

Government announces roadmap taskforces

News story

New ministerial-led taskforces have been set up to plan how closed sectors can reopen safely.



Five new ministerial-led taskforces have been set up to develop plans for how and when closed sectors can reopen safely, following publication of the UK's [roadmap to rebuild Britain](#).

Businesses and shops in indoor environments or with closer contact between people, like pubs, hotels and non-essential retail, will likely have a higher risk of transmission, as is the case with many places of worship.

It is the Government's ambition to open as many of these other businesses and public places as possible over the coming months, when the scientific advice provided allows us to.

Similarly, the Government recognises this has been a particularly challenging time for the international aviation industry.

These taskforces will be crucial to the reopening of Britain's economy and each one will lead on developing new COVID-19 secure guidelines for the reopening of public places and businesses, where and when it is safe to do so.

The five new ministerial taskforces will look at the following sectors:

- pubs and restaurants (Department for Business, Energy and industrial Strategy)
- non-essential retail (including salons) (Department for Business, Energy and industrial Strategy);
- recreation and leisure, including tourism, culture and heritage, libraries, entertainment and sport (Department for Culture, Media and Sport)
- places of worship, including faith, community and public buildings

(Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government)

- international aviation, reflecting the unique challenges that sector is facing (Department for Transport)

As part of this science-led approach, each taskforce will work across Government and engage with key stakeholders in public health, industry, trade unions and devolved administrations to:

- ensure that COVID-19 secure guidelines are developed in line with the phased approach and public health directions, building on the existing guidance and providing intelligence and sector-specific expert input
- agree and ensure alignment of all relevant sectoral guidance
- provide key sector stakeholders direct access to Ministers to shape the guidance.

Published 13 May 2020

[Check your vehicle for these five things before driving](#)

You should still stay at home as much as possible. But if you are leaving home for one of the reasons the Government has given, remember that any vehicle which hasn't been on the road for some time will need a thorough check to ensure it is roadworthy and safe.

Richard Leonard, Highways England Head of Road Safety, said:

We should only be leaving home for the reasons the Government has set out – and we want those journeys to be safe ones. If you haven't driven for a few weeks you might feel a bit strange getting back behind the wheel, and your car will need a few simple checks, like your tyres, oil, water, lights and fuel.

As our teams have been able to continue working, while following social distancing guidelines, the layout of some roads have slightly changed.

Everything will not be the same as the last time you were on the road, so please ensure you and your vehicle are prepared.

You should still stay at home as much as possible. The reasons you may leave home include:

- for work, where you cannot work from home

- going to shops that are permitted to be open – to get things like food and medicine
- to exercise or spend time outdoors
- any medical need, including to donate blood, avoid injury or illness, escape risk of harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person

Here is Highways England's advice for drivers:

Check tyres

Prior to setting off on a long/significant journey, check your tyre pressures are suitable for the load and the condition of your tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit.

Check engine oil

Use your dipstick to check oil regularly and before any long journey, and top up if needed. Take your car back to the garage if you're topping up more than usual.

Check water

To ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen.

Check lights

If your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk. In addition, light malfunctions can be a reason for your vehicle to fail its MoT.

Check fuel

Before setting out, check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough to get to your destination.

[More tips, including 'how to videos'](#), are available online.

Real-time traffic information for England's motorways and major A roads is available through the [Traffic England website](#), local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile apps. Local Twitter services are also available on [Highways England's website](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Applications for Self-Employment Income Support Scheme open early

- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme opens for applications today
- those eligible will receive government grant worth up to £7,500
- money expected to be in bank accounts by 25 May

From 8am this morning self-employed individuals or members of partnerships whose business has been adversely affected by coronavirus will be able to apply for a Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant worth 80% of their average monthly trading profits.

Millions are expected to benefit from the scheme with the payments – to be paid in a single instalment covering three months and capped at £7,500 – expected to land in bank accounts within six working days of each claim.

Everyone eligible for the SEISS, which is one of the most generous support schemes announced by any government in response to coronavirus, will be able to receive the government grant by 25 May, or within six days of a completed claim.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

We're working ahead of time to deliver support to the self-employed and from today, applications open for the millions of people eligible for the scheme.

With payments arriving before the end of this month, self-employed across the UK will have money in their pockets to help them through these challenging times.

From today, people will be able to make their claim on a specified date between 13-18 May, based on their Unique Tax Reference number. HMRC has assigned eligible self-employed individuals a specific date to apply on and this can be checked on HMRC's online checker.

The SEISS is part of a comprehensive package of support for self-employed people, including Bounce Back loans, income tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays and the various business support schemes the government has introduced to protect

businesses during this time. Derek Cribb, CEO of IPSE (the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed) said:

For the self-employed, Coronavirus is not only a health crisis, but also a pressing income crisis. It is therefore very welcome that the Government has managed to get this new scheme in place ahead of schedule, and that a section of the freelance community can now get the help they need early. We are delighted that the government has heeded much of IPSE's advice by setting up the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, which extends a much-needed lifeline to those self-employed people who are eligible for it.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

The self-employment income support scheme represents a lifeline for the millions of self-employed people who are expected to qualify. I would encourage all those who think they are eligible to use the online checker if they've not done so yet, and to apply on the date allocated.

We are particularly pleased to see the scheme opening earlier than scheduled, with a simple fast-track application and a promise for speedy payment. Getting the system designed and built ahead of schedule is impressive. Just like the Job Retention Scheme portal we hope it will cope with the high expected demand. I would like to pay tribute to the staff of HMRC for the behind the scenes work to get this scheme off the ground.

Brian Berry, Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders said:

The self-employed account for 40% of the construction workforce so the government's decision to bring forward the payment to the end May will be very welcome news for the many independent tradespeople who operate in construction. The government's support package to date has been targeted at businesses so the self-employed will be welcoming this cash boost at a time when they need it most.

Further information

Individuals are eligible if their business has been adversely affected by coronavirus, they traded in the tax year 2019 to 2020, intend to continue trading, and they:

- earn at least half of their income through self-employment
- have trading profits of no more than £50,000 per year
- traded in the tax year 2018 to 2019 and submitted their Self Assessment tax return on or before 23 April 2020 for that year

HMRC calculate the amount to be paid to each eligible claimant based on an average of the tax returns for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Customers have been invited to claim their SEISS grant on a specified date, from 13 – 18 May. They won't be able to apply before their claim date but can make a claim after that day.

People can check their date using HMRC's online checker at any time.

<https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/self-employment-support/enter-unique-taxpayer-reference>

For further information, please read HMRC's guidance or speak to your tax agent. If you need further support, please use HMRC's webchat service or call the Covid-19 Helpline on 0800 024 1222.

Government to support businesses through Trade Credit Insurance guarantee

Trade Credit Insurance provides cover to hundreds of thousands of business to business transactions, particularly in non-service sectors, such as manufacturing and construction. It insures suppliers selling goods against the company they are selling to defaulting on payment, giving businesses the confidence to trade with one another. But due to Coronavirus and businesses struggling to pay bills, they risk having credit insurance withdrawn, or premiums increasing to unaffordable levels.

To prevent this from happening, the government will temporarily guarantee business-to-business transactions currently supported by Trade Credit Insurance, ensuring the majority of insurance coverage will be maintained across the market. This will support supply chains and help businesses to trade with confidence as they can trust that they will be protected if a customer defaults on payment.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen said:

This country's businesses are crucial in helping us to kick start the economy as we get back to work, and I will do everything I can to help support them through this difficult time. By guaranteeing business-to-business transactions currently supported by Trade Credit Insurance, we will help to maintain a vital cog in our economy.

This is on top of an unprecedented package of support we have put

in place to help protect individuals, businesses and the economy.

Business Minister, Paul Scully, said:

Giving businesses the confidence to continue trading is vital to seeing us through this crisis. This guarantee will be essential as we seek to reopen new sectors of the economy and get the UK back to work in a way that is safe for everyone.

The guarantee will be delivered through a temporary reinsurance agreement with insurers currently operating in the market.

The government will work with businesses and the industry on the full details of the scheme to ensure firms are supported and risk is appropriately shared between the government and insurers.

The guarantees will cover trading by domestic firms and exporting firms and the intent is for agreements to be in place with insurers by end of this month.

The guarantee will be temporary and targeted to cover CV-19 economic challenges, and will provisionally last until the end of the year. It will be followed by a review of the TCI market to ensure it can continue to support businesses in future. Further details will be announced in due course.

Further information

- in whole of 2018 £450 million was paid in TCI premiums to cover over £350 billion in business activity
- as of April 2020 there was over £171 billion business activity insured, covering transactions between around 13000 suppliers and 650,000 buyers

Groceries survey shows supermarket behaviour at a record high

The UK's supermarkets have achieved a record improvement in their dealings with groceries suppliers, Christine Tacon's seventh and final GCA survey has revealed.

Early analysis of suppliers' responses to the comprehensive annual groceries sector survey shows that retailer compliance with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice is at an all-time high.

A record of nearly 1,500 direct suppliers to the 13 regulated retailers

completed the survey and just 36% said they had experienced a Code-related issue at any point in the past 12 months – down from 41% in 2019.

This was a particularly striking result as the survey period included three weeks when the sector was facing the challenge of huge increases in consumer buying of certain products as the COVID-19 emergency hit. And it represents significant progress since the first survey was conducted in 2014 when 79% of suppliers said they had experienced issues.

In addition, direct suppliers recognised improvements across every Code-related issue. The most common issues experienced by suppliers in 2020 related to forecasting, delay in payments and de-listing. Each of these is now at its lowest reported level – at 13%, 12% and 12% respectively.

In comparison, 35% of suppliers reported experiencing delay in payments in 2014, 33% experienced issues with forecasting and 22% with de-listing. The most reported issue in 2014 – forensic auditing – which 45% of suppliers highlighted, is now at just 5%.

Ms Tacon said:

This is my final survey as GCA as I will be stepping down later in 2020 after seven years in the role and it tells an extremely positive story.

I am delighted to report that in a year when an additional retailer – TJ Morris – was included in the survey and the sector faced the challenge of COVID-19 my survey demonstrates that UK supermarkets continue to make substantial progress.

The survey period included three weeks when the sector was under huge pressure but the data shows no adverse impact on compliance with the Code as retailers and suppliers raced to keep supermarket shelves filled.

Indeed it corroborates my own discussions with the retailers who have told me not one supplier has raised an issue with their Code Compliance Officers or asked for an issue to be escalated. I made it clear in my position statement issued on 17 March that suppliers should not wait to raise issues with retailers.

This is a testament to the stronger and more effective communication between retailers and suppliers which the GCA has fostered over the past seven years and which has proved so valuable during this emergency.

It also demonstrates that the Code has provided the flexibility retailers need to maintain a vital and efficient supply chain that is getting groceries to the consumer.

The GCA is continuing to analyse the details of the survey carried out on its behalf by the independent polling company YouGov and will publish more information, including how suppliers rank the retailers for Code compliance, in the coming week.

Notes to editors: