

Coronavirus (Covid-19) & Your Organisation

Guidance & Support from PatronBase
Version 3 - 19th March 2020

Revision History

Version No.	Date	Revisions
V.1	13.03.2020	Initial Version
V.2	17.03.2020	Additions to 'What other venues are doing' & 'Support for affected organisations' Added 'Scale of the Challenge' Section
V.3	19.03.2020	Changes to Support for Affected Organisations and What Are Other Venues Doing? The What should I do to prepare? Section has been replaced with new information on Useful Resources. A new section has been added on Additional Support from PatronBase.



Intro

You will likely have been planning for Coronavirus already. Your knowledge and expertise will be invaluable in bringing your organisation through the gathering storm.

Many organisations have turned to us for advice, however, so we've put together this guide covering things we've been asked and that other venues are considering, and how PatronBase can help.

Of course, you know your audience best, and may well have it covered – in which case, file this document away in your resilience plan to keep the auditors happy.

If not, though, we hope there will be some insight or advice you can adapt to your venue. We're here to help, so don't hesitate to reach out to your PatronBase Partnership Manager or support team.

Working Remotely

Home Working

Working from home may be a big change for you, but is nothing to be scared of! Many people do it all the time, and some of your PatronBase team work in that way.

There are lots of newspaper articles with tips for homeworkers but essentially:

- Be comfortable - make sure your chair is supportive.
- Set aside a dedicated space, and try to stick to planned working hours
- Move around - you do more walking in your job than you think, get up every now and then.
- You're not alone - we're here to support you.
- Keep in touch with your team – home working can cause feelings of depression and isolation, so regular check-ins can stave this off
- Wear your pyjamas if you want, it's really up to you – but don't forget to change before jumping onto that video call!

Working Remotely

Accessing the Software

If your venue works with PatronBase via a cloud login, simply open Internet Explorer and go to cloud.patronbase.co.uk and use your normal login. You then sign into your modules as normal – it will work just fine on your home broadband.

Telecoms companies are concerned about the possible impact on home broadband of a huge increase in home working and kids off school on the internet or watching TV, so think about having a mobile internet connection as a backup.

If you're self-hosted think about moving to cloud as soon as possible - ask your Partnership Manager to get you a quote. It's not expensive, and to support venues making the shift, we're waiving the first 3 months' hosting fees for those moving to the cloud in March and April.

There's a couple of extra steps if you use a Mac, but once you're set up, you will still be able to connect just fine. Get more details on this, and many other subjects, from <https://patronbaseuk.freshdesk.com/a/solutions>

Above all, remember, we're here to help.

Printing and Payments

Your PatronBase system gives you many options as to how you operate your box office. Now is the time to think of the ways you work and consider other models - for instance, do you need to print tickets at all?

If you have no events running, or run a festival later in the year, ticket printing isn't essential whilst you're closed and they can be bulk printed at a later date. Do you already bulk print? We can show you how to do that if not.

We are not recommending that you take your printers home with you. Apart from the backache of lugging a printer around town, there are settings that your printer needs that are unlikely to be available in your home.

There are options available for sending tickets via email. If you aren't already using Print@Home, now could be the time to make the switch, or roll it out to your box office. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to explore this, but don't forget to consult your FoH team about any changes.

There are different ways of taking payments, some venues have standalone card machines which may work from home but there are other solutions. As you'll only be processing mail or telephone order payments from home, there are web based products to take payments – talk to us about your options if this isn't something you have in place.

Communicating with your Patrons

Your patrons will inherently want to support you as an organisation, but often won't appreciate that the crisis will have impact on you as an organisation as well as them as individuals. Communicate with them early, openly and honestly – if they understand the decisions you are making, they are more likely to be supportive.

Some organisations will struggle from the financial impact – make your patrons part of the solution to that now, rather than waiting until it's too late. Consider a fundraising campaign for your loyal audience to support you through this difficult time, and think about how you could incentivise patrons to participate. Could you offer a special supporter membership with advance access to next year's season, or a special thank you event once the crisis has passed?

You'll want to direct patrons to your website and web ticketing first and foremost, as getting hold of your Box Office team by phone may be harder if staff are remote working, to prioritise staff for more complex concerns or queries.

Once you've figured what you're communicating and to whom, PatronBase has rich tools to allow you to mail your patrons. You may already be familiar with the Marketing module, allowing you to segment your audience and send targeted mailings, but if not, we can help. Sending mailings to all ticketholders of an event is easy and quick, and much more complex segments can be built with ease. If you're communicating about someone's ticket purchase, your privacy policy will likely allow you to do so without explicit marketing consent under a different lawful basis, but consult the person responsible for your privacy arrangements for advice.

Don't forget the customers whose email addresses you don't have – post a prominent message on your site directing customers to your guidance, and if you're closing or reducing your Box Office phone service, don't forget to update the voicemail or IVR message.

There will almost certainly be some grumpy customers, whatever you decide to do – keep it in perspective, and look to your team for moral support, particularly if you're in a public facing or social media role. ***This too shall pass!***

Managing Cancellations, Refunds and Rescheduling

Clarity for your staff and clarity for your customers is absolutely vital. You'll be doing some refunds so it's worth getting a robust policy in place so that everyone does the same thing.

You will be considering rescheduling or cancellations – moving a performance to a different date (or even venue) is straightforward, but you may have little alternative but to cancel events. This will undoubtedly have financial impact on your organisation – can you launch a fundraising campaign to encourage your patrons to donate their refund, or convert it to a membership or gift voucher?

The next thing to think about is your cutoff dates. If you cancel events up until the end of May (for example) then state that boldly in a prominent place. Also state that it is a fluid situation under constant review. If a customer then calls about an event on 1 June you can genuinely state your position.

Stick to the agreed position. Working as a team when you're not all physically together can be challenging, so make the rules clear to team members and, by extension, to your customers. If you can concentrate on rescheduling events rather than cancellations the strain on refunding will be lessened and if you can get your customers to agree to taking their refund as a gift voucher then your organisation will thank you.

You may be unfamiliar with vouchers - PatronBase Guides is your friend <https://guides.patronbase.com> and search for "vouchers", or ask your PatronBase Support team.

*Have you thought about offering **refund protection** to your customers? By offering Booking Protect's Excellent rated product (TrustPilot), you can offer this vital service to your customers, allowing them to obtain a refund should they be unable to attend an event*.*

**Terms and conditions apply – see <https://bookingprotect.com/> for details*

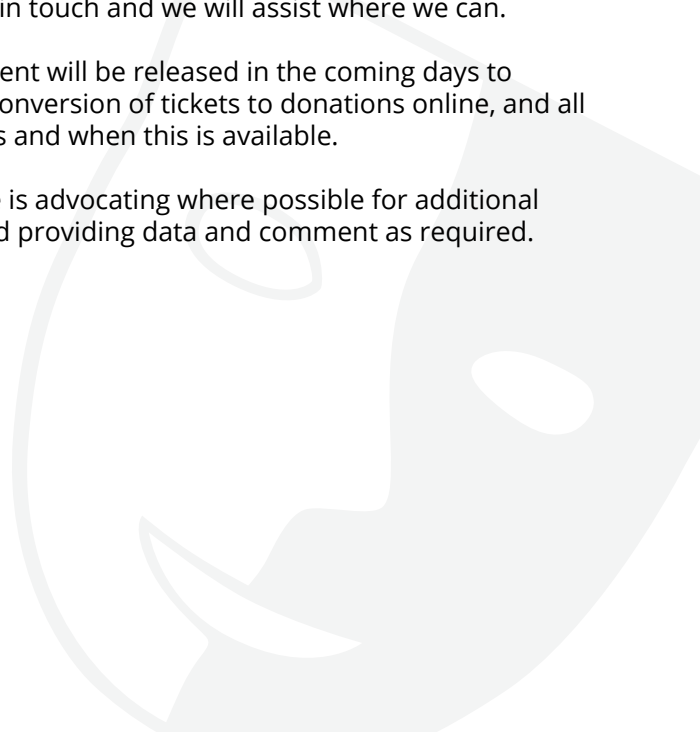


Additional support from PatronBase

In the aftermath of the changed advice to venues, PatronBase's immediate support has focussed on assistance to partners in returning tickets and making refunds. Venues have also requested custom reports to assist in refunds, contacting customers and quantifying the lost revenue – if this affects you, please do get in touch and we will assist where we can.

A new software development will be released in the coming days to assist you in maximising conversion of tickets to donations online, and all partners will be notified as and when this is available.

More broadly, PatronBase is advocating where possible for additional support for the sector, and providing data and comment as required.



Working with the PatronBase Team

Support & Service

It's business as usual for your PatronBase team – many of our team already have the flexibility to work remotely, and arrangements have been put in place for all staff to work from home if they want or need to, including Support, Technical, Development and more.

We will continue to be available in the hours you expect – office hours between 9am and 5.30pm Monday to Friday, and emergency support from 8am to 10pm 7 days per week.

Meetings, Training and Events

For your health and ours, we're trying to limit meetings, training and events. After all, we don't want to become "super-spreaders", travelling from venue to venue, which sounds distinctly unpleasant.

So, although we will still be travelling if requested unless and until Government advice changes, we'll be offering remote options in preference to face to face meetings – at least until the crisis has passed.

We already have robust tools for meetings, training and collaboration – we use Zoom for conference calls, demos, remote training and meetings, and Teamviewer for remote support, so you'll be able to access all the same services you've come to expect from PatronBase, from the comfort of your office or sofa at home.

We may be less visible at conferences and events, and the planned PatronBase roadshow will be postponed until later on in the year, but your and our team's health is the most important thing.

In choosing remote options, you're saving money, doing your bit for the planet AND making one small contribution to public health – so what's not to like?

Support for Affected Organisations

The budget on 11th March 2020 included measures intended to support businesses, including the arts and culture sector. The primary mechanisms intended to support organisations such as yourselves are a year's holiday from paying business rates for venues with a rateable value under £51,000, a £3,000 Grant for the smallest premises and underwriting Statutory Sick Pay for small and medium organisations. A range of funding has also been announced for the Arts more generally.

The grant funding for small organisations was subsequently increased to £10,000 in the Chancellor's statement on 17th March, with a larger £25,000 grant available to businesses in the hospitality industry.

A business interruption loan fund has also been announced, but it's unclear how that will work in practice right now.

Whilst this may help with some of your costs, it is unclear how this will apply to charities already enjoying the benefit of business rate relief, and our view is that it does not go far enough. You may wish to check your insurance cover for business interruption provision, and if your venue uses the PatronBase integration with Booking Protect, to check the guidance on Booking Protect's website for patrons affected by Coronavirus.

Now may also be a good time to consider fundraising and messaging. If you anticipate an impact on your income, you may want to start a campaign to meet that shortfall before patrons reach "virus fatigue" and whilst they are minded to support their favourite venue. By encouraging patrons to turn a refund into a donation or membership of a supporter's circle, if every patron does their bit in helping our arts and cultural venues get through the looming crisis, we will be stronger as a result.

The Arts / Creative Councils of England, Scotland and Wales are showing every sign of being sympathetic to the plight facing the sector.

Very quickly after the scale of the crisis became apparent, Arts Council England pledged support for the sector, and those working within it. Initially this will focus on relaxing conditions for funded organisations and refocussing grant schemes, suggesting that, as yet, there is no additional money available for the sector from Central Government. However, ACE confirm they are in regular contact with DCMS to discuss the wider need for short and long term support.

Support for Affected Organisations

Arts Council England advice has focussed on support for funded organisations with a helpful FAQ on their Coronavirus Information page <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19>. It is as yet unclear what support may be available to organisations who do not already receive funding, but this will hopefully be forthcoming in due course.

Creative Scotland have taken a similar approach to ACE as regards regularly funded organisations, and are directing organisations to wider Scottish Government business support rather than referencing sector-specific funding measures. Find Creative Scotland's statement here <https://www.creativescotland.com/what-we-do/latest-news/archive/2020/02/coronavirus-advice>

Arts Council of Wales have also focussed on funded organisations, with some guidance about freelancers and artists, as well as announcing that the forthcoming Funding Review has been postponed for the foreseeable. The Arts Council of Wales information page may be found here <https://arts.wales/news-jobs-opportunities/responding-coronavirus-covid-19>.



What are other venues doing?

PatronBase operates internationally on 4 continents, and we are seeing a range of different responses by country.

In New Zealand, the normally inconvenient travel distance from other countries is proving a blessing, and impact is limited. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Oman is taking early measures to limit the spread, and PatronBase partner Royal Opera House Muscat has taken the precautionary measure of cancelling all performances, tours and other activities.

PatronBase partners in Spain have seen all but the smallest events cancelled or postponed, with the PatronBase Spain team providing support as required. This sits alongside mass closures of restaurants, service and retail businesses. Responses in the US vary by state but appear to be focussing on the hygiene and cleanliness aspects (such as auditorium cleaning and provision of hand sanitizer) rather than cancellation at the current time.

Within the UK, Scotland appears to be quick off the mark, with events of over 500 people recommended for cancellation. It is unclear what support, if any, will be provided for event organisers, or whether England and Wales will follow suit.

Many venues are putting arrangements in place for home working. As well as thinking about the technical measures, venues are considering how this will work in practice, such as when and how tickets should be printed or dispatched. Where day to day work will be impacted or venues anticipate closure, venues are considering utilising other wasted time on comms projects, data cleanup or implementing new modules of the system to fill otherwise unusable time. Venues are also considering measures to combat social isolation and the mental health impacts from teams of people needing to work individually and away from the support of colleagues.

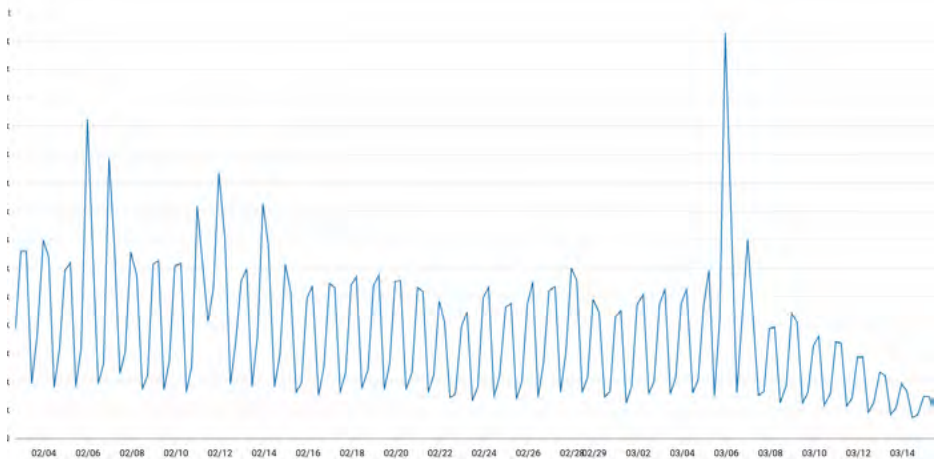
Despite the lack of clear policy from Central Government, the vast majority of venues and attractions have now closed. Some venues have defined a planned closure period of between a couple of weeks or a couple of months; others have instead chosen to close until further notice. Many venues have sought to reschedule events; however given that the duration of the shutdown is unclear, this poses a challenge.

Organisations have seen significant success from asking patrons to consider donating the cost of the ticket or converting it to credit

The PatronBase team will be continuing to operate a full service throughout, and is here to help with support, guidance or advice in what we appreciate will be a trying time for the Arts and culture sector.

The scale of the challenge

What is clear is that there has been a significant effect on the public's buying behaviour. The below image shows analytics for our booking pages over the past 6 weeks, aggregated for all venues we support across the UK and Spain. In effect, this is a measure of your customers' intention to buy.



On the left, the “healthy” sector shows peaks and troughs for day and night respectively. On the right, the last few days shows day and night nearly flatlining. It’s clear that the sector is facing an unprecedented collapse in public interest in attending events.

Useful Resources

A number of organisations have produced useful resources which may be of benefit to you as the crisis continues.

International Ticketing Association INTIX has opened a new forum, Ticket Life with COVID-19 (<https://www.intix.org/forums/Topics.aspx?forum=244696>), for all ticketing professionals to access. The forum is ungated and accessible to all, so please do network with professionals from the US and beyond – colleagues face similar pressures around the globe.

INTIX are also opening a 30 minute Zoom meeting weekly to check in, commune, share and inspire. Starting 18th March 2020, Wednesday Wisdom will run at 4pm UK time. There is no set agenda, and ticketing professionals are encouraged to dial in and share.

The Arts Marketing Association has published helpful resources, primarily targeted to help those engaging audiences, which may be found here <https://www.a-m-a.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-resources/>. In addition, free webinars on : **Wellbeing for Yourself and your Team** and **How to Prepare your Crisis Comms Plan** have proved very popular and a number of further dates for these have been offered.

Additionally, the Arts Marketing Association has provided a Coronavirus Support Facebook Group which is open to all arts, culture & professionals, and provides a safe space to ask questions, share advice & resources, and get support: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AMACommunitySupport/>

Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre have launched a mini-site, Theatre Support (theatresupport.info) to centralise useful help and support resources for theatre professionals affected by the crisis.

