



## Introduction

With around 50,000 members in over 120 countries, the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) is the UK's professional body for chemical scientists from all over the world. As part of our offer to chemical science companies in Industry, [EnterprisePlus \(EP\) is a dedicated scheme](#) specifically for UK micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SME) that are the base for many other UK industries. It provides opportunities to help promote your business, recruit the right people and find the connections and information you need to grow.

The Coronavirus pandemic and the measures put in place to fight its spread are significantly affecting every aspect of daily life for employees, employers, the business landscape and the economy. EP SMEs are highly specialised, innovative and productive. They are well placed to help combat the pandemic, but also stand to be greatly affected by it.

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any one time, helping staff to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Another said they are limiting numbers in the lab to two at once.

As of w/e 30 April, five EP SMEs have report to the RSC that their labs have closed as part of wider closures in universities and insitutions. One EP SME said they are looking into new premises but have very specific requirements, and must assess the time and expense it would take to relocate for only a short period compared to the loss of R&D whilst waiting for their current lab to reopen.

However, by introducing such measures, some EP SMEs expect to or already have experienced a drop in producing results. **Further damage to productivity would be done by any further restrictions on lab workers being able to go to their place of work.**

## **2. Continued investment flows are vital for survival**

Many EP SMEs are pre-revenue, meaning they are ineligible for many measures put in place. For such companies, the Bounce back Loan scheme announced on 27 April is welcome and timely, and should provide much needed relief. Government have clearly listened to the concerns of the EP SME community on issues relating to micro and small businesses.

Medium and longer term issues remain, however. **It is vital that investors have the confidence to continue to invest in new and existing ventures immediately after the pandemic has abated.** One EP SME also suggested that investors are already becoming more cautious, whilst another suggested that investors have pulled interest in any new ventures to focus instead on existing ones.

**Lower productivity or delayed results will also affect investment.** One SME noted that the longer labs remain closed the greater the impact on its R&D and accompanying results. This increases the likelihood of investors pulling out or companies being unable to raise further investment, meaning they will eventually run out of money, jobs will be lost and the companies fold.

## **3. Business and operational disruptions**

**Many EP SMEs reported issues with partnerships and collaborations, which is affecting operations.** One SME said they were reviewing budgets because of uncertainty around a collaboration with an

said, after an initially positive response, they have received contact from several different Government Departments with conflicting and vague requests that were never resolved.

They were also directly contacted by a local hospital trying to source their own PPE but had no knowledge or experience of the necessary regulation or certification, presenting a potential safety issue. **There must be better communication between Government and**

## Appendix (last updated 30 April 2020)

**EP company    Activity during COVID-19 outbreak**

|                                      |  |   |         |   |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---------|---|
| Imophoron<br>(Not EP<br>company yet) |  | Highly adaptable, easy-to-manufacture, rapid-response platform for vaccines to combat present and future infectious diseases. | Bristol | <a href="https://www.thepharmaletter.com/article/imophoron-to-begin-preclinical-tests-on-covid-19-vaccines">https://www.thepharmaletter.com/article/imophoron-to-begin-preclinical-tests-on-covid-19-vaccines</a> |
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