has been clear that no one should leave their home without a justifiable reason, and that includes the requirement to travel to work.

The Forum would re-affirm that everyone should work from home where possible. No one should travel to work unless their work cannot be done from home and it is in a priority sector.

As a society, every citizen has a duty of care to ensure we do all we can to ensure lives are not exposed to unnecessary risk while also finely balancing the enablement of the economy to continue to function to allow for the ongoing provision of essential goods and services, avoid significant job losses and ensure people get paid.

It is therefore imperative, as we move into the period during which the spread of the coronavirus is expected to peak, that there is unambiguous clarity about what constitutes priority work to help fight the virus and sustain healthy homes and communities. This can only be achieved through the avoidance of unnecessary social interaction, which we know increases the risk of spreading the virus.

This is vital to allay any confusion and bring greater clarity to those businesses which should be expected to continue trading and businesses which should be encouraged to temporarily close to reduce the risk of community infection.

This guidance is directed at companies critical to local, national and global supply chains that are responding to the COVID-19 crisis, and other companies that perform critical global roles.

Furthermore, businesses, which supply priority sectors, including down-stream suppliers and subcontractors, are covered by this guidance.

The Forum also acknowledges that some sectors may not be considered priority under this guidance but are able to continue to operate with staff working from home.

Similarly, organisations providing priority services should facilitate remote working as far as possible.

Those organisations operating in sectors not included on the list will have an opportunity to appeal the exclusion.

Furthermore, all priority sectors must fully comply with the Emergency Code of Practice that offers practical assistance for priority sectors and their workforce, to ensure full compliance with Health Protection Regulations and Public Health Agency (PHA)/Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance (single code developed jointly by HSE, Labour Relations Agency and PHA).

### **Eligibility test**

To assist businesses in determining their eligibility to continue to operate under this guidance, the following guide should be used:

1. Can you meet the requirements of **the Forum's guidance: Covid-19: Working Through This Together – A Practical Guide TO Making Workplace Safer'** to fully comply with the Health Protection Regulations and Public Health Agency (PHA)/Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance (single code developed by HSE, Labor Relations Agency and PHA).

If yes, move to step 2

If no, can you:

- (i) make provisions for staff to work from home? Those businesses that can facilitate remote working for sufficient staff, to sustain their operations, may continue to operate unhindered
- (ii) redesign your production operations to ensure compliance with the **the Forum's guidance: Covid-19: Working Through This Together – A Practical Guide TO Making Workplace Safer'**.

2. Is your business directly involved in a priority area?

If yes, you may continue to operate

If no, move to step 3

3. Is your business a significant downstream supplier or subcontractor servicing or supplying a priority sector?

If yes, you may continue to operate

If no, move to step 4

4. Is your business able to repurpose production to provide one of the many priority goods and services to help fight against COVID-19 and can meet the emergency code of practice as outlined in step 1.

If no, move to step 5

5. Businesses not deemed eligible after following the above steps will have formal recourse through an appeals process. Further guidance is provided below to provide

### **Registration**

Organisations must register as a business in a 'priority sector' with the Department for the Economy within five working days of the list being published (by **XX** April) in order to assist the public and indeed Government Departments and Agencies who are coordinating the response to this health emergency.

Any business that does not immediately identify as part of the agreed priority sectors will have the opportunity to repurpose, to provide goods or services critical to the fight against COVID 19. Businesses will be given a grace period of 5 working days to repurpose from non-essential to priority and apply to the Department for the Economy to seek approval and registration.

Many firms have already successfully repurposed to meet the demand from priority sectors, are playing a huge role in sustaining life. These initiatives are hugely welcomed and to be encouraged.

Registered businesses will be included on a publicly available list on the Department for the Economy website.

The list will also form part of the verification process used by government agencies that are responsible for the enforcement of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 such as the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The list will also enable the signposting of evolving procurement opportunities from government and other agencies and provide a vital communication tool for the sharing of information pertaining to the ongoing fight against the spread of COVID-19.

### **Right of Appeal**

An appeals process, run by the Department for Economy, will enable organisations to query their exclusion from the list by clearly identifying how they (i) meet the requirement of the aforementioned priority list and/or (ii), how they are assisting in the fight against COVID-19.

This need not apply to those businesses that are able to operate entirely on a remote basis, whose operations should be allowed to continue unhindered.

### **Further guidance / other considerations**

A list of primary, secondary, and third tier suppliers must be established to ensure those supply chains are satisfactorily prioritised. Employers in priority sectors should assist their downstream supply chains by confirming in writing their importance to their continued operation.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to make a significant impact on economic and community life, all businesses and individuals must reflect on how we can reduce social interaction and prioritise operations to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Where possible, businesses should identify what operations/plans can be postponed, delayed, or streamlined where appropriate to assist with reducing the numbers of people interacting in the workplace.

### **Special provisions**

Should a business be required to close, contrary to the advice provided by the UK government, the NI Executive must confirm that impacted businesses will fully qualify for the furlough scheme/Job Retention Scheme.

For those businesses with sister operations in Great Britain that will continue to operate, it must be guaranteed Northern Ireland-based operations are not unfairly disadvantaged by HMRC during the furlough rebate process and incur liabilities for the 80% salary costs.

A Resilience Fund similar to that available in Wales should also be considered, making grants available to any businesses forced to close as a consequence of this list.

Affected businesses should be able to apply for grants to cover costs such as contractual liabilities (assuming force majeure clauses are not enacted or rejected by insurance companies who refuse to recognise a deviation from UK government advice), pay salaries until the HMRC rebate is paid. Ongoing running fixed costs and additional security costs to ensure vacant buildings are protected from a higher risk of theft/burglary should also be covered.

### **Updates**

The list of priority sectors, and the accompanying guidance will be updated on an ongoing basis and as such, should be treated as a live document.

Broad Sector	Sub Sector	Detail
<b>Production</b>	Mining and Quarrying	<p>Extraction, processing and delivery of materials essential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agricultural activities</li> <li>Water filtration &amp; purification</li> <li>Construction / Maintenance of Health / Education related Infrastructure.</li> <li>Production and supply of high value aggregates</li> <li>Emergency maintenance of highways as per Department of Transport list of essential activities.</li> </ul>
	Manufacturing	<p>Manufacture of all food products, raw materials and ingredients</p> <p>Manufacture and supply of animal feed</p> <p>Processing of animal by-products</p> <p>Manufacture of beverages</p> <p>Manufacture of Personal Protective garments and other wearing apparel related to the delivery of health services.</p> <p>Manufacture of paper and paper products relating to packaging, human hygiene and medical services</p> <p>Printing and reproduction of recorded media relating to public information and public safety</p> <p>Manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products</p> <p>Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products</p> <p>Manufacture of aerospace components required to ensure the certification of aircraft</p> <p>Manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations</p> <p>Manufacture of rubber and plastic products where they intersect with life sustaining industries</p> <p>Manufacture of computer, electronic, optical products and imaging products.</p>

		<p>Manufacture of electrical equipment essential for life sustaining industries and sectors listed as priority areas.</p> <p>Manufacture of security, cyber, cloud and data centre infrastructure products and components</p> <p>Manufacture of machinery and equipment essential for life sustaining industries including minerals, waste and supplying and servicing sectors listed as priority areas.</p> <p>Manufacture of power generators and service parts.</p> <p>Repair and installation of machinery and equipment</p> <p>Manufacture of construction materials for essential maintenance or remedial works to include Concrete, Cement and Stone Products and Bituminous Materials.</p> <p>Manufacture of products critical to local, national global supply chains that are responding to the COVID-19 crisis.</p>
	Energy Generation and Supply	<p>Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, distribution and servicing</p> <p>Works that are necessary for the short to medium term security of supply, essential connections and/or for the protection and safety of consumers and utility employees.</p> <p>Fuel (including distribution)</p>
	Water and Waste	<p>Water collection, treatment and supply</p> <p>Sewerage</p> <p>Waste collection, (including animal waste), treatment and disposal activities; materials recovery</p> <p>Remediation activities and other waste management services.</p>
<b>Construction</b>		Any new builds/conversions/maintenance supporting, health service and related activities, other emergency and security services, food manufacture, supply & logistics and utilities

		<p>Any new builds/conversions/maintenance supporting priority sectors identified by either local or national governments</p> <p>Emergency services to businesses and homes on an emergency call-out basis in areas such as electrical, heating, plumbing, glazing and roofing or emergency repair related to fire, theft and burglary</p> <p>Supply of construction materials and builder's merchants for the above.</p>
<b>Distribution</b>	Wholesale and Retail	<p>Wholesale of agricultural raw materials and live animals</p> <p>Wholesale of food, beverages and tobacco</p> <p>Wholesale of household goods</p> <p>Retail sale of all food, beverages and tobacco in specialised and non-specialised stores</p> <p>Retail sale of agricultural supplies in specialised stores</p> <p>Retail of supplies for the health of animals, including animal feed.</p> <p>Retail sale of automotive fuel in specialised stores</p> <p>Retail delivery of home heating fuels</p> <p>Dispensing chemist in specialised stores (including veterinary medicines)</p> <p>Retail sale of essential goods for household maintenance</p> <p>Retail delivery sale of office equipment to facilitate home working</p> <p>Retail delivery sale of essential home items</p> <p>Retail business to consumers providing home delivery options.</p>
	Motor Vehicles	<p>Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles</p> <p>Supply, maintenance and repair and repair of commercial and agricultural vehicles and refrigeration units.</p>
<b>Service Industries</b>	Transport and Storage	<p>Land transport and transport via pipelines – All HGV, Bus, train, van drivers and Taxis</p> <p>Water transport – all Port staff, stevedores and crews</p> <p>Air transport – all operations staff associated with the continued operation of Airports that handle NI air freight.</p>

		<p>Warehousing, self-storage and support activities for transportation – forklift truck drivers, general warehouse operatives and load planners.</p> <p>Transport managers and transport planners who manage drivers, routes, deliveries and collections.</p>
	Accommodation and Food Service	<p>Workplace canteen operations in NHS Hospitals and in any priority business</p> <p>Food takeaway services</p> <p>Provision of temporary accommodation for front line and priority workers</p>
	Real Estate	Conveyancing – essential services which cannot be postponed
	Information and Communication	<p>Print media – Newspapers</p> <p>Programming, production and broadcasting activities</p> <p>Telecommunications and postal service</p> <p>Information technology and data infrastructure sector required to support priority services</p>
	Professional, Scientific and Technical	<p>Scientific research and development</p> <p>Legal Services necessary for the functioning of the judicial system.</p> <p>Food testing and certification</p> <p>Agency labour providers for priority services</p> <p>Veterinary activities</p> <p>Professional services required to support priority services and/or vulnerable people</p>



		<p>Professional services required to providing services or equipment to support home working</p> <p>Laboratory and analytical service.</p> <p>Professional services to satisfy legislative and statutory consultee requirements, in the areas of health and safety, land use planning and reserve replenishment:          Surveyors (Land, Air Quality, Noise and Ecological)          Geotechnical Engineers          Blasting Engineers and explosive suppliers</p>
	Administration and Support Services	<p>Security and investigation activities</p> <p>Private security to priority services</p> <p>Cleaning for priority service building</p> <p>Emergency and remedial landscape service activities</p>
	Other Service activities	<p>Funeral and related activities</p> <p>Laundrette facilities</p> <p>All childcare (those providing services to Key Workers (as defined by the Department of Education))</p> <p>All other services required to maintain the health and social care sector (including sub-contractors)</p> <p>Third sector and other organisations providing support priority services and/or vulnerable people</p> <p>Pest Control</p>

<b>Financial and Insurance</b>		Banking (including banks, building societies, credit unions, trade and credit agents and financial market infrastructure)  Insurance  Pension funding  Monetary intermediation
<b>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</b>		Crop and animal production, including essential contractors (e.g. slurry spreading, artificial insemination)  Machinery manufacturing, suppliers, service mechanics and engineers  Fishing and aquaculture  Aquaculture
<b>Public Administration and Health</b>	Administration of the State and the economic and social policy of the community	Regulation of the activities of providing health care, education, cultural services and other social services, excluding social security  Social security activities
	Provision of services to the community as a whole	Defence activities  Justice and judicial activities  Public order and safety activities  Fire service activities  Any private provider assisting the public sector in delivery of these services.
	Health	Human health activities  Residential care activities

		Social Workers and social care activities Any private provider assisting the public sector in delivery of these services.
	Education	Teachers, classroom assistants and staff necessary to provide service to the children of priority service workers.