

[Change to Plan 1 Interest Rates](#)

From the 7 April 2020, the interest rate applied to all Plan 1 Income Contingent Repayment (ICR) student loans will reduce from 1.75% to 1.1%.

The Department for Education has confirmed the change following the decrease to the Bank of England base interest rate from 0.25% to 0.1% on 19 March 2020.

Plan 1 borrowers will continue to repay 9% of their earnings over the repayment threshold. The repayment threshold for Plan 1 ICR loans remains at £18,935 (increasing to £19,390 on 6 April 2020).

For more information on repaying your loan visit: [Repaying your student loan](#)

[UK energy statistics: statistical press release – March 2020](#)

[Energy Trends](#) and [Energy Prices](#) publications are published today 26 March 2020 by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The publications cover new data for the fourth quarter of 2019 (October to December) and thus provisional annual data for 2019. This press release focuses mainly on the 2019 annual data. Energy Trends covers statistics on energy production and consumption, in total and by fuel, and provides an analysis of the year on year changes. Energy Prices covers prices to domestic and industrial consumers, prices of oil products and comparisons of international fuel prices.

PDF, 526KB, 16 pages

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Government to provide free car parking for NHS and social care staff

The government will cover the costs of providing free car parking to NHS staff working in hospitals during this unprecedented time, the Health Secretary has pledged today.

It comes as the Local Government Secretary has agreed local councils will also offer free car parking to all NHS workers and social care staff during the coronavirus outbreak.

In the face of this global pandemic it is essential NHS and social care staff are able to carry out their vital work without worrying about paying for car parking. Government is rightly committing to providing the financial backing NHS Trusts need to make this a reality in hospitals for the duration of this viral outbreak.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Our NHS is facing an unprecedented challenge, and I will do everything I can to ensure our dedicated staff have whatever they need during this unprecedented time.

So we will provide free car parking for our NHS staff who are going above and beyond every day in hospitals across England.

My enormous gratitude goes out to the many NHS Trusts and other organisations already providing free car parking and I urge other Trusts to do the same with our backing.

We will do what is needed to protect the NHS, support our health and care staff, and save lives as we tackle COVID-19.

NHS Trusts are responsible for setting car parking charges locally, and the Health Secretary is urging all Trusts to immediately make use of government funding to abolish parking charges for their staff during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Health Secretary Matt Hancock and NHS Chief Executive Simon Stevens both also praised those NHS Trusts who are already providing free car parking to staff working tirelessly on the frontline.

NHS chief executive Sir Simon Stevens said:

Our NHS staff are working round the clock gearing up to deal with this unprecedented global health threat, which will be a major challenge for health services across the world, and we have

listened to what they have told us would make their lives easier.

Free parking will make a big difference for hundreds of thousands of frontline staff, but this is just the start, and we will setting out further support offers over the coming days and weeks, to ensure the NHS looks after those who look after all of us.

Following an incredible response from volunteers and retired NHS staff coming forwards to work on the frontline, some hospitals may also require additional car parking capacity.

Under new measures agreed by Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, all councils in England and the Local Government Association critical key workers will also be able to use council parking bays without time restriction or charge.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Our NHS staff and social care workers are working round the clock to save lives and should not have to worry about the cost or time restrictions of parking.

Which is why, I've agreed with the LGA and councils in England to provide free car parking, on council owned on-street spaces and car parks.

By working together we are able to support these heroes as they play a front line role in our national effort to tackle the coronavirus crisis.

The changes will apply to all on-street parking and open, council-run car parks including pay and display and will suspend charges for health workers, social care workers and NHS volunteers.

Councils will set up local arrangements so NHS and care workers and volunteers can provide suitable evidence that they can display in their windscreen to ensure they avoid parking tickets.

Many councils have already suspended parking charges for key workers as part of the national effort to tackle coronavirus.

Local councils will continue to carry out crucial parking enforcement locally to ensure the public are kept safe and that the roads remain clear for emergency and essential services.

The National Car Parking Group confirmed earlier this will that is will also provide NHS staff free parking at all 150 of their car parks in England. Ministers are also urging all businesses and other organisations located near hospitals to work with their local NHS Trusts to consider allowing NHS staff use their car parks.

Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

Already, many councils have suspended parking charges in council-run car parks and for on-street parking and have waived all fines on appeal for critical workers.

Councils agree and have worked with government to develop this scheme that now means no health worker, social care worker or anyone volunteering for the NHS, should have to pay parking charges as they tackle the coronavirus and support communities.

These critical workers are all doing vital and highly-valued work to support the most vulnerable in our society and councils want to do all they can to support them.

International co-operation only way to get travellers home and beat coronavirus, says the Foreign Secretary

At a US-chaired virtual meeting of G7 Foreign Ministers today, members of the G7 committed to use their collective power and resources to respond to the “unprecedented” challenge of getting stranded nationals home during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Foreign Secretary led the top item on the agenda on coronavirus. Based on joint work by the UK and Germany, G7 Foreign Ministers (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the US and the EU) agreed 5 critical areas were the priority for international action:

1. Preventing further crises and strengthening resilience of the most vulnerable countries. The G7 committed support to those countries and people most at risk, leading the international effort by helping to fund the WHO's £71 billion overall requirement for the immediate public health response and priority research.
2. Tackling the immediate health emergency. Through increased support to the UN, and in particular the World Health Organisation. The 7 countries committed to working together to develop, manufacture and distribute medication and vaccines including through strong financial support to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. The G7 will also

support a Global Accord to ensure fair access to future diagnostics, drugs and vaccines to the global community.

3. Protecting global production and supply chains. Members agreed on the need to protect global production and vital supply chains and work together to ensure a speedy recovery from the crisis. Ministers committed to reducing tariffs in medical supplies and pharmaceutical products in order to help those most at risk.
4. Keeping global travel routes open. As our citizens try to return home, we need to keep commercial options available. And where commercial flights are not running, ensure that special flights, where possible, can take people home.
5. Standing up to those who seek to attack our shared values, and protecting our democracies against dis-information.

The UK has so far committed £241 million to support global efforts to combat the coronavirus outbreak including £40 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, while UK scientists are already supporting the development and testing of eight different vaccine options. The UK stands ready to provide further funding as necessary.

Speaking after the G7, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Today, I've agreed to work together to intensify international co-operation to support vulnerable countries, pursue a vaccine, protect the world economy, and enable our citizens who are stranded to get home safely.

ESFA Update: 25 March 2020

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this absolutely cannot be done from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

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