

Government launches new coronavirus business support finder tool

- New online platform helps businesses easily access the financial support they are eligible for during the coronavirus pandemic
- simple questionnaire takes business owners under a minute to complete and will signpost them to relevant government financial support

A new 'support finder' tool will help businesses and self-employed people across the UK to quickly and easily determine what financial support is available to them during the coronavirus pandemic.

The finder tool on GOV.UK will ask business owners to fill out a simple online questionnaire, which can take minutes to complete, and they will then be directed to a list of all the financial support they may be eligible for.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Businesses of all shapes and sizes play a vital role in our economy, which is why we want to make it as easy as possible for all of them to access our wide-ranging package of financial support during this challenging time.

This online questionnaire takes just minutes to complete and will quickly signpost a business to the loans, grants or other schemes they could be eligible for.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

We've launched an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs, businesses and incomes during these challenging times.

Millions are already benefitting and this new online tool will allow firms and individuals to identify what help they are entitled to in a matter of minutes.

We are doing everything we can to make our support as accessible as easy to navigate as possible.

To support business, workers and the self-employed during the coronavirus outbreak, government has:

- made up to £330 billion of loans and guarantees for businesses
- offered to pay 80 per cent of the wages of furloughed workers, up to £2,500
- deferred the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of

- June – representing a £30 billion injection into the economy
- introduced £20 billion in tax relief and cash grants to help businesses with cash flow
 - introduced the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Schemes for both SMEs and larger businesses to make it easier to access vital financial support
 - offered to cover the cost of statutory sick pay
 - entirely removed all eligible properties in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector from business rates temporarily;
 - introduced the Self-employment Income Support Scheme, offering a taxable grant worth 80% of trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 a month
 - deferred Self Assessment payments due in July 2020 until 31 January 2021
 - allowed companies required to hold AGMs to do so flexibly, which may include postponing them or holding them online;
 - suspended wrongful trading provisions for company directors to remove the threat of personal liability during the pandemic; and
 - offered a 3 month extension for filing accounts to businesses hit by coronavirus.

Notes to editors

The new business support finder tool can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder>.

More details on support for businesses can be found on the [coronavirus business support hub](#).

[Inverness Covid19 Regional Testing Centre to open for key workers](#)

A drive-through coronavirus testing facility is to open in Inverness as part of the UK Government's UK-wide drive to increase testing for thousands more NHS and other key workers.

The site sits alongside a rapidly expanding network of testing sites being set up around the UK, and is operating on an appointment-only basis for NHS staff and other key workers. The facility will be located at UHI Inverness campus and open on 26 April, it will be piloted for its first few days of operation.

This follows the launch of the UK Government's partnership with universities, research institutes and companies to begin rollout of the network of new labs and field testing sites across the UK, with 35 testing sites opened to date.

This network will provide thousands more PCR swab tests – which are used to identify if you currently have the virus – for critical key workers, starting

with NHS front line staff. This means those who test negative for coronavirus can return to work as soon as possible, and those who test positive are able to recover.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

“The UK Government is rapidly scaling up the national effort to boost testing capacity for coronavirus to protect the vulnerable, support our NHS, and ultimately save lives.

“This new service will help end the uncertainty of whether NHS and social care staff and other key workers need to stay at home, meaning those who test negative will be able to return to work.

“This is a national effort and we are proud to be working with a number of partners to turn this ambition into a reality and roll out additional capacity to where it is needed.”

Professor John Newton, National Coordinator for the UK Coronavirus Testing Strategy, said:

“New testing sites such as this one are a key pillar of our 5-pillar plan to scale up testing, and are critical in supporting NHS staff and other frontline workers who are isolating at home to return safely to work if the test is negative.

“This is a brilliant example of industries and businesses turning their resources to creating and rolling out mass testing at scale, which will help to deliver on our aim of carrying out 100,000 tests a day across the UK by the end of the month.”

UK Government minister Douglas Ross said:

“This new UK Government funded testing centre in Inverness will help key workers living in the area continue their vital work, helping to look after those who need it most.

“The UK Government has committed to expand our testing capacity right across the UK and this new centre is now one of four throughout Scotland. We will continue to work for everyone in the UK to save lives and protect our NHS.”

The testing centre will offer self-administered tests. Those tested will receive their results within a few days.

The UK Government is also urgently working on setting up a home-testing service for critical key workers, supported by Amazon’s logistics network and other commercial partners.

Chancellor delivers daily coronavirus update (20 April 2020)

Good evening from Downing Street, where I'm joined by Professor Angela McLean, Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser, and Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director of Public Health England.

Before I provide an update on the economic situation, let me start by addressing the issue uppermost on people's minds – personal protective equipment, or PPE.

This is an international challenge that many other countries are experiencing.

Alongside the efforts of British businesses and our embassies around the world, we are working hard to get the PPE our frontline NHS and social care staff need.

We have appointed Paul Deighton, formerly Chief Executive of London 2012 Olympics, to lead on our domestic efforts to make an increase the supply of PPE.

And we are receiving shipments of PPE regularly from suppliers in the UK and abroad.

We're working to resolve the Turkish shipment of PPE as soon as possible, following some unexpected delays at the weekend.

Today, we have unloaded a shipment of 140,000 gowns from Myanmar.

And we are, of course, continuing to pursue every possible option for PPE procurement.

Let me turn now to the economic situation.

Exactly a month ago today I stood at this lectern and said we would step in and help pay to people's wages.

We promised this support would be available by the end of April – today, we deliver our promise.

HMRC opened the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme at 8 o'clock this morning.

As of 4 o'clock this afternoon, over 140,000 firms have applied..

and the grants they'll receive will help pay the wages of more than a million people..

...a million people who, if they hadn't been furloughed, would have been at risk of losing their job.

Firms applying today should receive their cash in six working days. HMRC will continue to provide updates on the number of people furloughed.

And let me put on record my thanks to the thousands of staff at HMT and HMRC who have made this happen.

People have come out of retirement, put aside their normal duties, and worked around the clock, from their kitchen tables and spare rooms, to get this new system up and running.

This remarkable story of public service reminds us how many different people are playing a role in this crisis – and I'm very grateful to all of them, for everything they've done.

It's important to be clear why we have introduced the CJRS, and the other schemes we've put in place to support the self-employed and businesses.

We've never seen an economic crisis like this one.

Times like this demand that we put aside ideology and orthodoxy.

Times like this demand that the state turns to its most immediate purpose: the protection and support of its people.

The goal of the new schemes we've developed is to maintain as many people as possible in their existing jobs;

to support viable businesses to stay afloat;

and to protect the incomes of the self-employed to allow them to trade again.

To maintain, in other words, our economy's productive capacity so that we can bridge through this crisis.

That is what we have done – and the Office for Budget Responsibility said last week that the situation would have been much worse if it hadn't been for our actions.

But in everything we have done, even in our defence against the immediate crisis, we have also been sowing the seeds of our ultimate recovery.

As we look ahead and start to plan for our recovery, it is critical we don't just maintain companies and jobs that already exist...

...but that we also encourage the businesses, jobs and technologies of the future.

Innovation and entrepreneurship have powered growth in our country for centuries; and it is what will drive our growth as we recover from this crisis.

To that end, earlier today, I launched two initiatives to support the most innovative firms in the country, worth £1.25 billion.

First, we are launching a new Future Fund worth £500 million, to make sure that high growth companies across the UK can continue to access the investment they need during the crisis.

Launching in May, the Future Fund will provide UK-based early stage companies with convertible loans between £125,000 and £5 million.

Our Future Fund will match investments made by private investors in early stage businesses, on terms that protect the UK taxpayer.

Second, alongside the new Future Fund, the Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, has worked closely with Innovate UK – our national innovation agency...

...to provide £750 million of grant and loan funding for tens of thousands of highly innovative firms...

...in every sector, and every region and nation of the UK.

He, like I, believes strongly in the role of innovation and enterprise in recovering our economy.

As I said last week, right now, the most important thing we can do for the health of our economy is to protect the health of our people.

We must continue to slow the spread of the virus;

to make sure fewer people need hospital treatment at any one time;

and protect the NHS's ability to cope.

Today, the government's ongoing monitoring and testing programme reports:

- 501,379 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out, including 19,316 tests carried out yesterday
- 124,743 people have tested positive, an increase of 4,676 cases since yesterday
- 17,971 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus in the UK
- and sadly, of those who have been hospitalised, 16,509 have now died – an increase of 449 fatalities since yesterday

Our thoughts are with the families and friends of all those who have lost their lives.

As we look forward, towards the next stage in our battle against this disease, there are encouraging signs we have been making progress.

But before we consider it safe to adjust any of the current social distancing measures, we must be satisfied that we have met the five tests set out last week by the First Secretary.

Those tests mean that the NHS can continue to cope;

that the daily death rate falls sustainably and consistently;

that the rate of infection is decreasing; that the operational challenges have been met;

and, most importantly, that there is no risk of a second peak.

So I want to thank each and every person across the UK who is following the government's advice to stay at home, protect our NHS and, ultimately, save lives.

Thank you.

Let me now hand over to Angela before taking questions from the media.

[Update on Fisheries Response Fund, Monday 20 April 2020.](#)

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has launched the government's new £10m Fisheries Response Fund for England's fishing and aquaculture businesses.

From Monday 20 April 2020 eligible fishing vessel owners will be contacted directly, by email, in stages. Further information for Aquaculture businesses will be provided from next week.

The Fisheries Response Fund (FRF) will directly contribute towards the fixed business costs of over 1000 catching and aquaculture businesses that have been adversely impacted by the downturn of export and domestic markets for fish and shellfish.

For information on the fund criteria and eligibility, please see our [guidance](#).

Tom McCormack, Chief Executive of the Marine Management Organisation, said:

"We've continued to stay closely engaged with the fishing industry and are very much aware of the difficulties many fishing businesses have been facing with the downturn in markets for fish and shellfish. We absolutely acknowledge the importance of our fishing industries and share concerns about these current impacts – it is our problem too.

The data we collect from the fishing industry has proved timely and incredibly valuable in helping to quickly evidence the current situation and to target where financial support is most needed.

We will be reviewing as we go, and will continue to engage with and listen to industry to ensure we're supporting our fishing industry in the right ways."

The seafood and fisheries sectors are encouraged to apply for the [existing support available](#) for businesses, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme.

[Windrush Compensation Scheme claimant tender assistance launched](#)

A tender for a contract to provide assistance to people claiming compensation through the Windrush Compensation Scheme has been launched today (Monday 20 April).

The successful bidder will provide hands-on support to those applying for compensation. This will include helping them to complete their application forms with over-the-phone and face-to-face appointments.

The scheme, designed with independent oversight, is intended to be as straightforward as possible with dedicated caseworkers assessing claims as quickly as they can. The first payment was made within just 4 months of the scheme opening.

The Home Office also funded a support contract currently run by Citizens Advice which has been operating since April 2019.

The next phase of this programme is now open for bids. The successful bidder will have to show that they can provide this service throughout the UK, offer a holistic service to all claimants and spot particular vulnerabilities of those they are assisting to make sure that they receive help in all aspects of their life.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the race and history of the Windrush generation was at the heart of the Windrush lessons learned Review.

Although no amount of money will ever be able to repay people for the hurt and suffering they have endured, I want to ensure that those who have suffered are compensated for their losses, and that is why I am ensuring that support is continuing to be available for those who need it to apply.

The Home Office will continue to do everything possible to listen to and support those were affected by this scandal and the Windrush Compensation Scheme is fundamental to that.

The tender will be open for 10 weeks rather than 6, to give organisations which have been affected by coronavirus additional time to bid for the contract.

The tender will be open from 22 April 2020 and close on 1 July and interested organisations can find out how to access the relevant documents on the [GOV.UK Contracts Finder](#). However, we will keep the situation under review and will extend the deadline if necessary.

The [Windrush Compensation Scheme](#) was launched in April 2019 to ensure that affected members of the Windrush generation receive payments for the impact on their lives.

This includes payment for loss of employment, benefits and other forms of hardship. The first payments were made within four months of the scheme opening. For the latest information on the scheme, please see the [Windrush Compensation Scheme factsheet](#).

The Wendy Williams Lessons Learned review was published in March 2020. The Home Secretary made clear in her statement to the House of Commons on the day of publication that the department will carefully consider the detail of the report and its recommendations to develop a comprehensive plan for changing the ways of working of the Home Office.

As announced by the Home Secretary in March, the Home Office will shortly launch a separate £500k fund for grassroots organisations to promote the Windrush Schemes and provide advice services. We will work with stakeholders to co-design the fund.