

Mark Buckton
Executive Director of Jobs Cards and Services
NOCN Group Head Office
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1 Concourse Way
Sheaf Street
Sheffield
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23 March 2020

Dear Mark Buckton,

Support Required by the Concrete Structures Industry

Given the unprecedented impact of the coronavirus pandemic, I am writing to you today to outline the concerns our members have surrounding the CPCS card scheme and the impact on qualification achievement, and how you can help us keep the construction industry building during this complex and challenging situation.

CONSTRUCT Concrete Structures Group is the leading representative body for the concrete structures industry, and our members undertake approximately 80% of all concrete frames built nationwide.

CPCS Concerns

CPCS have put out limited information to the industry since the pandemic escalated, other than the need for sites to show discretion.

We are calling for you to issue more detailed guidance for sites and stronger directives to the major contractors about flexibility on temporarily accepting expired cards, unless there is reasonable cause for concern that the operative is not genuine.

This is particularly poignant where operatives have been unable to take their H&SE Test or complete the necessary training or qualifications as a result of Test/Training Centre closures.

In light of Pearson Vue centre closures, we would expect that operatives would not need to provide evidence of this while the centres remain closed.

In the initial stages of this outbreak, we are calling for all cards to have a grace period of 6 months from expiry for being accepted on site, and this period should be reviewed regularly in line with the latest government guidance, and extended if necessary.

Many of our members will have a workforce that has cards from a number of schemes, and we would like to see a coordinated approach to flexibility measures.

CSCS has stated that the deadline for renewal of cards has been extended from 6 months to 12 months. We are calling for CPCS to mirror this measure and we would again urge that this is regularly reviewed in line with government guidance, and extended if the pandemic continues over a prolonged period.



Chairman: Neil Marney

Secretariat Manager: Dave Campbell

We will be calling on CITB to consider if the H&SE Test could be administered remotely, so that operatives can take the test from their homes or from site/company offices. We understand the lack of invigilation that would arise from this set up, but a shorter window of validity of 12-18 months could be considered, until the operative is able to attend a test centre. We would ask that CPCS be involved with this discussion to find a means to make this workable.

Since the introduction of the new online application system, you will be aware that CONSTRUCT's members have experienced significant problems getting the cards they need for their employees. While we appreciate that the pandemic will be a focus for CPCS, these ongoing problems are still taking a toll on members' ability to access site, which will only be exacerbated in the current climate. I would request that these issues, or those that we forward to your team, are dealt with the utmost urgency.

Qualification and Apprenticeship Achievements

As it is not clear when this pandemic will subside, it is possible that it will affect the ability of employees and candidates to complete their qualifications.

We welcome NOCN's announcement to work with industry on End-Point Assessments, particularly in construction where face-to-face assessment is prevalent. We would urge that all EPAs are reviewed for opportunity for bringing flexibility in the delivery to avoid delay in apprenticeship achievement, and that a grace period of 6 months be introduced to any deadlines for completion. This period should be reviewed regularly in line with the latest government guidance, and extended if necessary.

If the pandemic is short-term there may be little impact on the ability for candidates to complete their NVQs within the 3-year period. However, we would call for NOCN to offer a 6-month grace period for completion for those that are nearing the deadline, again with the option to extend further in necessary.

As this is an on-going and fast-moving situation, we would like to work closely with you to ensure the issues faced by our sector –and no doubt the other sectors of construction – are robustly dealt with during this difficult time.

Yours Sincerely,



Dave Campbell
CONSTRUCT Trade Association Manager
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