

Cancellation, postponement or reduction in numbers? The Government has not suggested that conferences and events should be cancelled, the message is 'Business as Usual'. Association conferences are on a set cycle and it will be challenging/expensive to move them. The general consensus is to red-flag crucial points within terms and conditions, and to go ahead wherever possible. Hybridisation can be introduced to ensure full delegate engagement. Some universities and hospital teams have been asked not to undertake any unnecessary travel, so a hybrid event can help them to participate. Please note that communicable diseases are usually excluded from events insurance contracts – so please check your terms and conditions as you may not be covered unless you have paid a premium for an extension in cover. This extension is likely to be worded that any claim is valid only once there is a ban on public gatherings leading to closure of the venue. No travel insurance will respond to delegates 'disinclination to attend' but there will be more cover if the FCO has advised against travel to a certain destination and the policy was purchased before this travel ban. If you are considering postponement then you need to consider the time-frames as the Chief Medical Officer is suggesting that it will last 5-6 months.

Venues – should have 're-assurance' that they can give to PCOs for onward communication with regards to delegates feeling safe whilst on-site – this can be communicated prior, and by digital signage at the venue. Work with your venues to communicate this to delegates. The advice is that it is no riskier being at an event than anywhere else at the moment. Venues should not be asking the PCO for indemnity if a delegate becomes sick, and if there stay in accommodation needs to be extended (evacuation/repatriation). This should be covered by the venue insurance and by the delegate travel insurance (may be opportune to suggest that all delegates have travel insurance). Venues are generally working with their clients, particularly regular clients, to show some leniency on terms and conditions and to help them to maximise the delegate attendance. Public Health England are very helpful and worth seeking advice from.

Risk assessments and action plans – are the PCOs responsibility, and they are the central hub of contact. They should be updated regularly in line with the FCO advice (which is more relevant than WHO for delegates in this country – please refer to local Government advisory services in the country where the conference is taking place for overseas conferences) PCOs can make sure that they give advice for delegates travel, and can stagger arrival/departure, consider the lay-out of conference rooms, consider having wrapped food etc.

Employees – there is a duty of care to look after our teams and to take their objections into consideration. Keep referring back to the FCO for most up to date info. If we have a team member that contracts the virus and is quarantined then the employer has a duty of care to ensure that they are properly looked after. Also good practice to keep a log of where all team members are and when – including in their personal time, such as holidays.

Some wording statements from IMEX and Delegate Wranglers have been shared on the forum, as will the transcript from the call.



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