[Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for employees, employers and businesses]

If you are an employer or a business owner we encourage you to read and follow the guidance for employers and businesses.

This guidance will assist employers and businesses with advice on:

- the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)
- how to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19
- what to do if someone in the workplace becomes ill
- advice on sick pay and certification of absence from work resulting from COVID-19
- business support measures on rate relief and loans

If you would like to receive updates on the government's response to COVID-19 you can sign up for email alerts.

Business support announced in the Budget and 17 March

In the Budget (11 March 2020) the Chancellor announced a package of measures to provide support for public services, individuals and businesses to ensure the impact of COVID-19 is minimised.

A new Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, delivered by the British Business Bank, will enable businesses to apply for a loan of up to £5 million, with the government covering up to 80% of any losses with no fees. Businesses can access the first 6 months of that finance interest free, as government will cover the first 6 months of interest payments.

For businesses with fewer than 250 employees, the cost of providing 14 days of Statutory Sick Pay per employee will be refunded by the government in full. This will provide 2 million businesses with up to £2 billion to cover the costs of large-scale sick leave.

A dedicated helpline has been set up to help businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities receive support with their tax affairs. Through this, businesses may be able to agree a bespoke Time to Pay arrangement. If you are concerned about being able to pay your tax due to COVID-19, call HMRC's dedicated helpline on 0800 0159 559.

There will be a £10,000 cash grant to our smallest businesses, delivered by local authorities. Small businesses that pay little or no business rates and are eligible for small business rate relief (SBBR) or rural rate relief will be contacted by their local authority – they do not need to apply. The funding will be provided to local authorities in early April. Guidance is available for local authorities on managing the scheme.

Finally, the government is introducing a business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.

A £25,000 grant will also be provided to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses operating from smaller premises, with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000.

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

Guidance for local authorities on managing the retail grant funding.

Guidance for local authorities on the expanded retail discount.

In addition, the decisions announced by the Bank of England on 11 March 2020 mean that banks are in a better position to provide additional credit to smaller businesses.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

> The coronavirus clearly poses multiple challenges for businesses, and I know from regular calls with business representatives that many are concerned about the longer-term effects on investment, cash flow and the future of their businesses.
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> Supporting companies through this period is a top priority and a whole of government effort. The measures set out in the Budget show that this government will support business through this turbulent time and keep the economy moving. We will continue to review these measures as the impact of the virus progresses.

Call for businesses to help make NHS ventilators

The government is looking for businesses who can support in the supply of ventilators and ventilator components across the UK as part of our response to COVID-19.

If you think your business can help, please register your details.

Additional resources

- the government's coronavirus action plan provides detailed information about the government's response
- the government has put a range of support in place for those who do not receive Statutory Sick Pay, including Universal Credit and contributory Employment and Support Allowance
- ACAS has published information for employees and employers, including simple steps to help protect the health and safety of staff

- a number of private lenders are also making funds available to small businesses impacted by COVID-19, including £2 billion from Lloyds Banking Group, £5 billion from NatWest and £7 billion from Barclays

If you have a query that isn’t covered by this guidance you can contact the Business Support Helpline.