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Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do

Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy



Public Health
England

Guidance

COVID-19: support for businesses

Updated 3 April 2020

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The Chancellor has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

This includes a package of measures to support businesses including:

- a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- deferring VAT and Self-Assessment payments
- a Self-employment Income Support Scheme
- a Statutory Sick Pay relief package for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs)
- a 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery businesses in England
- small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- grant funding of £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000
- the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme offering loans of up to £5 million for SMEs through the British Business Bank
- a new lending facility from the Bank of England to help support liquidity among larger firms, helping them bridge coronavirus disruption to their cash flows through loans
- the HMRC Time To Pay Scheme

[Check the business support website for answers to frequently asked questions](#)

Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a temporary scheme open to all UK employers for at least 3 months starting from 1 March 2020. It is designed to support employers whose operations have been severely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

Employers can claim for 80% of furloughed employees' (employees on a leave of absence) usual monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, plus the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions on that wage. Employers can use this scheme anytime during this period.

The scheme is open to all UK employers that had created and started a [PAYE](#) payroll scheme on 28 February 2020.

[Claim for wage costs through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#)

If your business needs short term cash flow support, you may be eligible for a [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan](#).

Support for businesses through deferring VAT payments

We will support businesses by deferring Valued Added Tax (VAT) payments for 3 months.

If you're a UK VAT registered business and have a VAT payment due between 20 March 2020 and 30 June 2020, you have the option to:

- defer the payment until a later date
- pay the VAT due as normal

[Find out how to defer your VAT payment](#)

If you're in temporary financial distress because of COVID-19 more help is available from HMRC's [Time to Pay scheme](#).

Support for businesses through deferring Self-Assessment payments on account

If you're due to pay a self-assessment payment on account by 31 July 2020 but the impact of the coronavirus causes you difficulty in making payment by that date, then you may defer payment until January 2021.

Eligibility

You are eligible if you are due to pay your second self-assessment [payment on account](#) on 31 July. You do not need to be self-employed to be eligible for the deferment.

The deferment is optional. If you are still able to pay your second payment on account on 31 July you should do so.

How to access the scheme

This is an automatic offer with no applications required. No penalties or interest for late payment will be charged if you defer payment until 31 January 2021.

During the deferral period you can set up a [budget payment plan](#) to help you pay the deferred payment on account when it comes due.

If you're in temporary financial distress because of COVID-19 more help is available from HMRC's [Time to Pay scheme](#).

Support for self-employed through the Self-employment Income Support Scheme

The Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will support self-employed individuals (including members of partnerships) who have lost income due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

This scheme will allow you to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of your trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 per month for the next 3 months. This may be extended if needed.

[Claim a grant through the Self-employment Income Support Scheme](#)

Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees

We will bring forward legislation to allow small-and medium-sized businesses and employers to reclaim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paid for sickness absence due to COVID-19. The eligibility criteria for the scheme will be as follows:

- this refund will cover up to 2 weeks' SSP per eligible employee who has been off work because of COVID-19
- employers with fewer than 250 employees will be eligible - the size of an employer will be determined by the number of people they employed as of 28 February 2020
- employers will be able to reclaim expenditure for any employee who has claimed SSP (according to the new eligibility criteria) as a result of COVID-19
- employers should maintain records of staff absences and payments of SSP, but employees will not need to provide a GP fit note. If evidence is required by an employer, those with symptoms of coronavirus can get an isolation note from [NHS 111 online](#) and those who live with someone that has symptoms can get a note from the [NHS website](#)
- eligible period for the scheme will commence the day after the regulations on the extension of SSP to those staying at home comes into force
- the government will work with employers over the coming months to set up the repayment mechanism for employers as soon as possible

Eligibility

You are eligible for the scheme if:

- your business is UK based
- your business is a small or medium-sized and employs fewer than 250 employees as of 28 February 2020

How to access the scheme

A rebate scheme is being developed. Further details will be provided in due course once the legalisation has passed.

Support for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses that pay business rates

Business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses

We will introduce a business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.

Eligibility

You are eligible for the business rates holiday if:

- your business is based in England
- your business is in the retail, hospitality and/or leisure sector

Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied properties that are wholly or mainly being used:

- as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues
- for assembly and leisure
- for hospitality, as hotels, guest & boarding premises or self-catering accommodation

More information on eligibility is set out in the [expanded retail discount guidance](#).

How to access the scheme

There is no action for you. However, local authorities may have to reissue your bill to provide this support. They will do this as soon as possible.

You can estimate the business rate charge using the [business rates calculator](#).

Guidance for local authorities

Guidance for local authorities is available in the [expanded retail discount guidance](#).

Cash grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses

The Retail and Hospitality Grant Scheme provides businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with a cash grant of up to £25,000 per property.

Businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of up to £15,000 may be eligible for a grant of £10,000.

Businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000 may be eligible for a grant of £25,000.

Eligibility

You are eligible for the grant if:

- your business is based in England
- your business is in the retail, hospitality or leisure sector
- your business has a rateable value of under £51,000

Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied properties that are wholly or mainly being used:

- as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues
- for assembly and leisure
- as hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation

How to access the scheme

Eligible businesses will be contacted by their local authority, though some local authorities have decided to operate an applications process.

Any enquiries on eligibility for, or provision of, the grants should be directed to the relevant local authority.

[Find your local authority.](#)

Guidance for local authorities

Guidance for local authorities is available on [administering the business grant schemes](#)

Support for nursery businesses that pay business rates

We will introduce a business rates holiday for nurseries in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.

Eligibility

You are eligible for the business rates holiday if:

- your business is based in England

Properties that will benefit from the relief will be hereditaments:

- occupied by providers on Ofsted's Early Years Register
- wholly or mainly used for the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How to access the scheme

There is no action for you. However, local authorities may have to reissue your bill to provide this support. They will do this as soon as possible.

You can estimate the business rate charge using the [business rates calculator](#).

Further guidance for local authorities is available in the [nursery discount guidance](#).

Support for businesses that pay little or no business rates

The government will provide additional Small Business Grant Scheme funding for local authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no business rates because of small business rate relief (SBRR), rural rate relief (RRR) and tapered relief. This will provide a one-off grant of £10,000 to eligible businesses to help meet their ongoing business costs.

Eligibility

You are eligible if:

- your business is based in England
- you are a business that occupies property
- you are receiving small business rate relief or rural rate relief as of 11 March

How to access the scheme

Eligible businesses will be contacted by their local authority, though some local authorities have decided to operate an applications process.

Any enquiries on eligibility for, or provision of, the grants should be directed to the relevant local authority.

[Find your local authority.](#)

Guidance for local authorities

Further guidance for local authorities is available on [administering the business grant schemes](#)

Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

The temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme supports SMEs with access to loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance of up to £5 million and for up to 6 years.

The government will also make a Business Interruption Payment to cover the first 12 months of interest payments and any lender-levied fees, so smaller businesses will benefit from no upfront costs and lower initial repayments.

The government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan (subject to pre-lender cap on claims) to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance to SMEs. The scheme will be delivered through commercial lenders, backed by the government-owned British Business Bank.

There are [40 accredited lenders](#) able to offer the scheme, including all the major banks.

[Find out if you're eligible and how to apply](#)

Support for large businesses through the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme

The new Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) will provide a government guarantee of 80% to enable banks to make loans of up to £25 million to firms with an annual turnover of between £45 million and £500 million.

This will give banks the confidence to lend to many more businesses which are impacted by coronavirus. Facilities backed by a guarantee under CLBILS will be offered at commercial rates of interest.

We expect the scheme to be delivered through commercial lenders. The government will provide lenders with an 80% guarantee on individual loans for businesses that would be otherwise unable to access the finance they need.

Lenders will still be expected to conduct their usual credit risk checks. This scheme allows lenders to specifically support businesses that were viable before the COVID-19 outbreak but now face significant cash flow difficulties that would otherwise make their business unviable in the short term.

The new scheme will launch later this month and will support a wide range of businesses to access finance products including short term loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance.

Businesses would remain responsible for repaying any facility they may takeout.

Eligibility

To be eligible, your business must:

- be UK-based in its business activity
- have an annual turnover between £45 million and £500 million
- be unable to secure regular commercial financing
- have a borrowing proposal which the lender:
 - would consider viable, were it not for the COVID-19 pandemic
 - believes will enable you to trade out of any short-term to medium-term difficulty

Businesses from any sector can apply, except for the following:

- banks and building societies
- insurers and reinsurers (but not insurance brokers)
- public-sector organisations, including state-funded primary and secondary schools

Further detail on eligibility will be confirmed later this month.

How to access the scheme

The new scheme will launch later this month. We anticipate it will be available through a range of accredited lenders.

Once the scheme has launched, there is likely to be a big demand for facilities - businesses should consider applying via the lender's website in the first instance. Telephone lines are likely to be busy and branches may have limited capacity to handle enquiries due to social distancing.

Support for larger firms through the COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility

Under the new Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility, the Bank of England will buy short term debt from larger companies.

This will support your company if it has been affected by a short-term funding squeeze, and allow you to finance your

short-term liabilities.

It will also support corporate finance markets overall and ease the supply of credit to all firms.

Eligibility

All non-financial companies that meet the criteria set out on the [Bank of England's website](#) are eligible.

How to access the scheme

The scheme is now available for applications.

More information is available from the [Bank of England](#).

Support for businesses paying tax: Time to Pay service

All businesses and self-employed people in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's Time To Pay service.

These arrangements are agreed on a case-by-case basis and are tailored to individual circumstances and liabilities.

Eligibility

You are eligible if your business:

- pays tax to the UK government
- has outstanding tax liabilities

How to access the scheme

If you have missed a tax payment or you might miss your next payment due to COVID-19, please call HMRC's dedicated helpline: 0800 024 1222.

If you're worried about a future payment, please call us nearer the time.

Commercial insurance

Most commercial insurance policies are unlikely to cover pandemics or unspecified notifiable diseases, such as COVID-19.

However, those businesses which have an insurance policy that covers government ordered closure and pandemics or government ordered closure and unspecified notifiable disease should be able to make a claim (subject to the terms and conditions of their policy).

Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers.

Notifiable diseases

Notifiable diseases are certain infectious diseases that registered medical practitioners have a statutory duty to notify the 'proper officer' at their local council or local health protection team about when they come across a suspected case.

The government keeps an updated [list of notifiable diseases](#). On 5 March 2020, the government added COVID-19 to its list of notifiable diseases.

Many insurers use diseases on this list as triggers for the activation or exclusion of insurance cover. For example, insurers' policies that cover notifiable diseases will typically only cover a specific subset of notifiable diseases (such as Cholera or Anthrax) that the insurer will reference in the policy documentation. These policies will exclude any notifiable disease not on the insurers list, as well as future/unknown diseases (such as COVID-19). The price that the insurer charges for the policy is modelled against the risk posed by this set list of diseases.

Unspecified notifiable diseases

Some businesses will have purchased add-ons for their insurance that cover for 'unspecified notifiable diseases'. These policies effectively cover any disease listed as a notifiable disease, enabling the business to claim for losses for all

notifiable diseases as well as from diseases that are unknown at the point the policy is written.

The effect of the government adding COVID-19 to its list of notifiable diseases is to ensure that businesses with unspecified notifiable disease cover are able to make a claim – subject to the terms and conditions in their policy. For example, someone infected with COVID-19 may need to have been on the premises.

Government ordered closure

The government asked a [number of different businesses and venues](#) to remain closed from 21 March onwards.

Insurers have agreed that this advice is sufficient for businesses covered for COVID-19 losses to make a claim (if the only barrier to them making a claim was a lack of clarity on whether the government had ordered businesses to close). As such, intervention by the police or any other statutory body is no longer required to trigger cover in the current circumstances.

However, most businesses' commercial insurance policies (including for denial of access) are unlikely to offer cover for COVID-19. Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers.

Event coverage

Businesses with event cancellation policies that include unspecified notifiable disease extensions should be able to make a claim for the necessary and unavoidable cancellation, abandonment, curtailment, postponement and disruption of their event for reasons beyond the control of organisers and participants (subject to the other terms and exclusions of their policy).

Insurance for major events is often bespoke to the specific event, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their insurer or broker.

Protection from eviction for commercial tenants

Commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of COVID-19 will be protected from eviction.

These measures will mean no business will automatically forfeit their lease and be forced out of their premises if they miss a payment up until 30 June.

There is the option for the government to extend this period if needed.

This is not a rental holiday. All commercial tenants will still be liable for the rent. Commercial tenants are protected from eviction if they are unable to pay rent.

Eligibility

All commercial tenants in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are eligible.

How to access the scheme

The change will come into force when the Coronavirus Bill receives Royal Assent. No action is required.

Extension of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) arrangements

BIDs will be able to extend the maximum duration of their BID arrangements until 31 March 2021 by delaying BID ballots due to take place this year. This enables BIDs, and the local authorities who administer the ballot process, to concentrate on responding to the current emergency.

Eligibility

The measures apply to any BID in England due to ballot between now and 31 December 2020.

How to access the scheme

The change will come into force when the Coronavirus Bill receives Royal Assent. No action is required.

Support for businesses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Because some elements of business support are devolved, the measures you can access may differ if your business is in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Businesses in Scotland

[View the latest guidance on coronavirus for businesses in Scotland](#)

Businesses in Wales

[View the latest guidance on coronavirus for businesses in Wales](#)

Businesses in Northern Ireland

[View the latest guidance on coronavirus for businesses in Northern Ireland](#)

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