

Welsh Government COVID-19 Guidance – Reference Guide for Policy Owners

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Issue Number: 01

Date: 22 May 2020

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Who is this Guidance for?

Policy owners of Welsh Government Guidance issued/to be updated in relation to COVID-19.

What is this Guidance about?

The proposed process below will help coordinate our approach by providing clear roles and responsibilities for COVID-19 guidance, and by ensuring relevant stakeholders are informed of changes they need to be aware of.

Supporting Information:

Coronavirus guidance record log

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1. Summary

The need for a coordinated approach to online COVID 19 guidance

The ongoing and rapidly changing situation regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) means we are having to issue and amend public guidance on a regular basis and at an unprecedented speed. With material being published online at such pace, there has understandably been some inconsistencies between different pieces of guidance, and some confusion over ownership of the guidance. In addition not all guidance has properly reflected the correct legal position.

The proposed process below will help coordinate our approach by providing clear roles and responsibilities for COVID-19 guidance, and by ensuring relevant stakeholders are informed of changes they need to be aware of.

The key principles you must follow are:

- **All Welsh Government guidance on COVID-19 must be approved through the processes set out in this document**
- **The COVID-19 Legislation Team must be notified whenever a change to guidance is under consideration**
- **Policy teams are primarily responsible for identifying where there may be a need for guidance, producing guidance and keeping all published guidance under review**

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 COVID-19 Legislation Team

The COVID-19 Legislation Team are responsible for coordinating changes to coronavirus-related legislation and guidance. The team works closely with a small core group of lawyers from Legal Services who have been providing advice on the imposition of the restrictions and legislative counsel from the Office of Legislative Counsel who have been drafting most of the legislation.

All new guidance and amendments of substance to existing guidance must be agreed with this group through the Legislation Team. In addition, if you have questions about the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 or the Coronavirus Act 2020, they can help. Please email questions you may have to Covid19.Legislation@gov.wales.

The team should also be kept informed of whenever you are considering issuing new guidance or making changes to pre-existing guidance.

The Legislation Team will email the guidance's policy owners about changes to the legislation, which will be done in as far in advance as possible. While they can help by responding to queries, they are not (unless specifically agreed) responsible for updating or producing individual pieces of guidance that may follow when legislation is changed.

Responsibility for producing both new and updated guidance belongs to the policy owner(s) listed in the enclosed spreadsheet, here.

The COVID-19 Legislation Team is likely to continue to receive future commissions for guidance from Ministers. In these cases, the Legislation Team will engage early and proactively to assign owners from the relevant policy area. This may include a callout at one of the tri-weekly Preparedness Birdtable meetings.

2.2 Communications

New guidance or substantial changes to pre-existing guidance will need to be communicated to the public. New guidance or substantial changes to pre-existing guidance will need to be communicated to the public in a way that is clear, and consistent with guidance in other policy areas.

Policy teams planning new or amended guidance must make their respective **Head of Communications** and departmental communications teams aware so that the communication and promotion of the new or amended guidance can be prepared. This includes online publication, press releases and informing stakeholders.

Note: Policy teams planning new or amended guidance must make their respective departmental communications teams aware so that promotion of the new or amended guidance can be prepared.

As well as informing their respective departmental communications team, policy leads are also asked to notify Toby Mason (toby.mason@gov.wales) and **NR** **NR**@gov.wales)

2.3 Corporate Digital Team (CDT)

Departmental web managers work with the Corporate Digital Team to publish new and amended guidance online.

The Corporate Digital Team provides an expert content design service. They may need to amend guidance so it works well online, this may include:

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- editing the words
- presenting it differently, for example breaking it into separate pages

CDT want to help you publish to the best possible standard in the time available and will be pragmatic they will balance the need to issue guidance against the effort to make any changes. Please contact them early and read the brief guidance below to help ensure information is published efficiently.

The contacts for publishing online material are **Name Redacted** @GOV.WALES and **Name Redacted** @GOV.WALES.

The CDT have cover for COVID-19 work between 7am and 7pm on weekdays, but please note that there will be reduced capability outside of the core hours of 9am to 5pm. Emergency publication needed after 7pm must follow the emergency publishing procedure.

There is reduced capacity on weekends, with only one member of staff typically working.

2.4 Translation Services

All guidance on Gov.wales for the public is required in both the English and Welsh languages.

You have two options for producing the Welsh language version:

- If the author has no Welsh language skills, email the English version through to Translation Services for translation. If this is an update to pre-existing guidance, then please provide the document with all changes clearly tracked.
- If the author has Welsh language skills, then you are welcome to produce a Welsh language version to send through to Translation Services for text checking. If the change relates to pre-existing guidance, then please email the document with all changes clearly tracked.

Please use the form found on this page to submit a job.

Note: In both instances, you must involve Translation Services, as it is important that all terminology is correct and Welsh language versions are of a translation standard.

If you require translation services at the weekend prepare, plan and contact the Translation Service ASAP. Given prior notice, the Translation Service will do their best to arrange a swift service, either internally or via their external contractors.

If you contact the Translation Service at the weekend, you will receive an out-of-office message directing you to telephone a member of staff on-call.

If producing a Welsh language version, the Translation Service's on-line resource portal, BydTermCymru, may be useful. It contains:

- TermCymru, a searchable database of terms
- Yr Arddulliadur, a searchable style and language guide
- A specific COVID-19 resources page bringing together all the latest terms and advice on language relevant to the crisis

2.5 Legal Services

All coronavirus guidance will need to be checked by the relevant Legal Services subject team to ensure it is fully consistent with the legal position. Please discuss your requirements with the relevant legal team early in the process for advice. More complex queries may need to be addressed by the Covid-19 Legislation Team; however, this should be done only after discussion with your legal team, who are likely to liaise with the Covid-19 Legislation Team in any event.

As with the other professions, please engage early and proactively to help secure resource and manage workloads. Your timetable is more likely to be accommodated the more notice and detail you provide of your requirements.

2.6 Ministers

All new guidance, alongside substantive changes to pre-existing guidance, needs to be cleared with the relevant minister **and** the Counsel General, who will seek advice from the Covid-19 Legislation Team to ensure they are content with the format of the guidance and legal compliance.

2.7 Impact Assessments

In responding to the Covid-19 outbreak and during the recovery policy response, it is essential that impact assessments are undertaken by Welsh Government.

Ministers must be advised of the impact of decisions and legislation on those who might be most marginalised and disadvantaged. This is vital, particularly when decisions are being made at speed and where public emergency decisions are determining our legislation, policy and decisions.

The nature of the policy decision and the extent of its coverage will determine the depth of evidence that needs to be gathered and considered. The principle of proportionality should guide how much effort and resource should be applied at each step of impact assessment. It should not be used to guide whether an impact assessment should be undertaken, only the scale of gathering and consideration of evidence needed to complete it.

Ultimately, it is for the senior official responsible for clearing the advice on the decision to take a judgement on what is required – this judgement and the reasons for it will need to be recorded and where appropriate set out in advice to Ministers.

Support

Support is available for officials on impact assessment:

- Equality branch are working closely with Knowledge and Analytical Services to collate, log and summarise the key themes from a range of reports, briefings and insights in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on people with protected characteristics in Wales. This work provides a resource to better understand the equality impacts of COVID-19 in Wales, and to consider mitigating actions where necessary. They are also providing conduits to groups who can provide insight into equality impacts from people with lived experience.
- Children's Branch CRIA@gov.wales can provide advice on CRIsAs and on data from the 'Coronavirus and me' children's survey)
- KAS generated data and evidence, including the regular COVID-19 data monitors, as well as data on the Coronavirus sections of the Welsh Government website and the ONS website, and evidence and data sources to support restart and recovery
- The Welsh Language Standards Team can provide advice on the Welsh Language requirements: Safonau.Standards@gov.wales
- Equality leads embedded within departments can support policy colleagues in developing impact assessments.

3. Process for Policy Owners

3.1 New guidance:

3.1.1 Ensure that there is a need for new guidance by checking for related existing guidance on Gov.wales, or in the spreadsheet linked on page 1. Sometimes an update to previous guidance may be more appropriate. If this is the case, please contact the guidance's owner listed in the spreadsheet. If unsure, the Central Web Team can provide advice.

3.1.2 Add the guidance you are working on to the 'Upcoming' tab of the spreadsheet.

3.1.3 Engage with related policy officials, your legal services team and relevant stakeholders as needed in drawing up a draft of the guidance.

3.1.4 It is particularly important to engage early with CMO's office to ensure the guidance is consistent with other related areas and based on sound public health advice. Requests for advice can be sent to healthprotection@gov.wales

3.1.5 A lot of guidance will raise issues about how laws will be enforced. Community Safety Division manages the relationship with Wales's police forces and should be consulted on any guidance in production which raises these issues, so they can advise

on how to secure views from the police. The contacts are [NR]@gov.wales and [NR]@gov.wales.

3.1.6 The Corporate Digital Team, Communications and Translation Services should also be engaged with early in the process, letting them know that you are producing new guidance, when you anticipate emailing the new material to them, and what services you will require. This will enable them to manage their workload effectively and to ensure the necessary resource is available to respond to your request in the appropriate time frame.

3.1.7 When creating new guidance you should consider early on what the appropriate **timing** would be for publication of that guidance. As a general rule, wherever possible, guidance relating to a change in the law should be available at the same time as, or before, that change in the law is made public. Where that cannot be managed, guidance should at least be available by the time the law comes into force. Timescales for other steps in this process should be planned accordingly.

3.1.8 It is essential you consider at the outset who the **audience** is for the guidance, and set the tone accordingly. Guidance for local authorities or business owners may use more technical language. To assist in clarifying who the intended audience is, it is usually helpful to include this in the **title of the document** (eg "Guidance for hubs and schools: coronavirus" or "Your responsibilities as an employer: coronavirus". If guidance is statutory (i.e. it is made under a law saying that people must have regard to guidance from the Welsh Government) then this should be made clear in the title.

3.1.9 The CDT follow comprehensive guidelines when publishing online content. For COVID-19 related guidance, the authors should follow these points as a minimum:

Use plain language where possible, especially when guidance is aimed at the general public. This will have to be balanced with the need to accurately portray legal requirements, but aim to keep legalistic phrasing to a minimum. Please consider running your text through the readability function in Word to check readability. Where guidance is for the general public, please consider also producing an Easy Read version.

Link to existing guidance, rather than repeating information found elsewhere. For example, link to the existing guidance on critical workers rather than replicating the list within any new guidance. This will help to keep updates more manageable and will reduce the risk of providing inconsistent information.

Break guidance into smaller units where possible. For example, instead of 'Schools Guidance' issue 'School Meals Guidance', 'School Breaks Guidance', etc. This will help users find the content they are looking for.

3.1.10 Once the new guidance is written, please share your draft with your LS team, who will work closely with you and (as required) the COVID 19 Legislation Team to ensure it is fully consistent with the legal position.

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3.1.11 Clear with the relevant ministerial and Counsel General Private office. Ministers will expect you to verify that the guidance has been endorsed by the CMO's office.

3.1.12 Once the content is agreed by Legal Services and the COVID-19 Legislation Team, email it to Translation Services to either be translated or proofread (if the policy owner has Welsh language skills).

3.1.13 Email both the English and Welsh language versions with all changes clearly tracked to the Corporate Digital Team (CDT) contacts listed above. If the request is urgent, please indicate this in the email's subject line.

3.1.14 When the new guidance is published, move the guidance from the 'Upcoming' tab of the spreadsheet to the 'Published' tab.

3.1.15 Given the rapidly changing situation, you will need to ensure your guidance stays up to date and consistent with other policy areas. Regular reviews of this guidance and any other guidance you own should be undertaken. If it needs to be updated, discuss with your line manager and please follow the 'Updates to existing guidance' process.

3.2 Updates to existing guidance:

3.2.1 Discuss the changes you intend to make with the COVID-Legislation team. Legal services will need to agree that the changes are consistent with the legal position – please discuss with the COVID-Legislation team on what will be required. If the changes are substantial, consider how Communications or other policy areas and stakeholders will need to be engaged.

3.2.2 Identify related existing guidance on Gov.wales, or in the spreadsheet linked on page 1 and contact the guidance's owner listed in the spreadsheet to discuss and agree any changes.

3.2.3 Add the guidance you are working on to the 'Upcoming' tab of the spreadsheet.

3.2.4 As with creating new guidance, you should consider early on what the appropriate timing would be for publication of the updated guidance. As a general rule, wherever possible, guidance relating to a change in the law should be available at the same time as, or before, that change in the law is made public. Where that cannot be managed, guidance should at least be available by the time the law comes into force. Timescales for other steps in this process should be planned accordingly.

3.2.5 Engage with the Corporate Digital Team and Translation Services early in the process, letting them know that you are producing an update to existing guidance, when you anticipate emailing the updated version to them, and what services you will require. This will enable them to manage their workload effectively and to ensure the

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necessary resource is made available to respond to your request in the appropriate time frame.

3.2.6 If the changes are substantial, send to the relevant ministerial and Counsel General Private office for clearance. All changes to guidance should also be agreed by special advisers before they are published, and confirmation should be sought from the CMO's office that they are content through the process at paragraph 3.1.4. If unclear about sign off processes, contact the Covid-19 Legislation Team.

3.2.7 Email a copy with all changes clearly tracked to Translation Services for translation (if written in English) or to proofread (if the policy owner has Welsh language skills).

3.2.8 Email both the English and Welsh language versions of the updated guidance (with tracked changes) to the Corporate Digital Team contacts listed above. If the request is urgent, please indicate this in the email's subject line.

3.2.9 When the updated guidance is published, update the 'Last Reviewed' section of the spreadsheet.

3.2.10 Regularly review this guidance, along with the guidance you own. If the guidance requires further updating, please follow this process from the beginning.

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Reference/Signposting Guidance

When drawing up your guidance the enclosed links should be used when you refer to the individual areas to ensure that the latest/accurate information is referenced.

1.	<u>CMO letter to extremely vulnerable people: support explained</u>
2.	<u>Coronavirus and personal protective equipment (PPE)</u>
3.	Coronavirus: closure of businesses and premises
4.	<u>Coronavirus regulations: FAQs</u>
5.	<u>Coronavirus social distancing guidance</u>
6.	<u>Coronavirus: Welsh Government guidance on exercise away from the home</u>
7.	<u>Face coverings: coronavirus</u>
8.	<u>Guidance to employers and businesses on COVID-20</u>
9.	Protect yourself and others from coronavirus
10	<u>Self-isolation: stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus</u>
11.	<u>Taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace</u>
12.	<u>Travelling safely (coronavirus): guidance for the public</u>

