



**High Court Enforcement Officers  
Association Limited**

Suite S31 Northwich Buss Ctr  
Meadow Street  
Northwich  
Cheshire  
CW9 5BF

Tel: 0844 824 4575

Website: [www.hceoa.org.uk](http://www.hceoa.org.uk)

Email: [enquiries@hceoa.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@hceoa.org.uk)

**HIGH COURT ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION  
COVID-19 PLAN  
A FLEXIBLE AND SYMPATHETIC APPROACH TO ENFORCEMENT**

**12 July 2021**

This plan has been reviewed and updated based on current legislation, guidelines and Ministry of Justice communications as of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

It sets out the principles, working practices and behaviours that the High Court Enforcement Officers' Association is recommending to its members with reference to COVID-19.

These recommendations will ensure our profession continues to play its part in minimising transmission of COVID-19 as UK Government restrictions are removed.

Precise activities in different areas of the country will vary over time in accordance with UK Government and Welsh Assembly legislation and guidance.

HCEOA members recognise that some judgment debtors may be continuing to experience significant impacts as a result of COVID-19. Our members' existing vulnerability processes are designed to consider the case-by-case circumstances of judgment debtors and ensure they are treated fairly. This plan reinforces and extends these processes.

High Court Enforcement Officers will, as a minimum, abide by the letter and the spirit of the law and UK Government regulations and Public Health England and Wales' guidance at all times in implementing this plan. Full details of this government guidance, which is called "[Working safely during COVID-19: enforcement agents \(bailiffs\)](#)" are available on the .gov.uk website.

Our recommendations are:

**1. Training**

Members should undertake appropriate training of all enforcement agents on an ongoing basis as regulations and guidance are updated.

The training programme should include:

- the effective use of protective equipment e.g., face coverings,
- the use of appropriate hygiene supplies,
- social distancing requirements,

- how to protect themselves and those that they encounter in the community,
- supporting the vulnerable and recognising mental health issues, and
- full familiarity and understanding of this Plan and what constitutes permitted activity at that time.

## **2. Data collection and recording**

HCEOA members should collect and record details of customer vulnerabilities, in line with data protection requirements, e.g., customer consent, and develop support plans that reflect best practice on dealing with vulnerabilities as it impacts on households of COVID-19 in accordance with their vulnerability policies.

## **3. Notices of Enforcement**

Members should continue to issue Notices of Enforcement in accordance with the Taking Control of Goods Regulations 2013, giving a minimum of 7 clear days' notice prior to a visit taking place.

Where a judgment debtor contacts an HCEO during the compliance stage and identifies vulnerability then the member should deal with this through their vulnerability process before moving the case to the next stage of enforcement.

## **4. Visits to commercial and residential properties**

High Court Enforcement Officers and their representatives should not proceed with a visit if they are made aware either prior to or on arrival that anybody in the household has symptoms, has been instructed to self-isolate or has tested positive for COVID-19.

When visiting commercial or residential premises to enforce a Writ, High Court Enforcement Officers and their representatives should:

- check on the COVID-19 status
- maintain appropriate social distancing measures
- use appropriate protective equipment such as face coverings at all times
- undertake regular lateral flow tests
- be trained to identify any vulnerabilities or changes in circumstances.

Where appropriate:

- vulnerable people or those severely impacted financially by the pandemic, e.g., through loss of job or receiving Statutory Sick Pay, will be referred to debt advice agencies for additional support
- organisations will be referred to relevant debt advice agencies for support.

## **5. Payment and/or taking possession of goods**

HCEOA members should, where payment in full is not made, enter controlled goods agreements and/or make arrangements to pay. This will reduce the burden of increased fees on judgment debtors.

Where payment or an arrangement is not made, escalation to taking possession of goods will follow.

This plan is based on current conditions, and the Association will update it in line with changes to UK Government, Welsh Assembly and Public Health England and Wales guidelines.

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