

Travel Insurance

Market Update

6th July 2020

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Introduction

COVID-19 has seen the travel insurance market face some real challenges with constantly changing and varied approaches from each insurer.

Many insurers have taken the decision to close to new business due to high call and claim volumes as well as future uncertainty as to how COVID-19 will shape product features and terms. The insurer responses and approach at this time is rapidly changing, and we expect that to continue.

Understandably, we are likely to receive enquiries asking us to confirm whether something is covered. We'll make every effort to help and provide you with our considered view as to what may be covered, we must caveat this by explaining that only the insurers can provide authoritative information and confirmation of cover. Where necessary we will therefore seek guidance directly from the insurers.

How a COVID-19 claim is dealt with will very much depend on the type of travel insurance policy you have whether it is business, leisure, employer-paid personal policy or an elected flexible benefit.

Whether you are an existing client of Howden or not please do feel free to reach out to one of our consultants to see how we can help you find the information you are looking for. Please find below some useful information and links that may help you find some of the answers you are looking for.



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Current Key Considerations

There are a vast number of questions coming out of the travel market and some of the answers from providers are still unclear. There are a few common trends and so we wanted to share some key considerations you should be thinking about:



Future Travel

As destinations that are on and off the government safe to travel list constantly change it is of continued importance that you regularly review these if looking at future travel. Make sure you check what travel cover is available, if any, and what the implications are if you are suddenly unable to travel in respect to cancellation refunds, changing of your booking and replacement vouchers. Some of the insurers are now covering medical claims linked to Covid, however not if travelling against FCO advice so again read your policy carefully. The future of travel is very uncertain and will continue to be for some time.



Travel Provider

Many travel providers are offering refunds on accommodation, flights and excursions that they had to cancel so approach them for refunds first to see if one is available.



Eligible claims

Insurers vary on how they deal with potential claims depending on when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic/known event and also when considering guidance from the FCO (Foreign & Commonwealth Office). If you are in any way unsure please contact your travel insurer for further guidance.



Airline Vouchers

Be aware if accepting airline vouchers for cancelled flights and ensure you read the full terms and conditions. Some of them have a shelf life and may expire after a defined period. In addition if the airline goes into liquidation some insurers may not pay out for a voucher, only a pre-booked flight.

Howden Employee Benefits & Wellbeing - Views and Advice

Our consultants will be happy to discuss any concerns and questions you have around your policy. As each insurer has a different stance our advice at this stage is to keep an eye out for updates your provider is sharing and be aware of the local government advice in the location you are based.

With Travel policies we also recommend you keep details of any claims, even if your insurer has already declined them as the position is constantly evolving and in rare circumstances in the past the government have stepped in further down the line once the "known event" is over.

Whilst we acknowledge some travel insurers are no longer providing quotations, we currently have access to a market that are still quoting corporate, employee benefit or Flex schemes. Please do get in touch should you require our help.

Market Actions

The insurers are meeting regularly through central governing bodies to share ideas and best practice and are also constantly reviewing their own internal processes and procedures. There are some useful links available which can help explain the travel insurer's approaches as follows:

- Foreign Commonwealth Office Advice - <http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- Association of British Insurers - [ABI Covid 19 Q&A](#)
- BBC article - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51615412>

Howden Employee Benefits & Wellbeing has set up a COVID-19 Technical Committee to keep up to date on developments with insurers, to share market experience and keep our consultants well informed so they can in turn keep our clients updated. Again please do reach out to your Howden Employee Benefits & Wellbeing representative should you have any questions to discuss further.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should you have any questions regarding your plan, you are encouraged to contact your insurer directly or your Howden Employee Benefits & Wellbeing Consultant, who will be able to give you the most appropriate and up to date information.

We felt it may also be useful to provide you with an outline below of some of the more frequent questions we are dealing with:

Does our Travel plan cover you for COVID-19?

With the number of variations on travel products available this is impossible to answer in one question. Please do give us a call and we can talk with you through your existing policy or contact your insurer directly for guidance.

What should I do if I experience symptoms whilst travelling?

If you are symptomatic, where possible try to isolate yourself from household members, particularly the vulnerable (e.g. elderly or those with pre-existing medical conditions). Don't panic and seek medical advice from your local authorities or your insurer claims team who will have the resources to direct you to the relevant local authority. If it is an emergency situation please try to make them aware you have symptoms before presenting yourself at any medical facility.

I can't get through on my insurer claims line, what should I do?

The insurers are experiencing high levels of call volumes currently, along with operating remote client servicing due to office closures. Please do keep trying and be patient. If it is a medical emergency insurers should have an option to press when calling for this, but please only use this option if it is an emergency.

Is my travel insurance policy still valid for anything not related to COVID-19?

Yes, providing your claim is covered under the policy terms and conditions and you are following the travel guidance within the policy (i.e. not travelling against FCO advice) then your policy remains valid.

There may be questions we know you want to ask but we or the travel market don't yet have the answers to – but rest assured we are continuing to liaise very closely with the travel insurance market so that we can provide you with the very latest information and guidance.

Useful Links

Amtrust

Updates are available but not live. Please contact your consultant or the insurer for further information.

Aviva

<https://www.aviva.co.uk/insurance/travel/coronavirus-advice-travel-insurance-customers/>

AXA PPP

<https://www.axapphealthcare.co.uk/update-on-coronavirus/>

Bupa

- **Global** – Updates are available but not live. Please contact your consultant or the insurer for further information.
- **UK** - <https://www.bupa.co.uk/travel-insurance/coronavirus-travel-faqs>

Canopious

Updates are available but not live. Please contact your consultant or the insurer for further information.

Chubb

<https://www.chubb.com/my-en/claims/travel-insurance-claims-response-to-outbreak-of-new-coronavirus-strain.aspx>

Crispin Speers

<http://www.eb.cspinsurance.com/index.php/newsmain/323-coronavirus>

Millstream

Employee Benefit (flex or company paid leisure) -

<https://www.mstream.co.uk/news/detail/coronavirus-COVID-19-employee-benefits>

Pen Underwriting

https://www.penunderwriting.co.uk/~/_media/Files/Pen-Underwriting/COVID-19-Notice--PA--Travel.pdf

About us

Howden Employee Benefits & Wellbeing work with clients of all sizes – both in the UK and globally - to provide dedicated employee benefits & wellbeing consultancy. We've won many industry awards for our work and are widely recognised for our innovative and creative approach to benefit design.

We remain committed to supporting clients and the wider HR community during these challenging times. If you want to know more or would simply like to have a chat about ways you can support your employees, please get in touch with your consultant or contact us.

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