

COVID-19 Support and Assistance

Support for Businesses

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1. Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

All UK employers will be able to access support to continue paying part of their employees' salary for those employees that would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis.

Eligibility:

All UK businesses are eligible.

How to access the scheme:

You will need to:

- designate affected employees as 'furloughed workers,' and notify your employees (via letter, email or verbally) of this change - changing the status of employees remains subject to existing employment law and, depending on the employment contract, may be subject to negotiation
- submit information to HMRC about the employees that have been furloughed and their earnings through a new online portal yet to be set up (HMRC will set out further details on the information required)

HMRC will reimburse 80% of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month. HMRC are working urgently to set up a system for reimbursement. Existing systems are not set up to facilitate payments to employers.

If your business needs short term cash flow support, you may be eligible for a [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan](#) (see below).

2. Deferring VAT and Income Tax payments

HMRC will support businesses by deferring Valued Added Tax (VAT) payments for 3 months. If you're self-employed, Income Tax payments due in July 2020 under the Self-Assessment system will be deferred to January 2021.

VAT

For VAT, the deferral will apply from 20 March 2020 until 30 June 2020.

Eligibility:

All UK businesses are eligible.

How to access the scheme:

This is an automatic offer with no applications required. Businesses will not need to make a VAT payment during this period. Taxpayers will be given until the 5th April 2021 to pay any liabilities that have accumulated during the deferral period. VAT refunds and reclaims will be paid by the government as normal.

Income Tax

For Income Tax Self-Assessment, payments due on the 31 July 2020 will be deferred until the 31 January 2021.

Eligibility:

If you are self-employed you are eligible.

How to access the scheme:

This is an automatic offer with no applications required.

No penalties or interest for late payment will be charged in the deferral period.

HMRC have also scaled up their [Time to Pay offer \(see point 8\)](#) to all firms and individuals who are in temporary financial distress as a result of Covid-19 and have outstanding tax liabilities.

3. Businesses who are paying sick pay to employees

Small- and medium-sized businesses and employers can reclaim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paid for sickness absence due to COVID-19. The eligibility criteria for the scheme will be as follows:

- this refund will cover up to 2 weeks' SSP per eligible employee who has been off work because of COVID-19
- employers with fewer than 250 employees will be eligible - the size of an employer will be determined by the number of people they employed as of 28 February 2020
- employers will be able to reclaim expenditure for any employee who has claimed SSP (according to the new eligibility criteria) as a result of COVID-19
- employers should maintain records of staff absences and payments of SSP, but employees will

- not need to provide a GP fit note
- eligible period for the scheme began on 13 March 2020
- the government will work with employers over the coming months to set up the repayment mechanism for employers as soon as possible. Existing systems are not set up to facilitate refunds.

Eligibility:

You are eligible for the scheme if:

- your business is UK based
- your business is a small or medium-sized and employs fewer than 250 employees as of 28 February 2020

How to access the scheme:

A rebate scheme is being developed. Further details will be provided in due course once the legalisation has passed.

4. Business rates holiday

Some businesses, including nurseries, in England will be eligible for a Business Rates holiday for 1 year from 1 April 2020:

- if you are currently receiving the retail discount for your Business Rates bill, you will receive a revised bill with 100% relief shortly
- if your business occupies a property in the retail sector with a rateable value of £51,000 or more, or if your business occupies a property in the leisure or hospitality sectors you may also be eligible for the 100% discount on your business rates bill
- you will shortly hear from your Local Authority.
- if you are a nursery, you will be entitled to the 100% relief for the next year.

Eligibility:

You are eligible for the business rates holiday if:

- your business is based in England
 - your business is in the retail, hospitality and/or leisure sector
- Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied premises that are wholly or mainly being used:
- as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues
 - for assembly and leisure
 - as hotels, guest & boarding premises and self-catering accommodation
 - your business is a nursery - properties that will benefit from the relief will be premises occupied by providers on Ofsted's Early Years Register
 - wholly or mainly used for the provision on the Early Years Foundation Stage

How to access the scheme:

There is no action required by you. This will apply to your next council tax bill in April 2020. However, local authorities may have to reissue your bill automatically to exclude the business rate charge. They will do this as soon as possible.

5. Cash Grants

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure

The Retail and Hospitality Grant Scheme provides businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with a cash grant of up to £25,000 per property.

For businesses in these sectors with a rateable value of under £15,000, they will receive a grant of £10,000.

For businesses in these sectors with a rateable value of between £15,001 and £51,000, they will receive a grant of £25,000.

Eligibility:

You are eligible for the grant if:

- your business is based in England
 - your business is in the retail, hospitality and/or leisure sector
- Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied premises that are wholly or mainly being used:
- as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues
 - for assembly and leisure
 - as hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation

How to access the scheme

You do not need to do anything. Your local authority will write to you if you are eligible for this grant.

Guidance for local authorities on the scheme will be provided shortly.

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

Other Businesses

The government will provide additional Small Business Grant Scheme funding for local authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no business rates because of small business rate relief (SBRR), rural rate relief (RRR) and tapered relief. This will provide a one-off grant of £10,000 to eligible businesses to help meet their ongoing business costs.

Eligibility:

You are eligible if:

- your business is based in England
- you are a small business and already receive SBRR and/or RRR
- you are a business that occupies property

How to access the scheme:

You do not need to do anything. Your local authority will write to you if you are eligible for this grant.

Guidance for local authorities on the scheme will be provided shortly.

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

6. Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

A new temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, was launched at the start of the week commencing 23 March 2020 to support primarily small and medium sized businesses to access bank lending and overdrafts.

The government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan (subject to a per-lender cap on claims) to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance to SMEs.

The government will not charge businesses or banks for this guarantee, and the Scheme will support loans of up to £5 million in value.

Businesses can access the first 12 months of that finance interest free.

Further details, including on the lenders providing access to this scheme will be announced in the coming days, and the scheme will be available from early on in the week commencing 23 March 2020.

<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/>

Eligibility

You are eligible for the scheme if:

- your business is UK based, with turnover of no more than £45 million per year
- your business meets the other British Business Bank eligibility criteria (see link above)

How to access the scheme

The full rules of the Scheme and the list of accredited lenders is available on the [British Business Bank website](#). All the major banks will offer the Scheme.

You should talk to your bank or finance provider (not the British Business Bank) as soon as possible and discuss your business plan with them. This will help your finance provider to act quickly. If you have an existing loan with monthly repayments you may want to ask for a repayment holiday to help with cash flow.

7. Support for larger firms through the COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility

To support larger firms, the Bank of England has announced a new lending facility to provide a quick and cost-effective way to raise working capital via the purchase of short-term debt. This will support companies which are fundamentally strong, but have been affected by a short-term funding squeeze, enabling them to continue financing their short-term liabilities. It will also support corporate finance markets overall and ease the supply of credit to all firms. Further details, including on how to access this funding will follow in the coming days, and the scheme was launched in the week commencing 23 March 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/launch-of-covid-19-corporate-financing-facility-ccff>

Eligibility

All UK businesses are eligible.

How to access the scheme

HMRC will provide information on how to access the scheme shortly.
More information is available from your bank or finance provider.

8. Support for businesses paying tax

All businesses and self-employed people in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's Time to Pay service. These arrangements are agreed on a case-by-case basis and are tailored to individual circumstances and liabilities.

If you are concerned about being able to pay your tax as a consequence of COVID-19 related issues, call HMRC's dedicated helpline on **0800 0159 559**.

Eligibility

You are eligible if your business:

- pays tax to the UK government
- has outstanding tax liabilities

How to access the scheme

If you have missed a tax payment or you might miss your next payment due to COVID-19, please call HMRC's dedicated helpline: 0800 0159 559.

If you're worried about a future payment, please call HMRC nearer the time.

9. Insurance

Businesses that have cover for both pandemics and government-ordered closure should be covered, as the government and insurance industry confirmed on 17 March 2020 that advice to avoid pubs, theatres etc is sufficient to make a claim.

Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers. Most businesses are unlikely to be covered, as standard business interruption insurance policies are dependent on damage to property and will exclude pandemics.

10. Companies House Filing Extension

All Companies must send their accounts, reports and confirmation statements to Companies House every year. If a company's accounts are filed late (after 9 months following the company's year-end), the law imposes an automatic penalty.

Your company should take appropriate measures to ensure accounts are filed on time. If, before the filing deadline, it becomes apparent that accounts will not be filed on time due to your company being affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19), we may make an application to extend the period allowed for filing. Please contact us if you anticipate this situation in order that we can discuss further and make the application on your behalf. You must apply for the extension **before** your filing deadline.

11. IR35

The new regulations due to come in April 2020 have been delayed by 12 months.