

£6.4 million boost for employers to support disabled people

- Drive to create more inclusive work environments and equip employers with advice on how people from all backgrounds can thrive at work and grow the economy
- Businesses and disability groups invited to test and shape new service which supports employers to employ more diverse and inclusive workforces

Thousands of businesses across the UK will benefit from a new £6.4 million online service to help employers better support disabled people and those with health conditions in the workplace.

The early test version of the [Support with Employee Health and Disability service](#) provides essential information about supporting and managing employees with disabilities or health conditions at work.

Any employer can access the service, which provides free advice on how to manage staff who may be in or out of work with a disability or long-term health condition in a user-friendly online Q&A format.

The service is aimed at smaller businesses, many of which do not have in-house HR support or access to an occupational health service and will help them to build more diverse and inclusive workforces.

The new service also covers potential changes an employer could make to help them return to and stay in work, supporting a government drive to boost numbers of people in employment and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to benefit from being in work.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Claire Coutinho said:

Since 2017 we have seen one million more disabled people in work, beating our target by five years. Now we want to go even further by giving more employers the tools and information they need to ensure disabled people and those with health conditions can succeed in the workplace.

As the new Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, there is no end to my ambition to build on the success of the Department by making sure disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to start, stay and succeed in work.

UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid said:

This will be a really valuable service for employers to help

disabled people and those with health conditions start, stay and succeed in work. I encourage businesses across Scotland to use the UK Government backed online system and create more inclusive work environments.

The site is currently in test mode, with businesses and disability groups invited to have their say through a short online survey, to help shape the future of the service.

The site will be constantly updated and improved over the next three years, informed by feedback given from the survey

The service has been designed to give employers easy access to the advice they need to create the best environments for their staff with disabilities or long-term health issues, so that anyone from any background can start, stay and succeed in work.

Once fully developed, the service will also help employers understand their legal obligations, including how to make adjustments for disabled people and those with health conditions.

Over the next three years, the government will invest £1.3 billion in employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions. This money will go towards building up existing provision, including expanding employment support, to grow the economy and help people with the cost of living.

Further Information

- The new online service is a direct response to the government's 2019 consultation, 'Health is everyone's business', in which employers asked for joined-up advice on supporting health in the workplace that is easier to find and act upon.
- The Support with Employee Health and Disability service is available online here – [Support with employee health and disability – GOV.UK \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/support-with-employee-health-and-disability)
- The website is the first public version of the service and is part of an almost £6.5 million (£6.428 million) programme of work to help employers support and manage employees with disabilities or health conditions.
- The latest figures show the number of disabled people in employment has increased by 1.3 million since 2017, delivering on a government goal to see one million more in work by 2027.
- The 10-year employment goal was a government manifesto commitment originally set in 2017 to break down barriers for disabled people and those with health conditions and to build more diverse and inclusive workforces.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

VMD Currently Experiencing Technical Issues

News story

Due to current technical issues some VMD services are currently unavailable.



Due to technical issues the following services are currently unavailable. Services through VMDS are unaffected.

- Special Import Service
- Export Certificates
- Animal Adverse Reaction Reporting
- Human Adverse Reaction Reporting
- Microchip Adverse Event Reporting
- Product Information Database

Along with access to the following Registers:

- Register of SQP Retailer Premises
- Register of SQPs
- List of Accredited Internet Retailers
- Register of Specific Manufacturing Authorisations – AVAs
- Register of Specific Manufacturing Authorisations – NFABBA, ESCCA
- Register of Veterinary-only GMP sites

We will update this message once they are available again. We apologise for any inconvenience.

Published 17 October 2022

Public consultation continues for Beales Corner flood defence

- ‘Drop in’ event open to all local residents and businesses
- Local people urged to have further say on proposals
- Plans to be submitted for approval later this year

Environment Agency officers will be available to discuss the next stages in the proposed project before plans are submitted. This follows a previous engagement event earlier this year.

Members of the public are invited to St George’s Hall, Load Street, Bewdley, DY12 2EQ on Tuesday 18 October 2022 between noon and 7pm. There is no need to book a time.

Last year £6.2 million of funding was announced for the left bank of Bewdley for the Environment Agency to work with partners and the community to develop a permanent scheme in the Beales Corner area.

This will reduce flood risk for homes and businesses in the Beales Corner area which will keep the main Kidderminster and Stourport roads into the town open at times of flood.

This project looks to replace the temporary barrier with a permanent scheme that will operate to a higher standard and with greater resilience.

Anthony Perry, Operations Manager for the West Midlands Environment Agency, said:

We’re very keen to hear further feedback from local people to help us finish the final proposals that will then form part of the planning application.

We have been assessing technical options, but any permanent defences are likely to follow a similar line to the temporary barriers, and our aim is to achieve the same level of flood protection as the Severnside Flood Scheme on the opposite bank of the river.

There are several issues to work through, such as securing planning approval, historic consents and managing the large number of utilities that are located along the potential route of any flood defence. The Environment Agency, together with all partners, is committed to driving forward the delivery of this project and to make best possible use of the public money available.

An artist’s impression of the flood defences at Beales Corner

Background

[Beales Corner, Bewdley, Flood Risk Management Scheme – Environment Agency – Citizen Space \(environment-agency.gov.uk\)](#)

<https://bealesfrms.virtual-engage.com/>

In July last year (2021), the Government allocated £6.2 million of growth funding, which made the possibility of viable scheme more likely.

Residents and local groups are reminded if they would like to receive Environment Agency newsletters and updates, they should email contact details to BLBFRMS@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Alternatively, they can call our National Customer Contact Centre during office hours on 03708 506 506 and they will be added to our mailing list.

Avian influenza: Prevention Zone declared across Great Britain

Following an increase in the number of detections of avian influenza (bird flu) in wild birds and on commercial premises, the Chief Veterinary Officers from England, Scotland and Wales have declared an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) across Great Britain to mitigate the risk of the disease spreading amongst poultry and captive birds.

This means that from midday on Monday 17 October, it will be a legal requirement for all bird keepers in Great Britain to follow strict biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks from the threat of avian flu.

Implementing the highest levels of biosecurity measures on farm is the most effective way in reducing the risk of disease spreading and is the best way to protect flocks. The introduction of the AIPZ comes after the United Kingdom has faced its largest ever outbreak of avian flu with 190 cases confirmed across the United Kingdom since late October 2021, with over 30 of these confirmed since the beginning of the month. The East of England has been particularly badly hit with outbreaks in poultry and captive birds. There have also been outbreaks in the south west and in wild birds at multiple sites across Great Britain.

Avian influenza circulates naturally in wild birds and when they migrate to the United Kingdom from mainland Europe over the winter they can spread the disease to poultry and other captive birds. Maintaining strict biosecurity is the most effective method of protecting birds from the virus.

Keepers with more than 500 birds will need to restrict access for non-essential people on their sites, workers will need to change clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and site vehicles will need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly to limit the risk of the disease spreading. Backyard owners with smaller numbers of poultry including chickens, ducks and geese must also take [steps](#) to limit the risk of the disease spreading to their animals.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

In a joint statement the Chief Veterinary Officers for England, Scotland and Wales said:

Bird keepers have faced the largest ever outbreak of avian flu this year and with winter brings an even more increased risk to flocks as migratory birds return to the United Kingdom.

Scrupulous biosecurity and hygiene measures is the best form of defence, which is why we have declared an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) across Great Britain, meaning that all bird keepers must take action to help prevent the disease spreading to more poultry and other domestic birds.

The introduction of an AIPZ means regardless of whether you keep a few birds or thousands, you are legally required to meet enhanced biosecurity requirements to protect your birds from this highly infectious disease.

The introduction of an AIPZ follows a decision to raise the risk level for avian influenza incursion in wild Birds in Great Britain from 'medium' to 'high'. For poultry and captive birds the risk level has been raised from 'medium' to 'high' at premises where biosecurity is below the required standards, and from 'low' to 'medium' where stringent biosecurity measures are applied.

The nationwide AIPZ builds on the additional biosecurity measures that were brought in last week as part of the regional housing order which covers Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex. The AIPZ, now in force across Great Britain, does not include a nationwide requirement to house birds. However, this is being kept under constant review.

There has been a prolonged season of avian influenza this year and with the now increased risk during the winter, the need to include a mandatory housing requirement in the AIPZ may arise. Further disease control measures will be based on the latest scientific evidence and veterinary advice.

The AIPZ means bird keepers across Great Britain must:

- Keep free ranging birds within fenced areas, and that ponds, watercourses and permanent standing water must be fenced off (except in specific circumstances e.g. zoo birds).
- Clean and disinfect footwear and keep areas where birds live clean and tidy;
- Minimise movement in and out of bird enclosures;
- Reduce any existing contamination by cleansing and disinfecting concrete areas, and fencing off wet or boggy areas
- Keep domestic ducks and geese separate from other poultry.
- Ensure the areas where birds are kept are unattractive to wild birds, for example by netting ponds, and by removing wild bird food sources;
- Feed and water your birds in enclosed areas to discourage wild birds;

Keepers should familiarise themselves with our [avian flu advice](#) and report suspicion of disease to APHA on 03000 200 301.

The avian influenza prevention zone will be in place until further notice and will be kept under regular review as part of the government's work to monitor and manage the risks of bird flu.

Dead wild birds may be infected so don't touch them unless wearing suitable protective clothing. When found on publicly owned land and a decision is taken to remove them, it is the local authorities' responsibility to safely dispose of the carcasses as animal by-products.

Poultry keepers and members of the public should consult our [latest guidance](#) to check the latest threshold for reporting dead wild birds to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77 and not touch or pick them up. Where not required for testing they should be disposed of safely.

[Energy Markets Financing Scheme opens today](#)

- The 'Energy Markets Financing Scheme' opens today to help support viable energy firms with major operations in the UK from the unprecedented volatility triggered by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.
- These firms will be able to apply for government-backed guarantees to secure commercial financing and meet large margin calls from energy price volatility.
- Following a rigorous approval process, a 100% guarantee will be issued to commercial banks on additional lending for approved firms. The Government will only be liable if a firm defaults on their repayment.

Russia's brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine has led to unprecedented

volatility in wholesale energy markets. Over the past month, natural gas futures prices have been changing by more than 15% a day.

This backstop scheme will help firms facing temporary short-term financing problems. The EMFS will allow commercial banks to provide larger credit lines to approved energy firms that are unable to meet extraordinary margin calls due to large moves in energy prices.

This vital intervention will help support wider confidence in the energy market and could help reduce the eventual cost of energy for businesses and consumers.

The scheme will be open to firms of good credit quality playing a significant role in UK energy markets, as generators, shippers or suppliers. They must currently operate in the UK energy market and must be, or have an entity which is, Ofgem-licensed. Firms will need to demonstrate they are facing large liquidity needs from margin calls when hedging their energy price risk. The EMFS is broadly similar to schemes launched in Germany, Finland and Sweden.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, said:

“A resilient energy market is vital as we all grapple with the consequences of Putin’s horrifying invasion of Ukraine and his decision to weaponise Russia’s energy reserves.

“Today we are continuing to act to ensure the market itself is secure, significantly reducing any risk of market failure.”

Governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, said:

“The volatility in energy markets we have seen in recent months, caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, has resulted in a number of energy firms facing extraordinary liquidity requirements.

“This scheme will provide short-term financial support for these firms so they can weather this period, while also supporting the wider resilience of energy markets in the UK.”

From today, the Bank will screen initial applications for eligibility. HM Treasury will then robustly assess the credit risks and limits before giving final approval. The Bank will then issue a 100% guarantee to the energy firms’ existing commercial bank or banks they use for additional lending. Whilst using the scheme, energy firms will be required to comply with a set of policy conditions, such as restrictions on the use of funds, executive pay, and capital distributions.

Firms have three months to apply and once approved will be able to benefit from a guarantee for a further 12 months.

State owned firms and energy firms owned by financial institutions and commodity trading houses will not be eligible for the scheme.

The 'Energy Markets Financing Scheme' was [announced](#) on 8 September 2022 alongside the Energy Price Guarantee, with [further details](#) confirmed as part of the Government's Growth Plan on 23 September 2022.

Further information:

- The Market Notice will be published [here](#). Further information and guidance, including on the application process and eligibility criteria, will be published shortly after.
- The scheme will be open to applications from 17 October 2022 until 27 January 2023.
- In the event of a verified guarantee claim from a commercial lender, HMT will settle the claim in accordance with the 100% guarantee, with the Bank acting as agent in that payment. HMT will fully indemnify the Bank for its role in the EMFS.
- Applications will be assessed initially by the Bank of England and then by an Advisory Committee, who will make a recommendation for the Chancellor to decide whether to approve or reject an application.
- HM Treasury, supported by UK Government Investments, will manage and monitor usage of the scheme once launched. HM Treasury and the Bank will also undertake and share reporting relating to the elements of the scheme for which they are responsible.
- The EMFS comes on top of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, for all eligible non-domestic customers, and the Energy Price Guarantee, which will ensure that a typical household in the United Kingdom pays around £2,500 a year on their energy bill, depending on their use, for the next 2 years, from 1 October 2022.