

How to access support in Scotland if you have been affected by COVID-19

In the last few months, both the UK and Scottish Governments have made multiple announcements on the financial and other support available for people, businesses and charities affected by COVID-19.

This document aims to pull together all that information in a single place.

In addition, we urge everyone to follow the latest medical advice at www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus.

Please note that this information is correct as of 3 June 2020 and may be subject to further updates as the situation develops.

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FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE

If you are worried you might lose your job, please read the following information:

- **For the first time in history, the UK government is stepping in to help pay people's wages – paying grants to support as many jobs as necessary.**
- **Grants will be paid to any employers who retain their staff.** Any employer in the country – large, small, charitable or for profit – who promises to retain their staff, will be able to apply for a grant from HMRC to cover most of the wages of people who are not working but are kept on payroll, rather than being laid off.
- **Employees who were on the payroll on 19 March or earlier are eligible.** The UK Government has extended the cut off period for those eligible for support. The cost of wages will be backdated to 1 March.
- **Grants will cover 80 per cent of the salary of retained workers up to a total of £2,500 a month –** which is above the average income. Employers will be free to top up the remaining 20 per cent, but this is not mandatory. There will be no limit on the number or total value of grants paid out.
- **The UK Government will also cover the cost of National Insurance and pension contributions.** Employer contributions for furloughed staff will be paid by the UK Government on top of 80 per cent of salary costs. This could save businesses an extra £300 a month for each employee under the scheme.
- Workers on the Job Retention Scheme who are planning to take paid parental or adoption leave will be entitled to pay based on their usual earnings rather than a furloughed pay rate.
- **The scheme has been extended by the UK Government until the end of October.** There will be no changes to the scheme until the end of July. But from the start of August there will be flexibility for employers to return people to work part time.
- Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.
- **If you are worried about being laid off, please make your employer aware of this information as soon as possible.**

If you are looking for work, please read the following information:

- The Department for Work & Pensions have launched a new site to advertise thousands of critical jobs across the UK - <https://jobhelp.dwp.gov.uk/>.

If you think you are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), please read the following information:

- You can get £94.25 per week Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if you're too ill to work. It's paid by your employer for up to 28 weeks.

- **If you are self-isolating because of COVID-19, you can now claim SSP.** This includes individuals who are caring for people self-isolating in the same household and therefore have been advised to do a household quarantine. To check your sick pay entitlement, you should talk to your employer, and visit <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay> for more information.
- **How soon does SSP apply?** The UK Government is legislating for SSP to be paid from day 1, rather than day 4, of your absence from work if you are absent from work due to sickness or need to self-isolate caused by COVID-19. Once the legislation has been passed, this will apply retrospectively from 13 March. You should talk to your employer if you are eligible for SSP and need to claim.
- **Do I need a sick note?** Those who have COVID-19 or are advised to self-isolate are able to obtain an 'isolation note' at <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note>, rather than visiting a doctor. For COVID-19 cases this replaces the usual need to provide a 'fit note' after seven days of sickness absence. Isolation notes will be accepted by Jobcentre Plus as evidence of your inability to attend.

If you are self-employed, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government's Self-Employed Income Support Scheme is now open, to make sure people who work for themselves get the financial support they need.** The Government will pay self-employed people across the whole UK who have been adversely affected by coronavirus a grant worth 80 per cent of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month, for three months.
- **And the scheme has been extended by the UK Government for another three months.** From August you will be able to apply for a second grant worth 70 per cent of your average monthly trading profits over three months. This means you will be able to claim up to £6,570. Eligibility will be the same for both grants.
- You can apply using the simple form online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-self-employment-income-support-scheme/>. Payments will then be made for successful applicants within 6 working days. You have until 13 July to apply for the first grant.
- The scheme is open to those with trading profits up to £50,000, meaning 95 per cent of people who are majority self-employed will be eligible for the scheme.
- HMRC will also ask people to demonstrate that the majority of their income comes from self-employment, and, to minimise fraud, only those who are already in self-employment, and who have a tax return for 2019, will be able to apply.
- **If you are newly self-employed and ineligible for the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, you can claim up to £2,000 from your local authority.** You will be eligible if you became self-employed on or after 6 April 2019, over half your income is from self-employment, and your trading profits were below £50,000 in financial year 2019-20. Further information is available at <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/service/coronavirus/newly-self-employed-hardship-fund>.
- **The UK Government have also deferred income tax self-assessment payments.** Income tax self-assessment payments for July will be deferred until the end of January 2021.

If you think you may be eligible for Universal Credit, please read the following information:

- **You can now more easily make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) or new style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).** For more information on how to claim, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance>. You will now be able to claim online and access advance payments upfront without needing to attend a Jobcentre Plus.
- **The minimum income floor on Universal Credit has been suspended for 12 months.** This means self-employed people can now access, in full, Universal Credit at a rate that is equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay for employees. If self-employed claimants' work, and therefore earnings, have significantly reduced due to the impact of COVID-19 guidance on self-isolation and social distancing, and the wider economic impacts of the outbreak, their Universal Credit award will increase to reflect their lower earnings.
- If you are eligible for new style Employment and Support Allowance, it will now be payable from day 1 of sickness, rather than day 8, if you have COVID-19 or are advised to self-isolate.
- The UK Government have increased Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by £1,000 a year. The Universal Credit standard allowance will increase by £86.67 per month (equivalent to £20 per week), on top of the planned annual uprating. Together these measures are estimated to benefit over 4 million of our most vulnerable households.
- **You no longer need to phone the Government as part of your Universal Credit claim.** New changes mean that if there is information that needs to be verified as part of your claim, the Department for Work and Pensions will phone you instead. This will mean you do not face long waits on the phone trying to get through to a member of staff.

If you think you may need financial support from your local council, please read the following information:

- The 'Scottish Welfare Fund' has received additional funding to provide crisis grants for those in financial emergency. Details on how to apply via your local authority can be found at <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-welfare-fund/apply-or-track-your-application/>.
- The council tax reduction scheme has received additional funding. To find out if you are eligible please visit <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income/help-with-your-council-tax-council-tax-reduction-s/>. Details on how to apply for a council tax reduction via your local authority can be found at <https://www.mygov.scot/council-tax/discounts-exemptions-and-reductions/>.
- The Scottish Government have said they will set up a £70 million 'Food Fund' to support households who may be worried about accessing food - whether due to an income drop or self-isolation. Local councils are free to deploy this funding as they see fit, so questions about how to access funding are best directed to them in the first instance. You can find their contact details at <https://www.mygov.scot/find-your-local-council/>.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties meeting your mortgage repayments, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government has agreed with mortgage lenders that they will offer 'repayment holidays' of 3 months to households in financial difficulty due to COVID-19.** This will also apply to landlords whose tenants are experiencing financial difficulties because of COVID-19.

- The offer of a payment holiday can be made available to customers who are up to date with payments and not already in arrears.
- Customers who are concerned about their current financial situation should contact their lender at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss if this is a suitable option for them. The application period has been extended until 31 October.
- If you are still struggling to make your payments at the end of your initial mortgage holiday, an extension for a further three months should be available.
- **A fund has been launched to provide interest-free loans to landlords for lost rental income on a single property.** You can apply at <https://covidlandlordloan.est.org.uk/>.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties paying your rent, please read the following information:

- **You should not face the threat of eviction for at least 6 months.** New legislation protects renters from being evicted if they fall into rent arrears as a result of coronavirus. This will extend the minimum period of arrears required to evict from three months in a row to six months in a row.
- The UK Government have announced that from this April, all new and existing private renters claiming Universal Credit and Housing Benefit will benefit from additional housing support. All Local Housing Allowance rates will be uplifted - worth an extra £14 a week on average for existing claimants and any additional Universal Credit claimants who rent in the private sector.
- New legislation means students should be able to exit their purpose-built student accommodation contracts early. This means that students currently tied into a student accommodation contract, and who may have returned home due to coronavirus, should be able to exit that lease with a seven-day notice period.
- **If you are experiencing issues paying your rent, please tell your landlord as soon as you can.** We need landlords to help their tenants as part of society's overall response. We cannot have people put at risk of homelessness at this difficult time.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties paying your energy bill, please read the following information:

- **An agreement between the UK Government and energy suppliers means customers who are unable to top up their meter or can't afford to pay their bills should get support from their supplier.** You are advised to contact your energy supplier immediately to discuss how you can be kept on supply.
- **If you are a pre-payment or pay as you go customer who cannot leave your home, your provider should help you stay supplied.** This could mean someone else can be sent to top up your card, a pre-loaded gas or electricity card is sent in the post, or funds are added to your credit.
- **Disconnection of credit meters should be completely suspended.** If you are in financial distress, you may also be able to have your debts or bill payments reassessed, paused or reduced where needed.

If you are experiencing difficulties paying back personal loans or credit card bills, please read the following information:

- The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) have called on lenders to use flexibility built into their rules to support consumers, taking into account customers' individual circumstances. Many major lenders have already made statements to this effect.
- If you are experiencing difficulties paying back loans or credit card bills because of COVID-19, you should talk to your lender.
- If you agree a payment holiday with your lender, they should record these in such a way that will not impact on your credit score.

If you are a student experiencing financial difficulties, please read the following information:

- A £5 million package of emergency financial support has been put in place to help students facing hardship. Students should apply directly to their university or college. Further information is available at <https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/coronavirus>

If you are concerned about facing insolvency, please read the following information:

- Scotland's insolvency service, Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB), has suspended sale and eviction from property in ongoing bankruptcy administrations until further notice.
- The evidential requirements for individuals seeking debt relief through bankruptcy have been amended to allow faster access, providing protection from debt enforcement.
- AiB is also reducing the need for face to face contact, allowing access to debt relief to be maintained by accepting electronic signatures on protected trust deeds and other documentation.
- If you have an ongoing debt payment plan but are worried about how you will be able to pay, AiB will not be revoking these programmes.
- The latest information is available from Accountant in Bankruptcy here: <https://www.aib.gov.uk/aib-covid-19-business-continuity>.

If you are worried about your current benefit claim, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government have suspended all benefit reviews and reassessments, to reassure vulnerable people that they will continue to receive benefits during this crisis.** This includes if you are claiming any of Universal Credit, Employment Support Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. This measure will also ensure resources are focused on helping new claimants access support.
- **The UK Government is suspending face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits for the next 3 months.** This move is being taken as a precautionary measure to protect vulnerable people from unnecessary risk of exposure to coronavirus.
- **You can now claim your pension credit online.** The application form is available at <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim>. It is still possible to claim by post or over the phone if you prefer.

- The UK Government have increased the basic element of Working Tax Credit by £1,045 to £3,040 from 6 April 2020 until 5 April 2021. Depending on your circumstances this increase could mean up to an extra £20 each week.
- The UK Government are protecting tax credit payments, so that if you can't work your normal hours due to coronavirus you will still automatically receive your normal payment.
- The UK Government has also uprated Child Benefit, other tax credits rates and thresholds, and Guardian's Allowance by 1.7 per cent with effect from 6 April 2020. The full list of rates and allowances is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-tax-credits-child-benefit-and-guardians-allowance/tax-credits-child-benefit-and-guardians-allowance>.
- There has been additional funding given to Discretionary Housing Payments. If you are struggling with your housing costs and are currently receiving Universal Credit or Housing Benefit you may be eligible for further financial support. Further information is available at <https://www.mygov.scot/discretionary-housing-payment/>.

If you require further financial support, please read the following information:

- You can check whether you are eligible for any of the social security benefits delivered in Scotland at <https://www.mygov.scot/benefits/social-security-scotland/>. If you have recently started to receive Universal Credit please be aware you may now be eligible for other benefits as a result.
- Citizens Advice Scotland able to support you access a range of support, from claiming benefits to getting help with your mortgage or rent. To access their resources please visit <https://www.cas.org.uk/> or call 0800 028 1456.

OTHER SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE

If you are symptomatic and need to book a COVID-19 test, please read the following information:

- Advice on symptoms can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Appointments for the drive-through testing centres can be booked online at: <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by calling 0300 303 2713.

If you are or know someone abroad who is trying to return home, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government is working flat out to get British travellers stranded abroad home, and have partnered with key airline providers to ensure that tourists stranded abroad can get home.**
- Where commercial routes do not exist, the UK Government has pledged £75 million to enable additional charter flights and to ensure that tickets home are affordable.
- Airlines have committed to offer alternative arrangements where routes have been previously cancelled. They will allow passengers to change tickets, as well as provide the latest advice and information as the situation changes.
- British tourists stranded abroad should first check if there are commercial routes available by checking airline websites, [FCO travel advice pages](#) and [local British embassy social media](#). If there are no commercial options, please visit the [UK Government's foreign travel advice page](#) and [follow embassy social media](#) and email updates. When special return flights become available, they will be advertised by the embassy, on FCO Travel Advice Pages and if you register for updates you will be contacted via email.
- Further advice from the UK Government on a range of travel related issues is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>.

If you are a foreign national concerned about your visa expiring while in the UK, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government have extended the visas of foreign nationals who cannot leave the UK due to travel restrictions or self-isolation, until 31 July.** This extension will apply to anyone whose visa expired after 24 January but were unable to return home as a result of coronavirus. The scheme will be kept under review in case it requires extending. Anyone in this situation apply online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>.
- **The UK Government have announced that all NHS frontline staff with visas due to expire before October 2020 will have their visa extended for one year.** Doctors, nurses, paramedics, midwives, radiographers, social workers and pharmacists will automatically have their visas extended, free of charge, for one year.

If you feel vulnerable but do not have a support network, please read the following:

- **A new helpline has been set up for people who would be at high risk if they contracted coronavirus, but are without support from family or their community.** In particular, people who are any of: (1) aged over-70, (2) disabled, (3) requiring the support of mental health services, (4) pregnant, (5) unable to get online or (6) receive the flu jab for health reasons should contact the helpline on **0800 111 4000**. This helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
- The helpline will support you to get essential food or medication, emotional support, or information for vulnerable children and adults.

If you are concerned about an older person in need of support, please read the following information:

- Age Scotland have a free, confidential helpline which provides information, friendship and advice on **0800 12 44 222**. It should be available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm. Practical advice for helping older relatives and friends through this difficult time is available at www.age.scot/5waystohelp.

If you are worried about your mental health or wellbeing, please read the following information:

- Advice on mental health can be found at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/your-mental-wellbeing>
- If you're feeling distressed, in a state of despair, suicidal or need emotional support you can phone Samaritans for free on **116 123**.

If you are a veteran, please read the following information:

- All Armed Forces Pensions, War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme regular payments should continue to be made as usual. However due to COVID-19, there have been some changes to Veterans UK Services. The latest information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-changes-to-veterans-uk-services>.
- A new website, www.HeadFIT.org, has been designed specifically for the defence community to provide 24/7 access to self-help tools that can enhance mood, drive and confidence, and help you manage the stresses of everyday life.
- The 'Unforgotten Forces' partnership has been given extra funding. Further information is available at <https://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/unforgotten-forces/about-unforgotten-forces/>.

If you are pregnant and worried about whether you should go to work, please read the following information:

- The latest advice for pregnant women and their families from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is available at <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/>.

If you are concerned about your car's MOT, please read the following information:

- Generally, people should stay at home and avoid travel, only leaving their home for essential purposes.

- **Car, motorcycle and van owners will be granted a 6-month exemption from MOT testing from 30 March 2020.** This will allow people to carry on with essential travel. During this period vehicles must still be kept in a roadworthy condition.
- **What if my MOT is currently due but I'm in self-isolation?** The Department of Transport is working with insurers and the police to ensure people will not be negatively affected as a result of self-isolating.
- Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-mots-for-cars-vans-and-motorcycles-due-from-30-march-2020>.

If you wish to report a business behaving unfairly, please read the following information:

- Unfair business practices can be reported to the Competitions and Markets Authority at <https://www.coronavirus-business-complaint.service.gov.uk/>.

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

If you are concerned about school or childcare, please read the following information:

- **The Scottish Government have announced that all schools will partially reopen on 11 August 2020.** Pupils will attend school on a part time basis initially, and will combine classroom learning with home-schooling.
- Certain groups of pupils may be asked to return to school earlier than this. These include vulnerable children, or pupils in transitional years such as P7 or S1. Such pupils could receive small amounts of classroom teaching from the end of June. We are awaiting further details on this from the Scottish Government.
- If your child has been attending a childcare hub, this should still be available over the summer months.
- On Friday 20 March 2020, all schools, and all local authority early learning and childcare settings closed to children and young people. There are exceptions in place to protect ‘key workers’ and vulnerable children.
- The Scottish Government have asked local authorities to decide what learning and childcare arrangements for the children of key workers are most appropriate for local circumstances. They are also asking local authorities, where possible, to make provision available beyond the school day, in partnership with providers of out of school care and after school and holiday clubs.
- Information for parents and carers from the Scottish Government is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-childcare-closures-and-emergency-provision/pages/parents-and-carers-closure-information/>
- Advice for parents and carers on managing the impact of COVID-19 on their child’s learning and family life is available at <https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/health/coronavirus>.
- Questions on schooling and childcare are best directed to your local council in the first instance. You can find their contact details at <https://www.mygov.scot/find-your-local-council/>.
- **Parents should not rely on those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category (such as grandparents or family members with underlying conditions) for childcare.** You can check who is in the at-risk category here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing>.

If you think you may be a ‘key worker’, please read the following information:

- Local authorities should now have critical provision in place so that children of key workers, such as NHS and social care staff, can still access learning and childcare if their parents absolutely must go to work.
- However, employers of key workers are being asked by the Scottish Government to consider if it is possible for workers to continue to provide essential services from home. To ensure childcare provision continues to be provided only where completely essential, parents who are key workers should therefore

work with their employers to find a way to work from home if possible, or to seek alternative childcare – for example, from a relative or carer who is not a key worker.

- The definition of ‘key worker’ has been broken up into three categories. If you fit into one of these three categories, your child may be eligible for learning or childcare provision from your local authority:
 - **Category 1:** Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID-19 response, and associated staff; Health and Care workers supporting life-threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; Energy suppliers (small numbers identified as top priority already); staff providing childcare/learning for other category 1 staff.
 - **Category 2:** All other Health and Care workers, and wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (Fire, Police, Prisons, Social Workers, etc), as well as those supporting our Critical National Infrastructure, without whom serious damage to the welfare of the people of Scotland could be caused.
 - **Category 3:** All workers (private, public or third sector) without whom there could be a significant impact on Scotland (but where the response to COVID-19, or the ability to perform essential tasks to keep the country running, would not be severely compromised).
- These categorisations may be slightly different in each local authority area depending on local priorities.
- Further guidance for key workers is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus---school-and-elc-closures-guidance-on-critical-childcare-provision-for-key-workers/>.
- Questions on key worker definitions are best directed to your local council in the first instance. You can find their contact details here: <https://www.mygov.scot/find-your-local-council/>.

If you think you may be a ‘key worker’, but have a partner who is not, please read the following information:

- The Scottish Government have advised local authorities that if one parent is a key worker and the other is not, the non-key worker should normally be expected to provide childcare. The general rule is that if it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.
- However, **parents should not rely on those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category (such as grandparents or family members with underlying conditions) for childcare.** You can check who is in the at-risk category here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing>.

If your child is in S4 to S6, please read the following information:

- **The SQA have advised that no young person with coursework to complete should attend school to do so.**
- For this year, schools and colleges will not be required to submit learner coursework for both Higher and Advanced Higher courses. While many students have already completed large elements of their

coursework already, this will all be used as part of the evidence upon which teachers base their decisions to award appropriate grades.

- National 5 coursework that has already been submitted will not be marked, and coursework that is due to be submitted in April or May is no longer required.
- The SQA have confirmed that teachers will award pupils predicted grades based on a number of factors, such as formative work. These predicted grades will then be compiled by the SQA who will decide if any adjustments are required. Any final decision reached on pupils' grades will be subject to a free appeals process.
- At this stage, there are no plans to allow students to sit exams in the autumn as part of the appeals process. If students are still unhappy with their grades following their appeal, they will be able to sit their 2020 exams in the 2021 exam period.
- It is expected that teachers will submit pupils' estimated grades by 29 May. Further information, including answers to frequently asked questions, is available at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93777.html>.

If your child is eligible for free school meals or has additional support needs, please read the following information:

- The Scottish Government have said that local authorities should put provision in place for children who are eligible for free school meals, have additional support needs or are otherwise vulnerable or at risk.
- Your local authority should make provision available to ensure that your children do not suffer unduly as a result of the current crisis. For free school meals, alternatives may take the form of direct payments to parents or food vouchers to be spent at supermarkets.
- Questions on free school meals are best directed to your local council in the first instance. You can find their contact details here: <https://www.mygov.scot/find-your-local-council/>.
- **Parents should not rely on those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category (such as grandparents or family members with underlying conditions) for childcare.** You can check who is in the at-risk category here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing>.

If your child attends an independent school, nursery or other childcare, please read the following information:

- The Scottish Government have said that private or independent schools, nurseries or other childcare setting can remain open, provided they support only the children of key workers and vulnerable children and wherever possible, work with local authorities in their areas to do this.
- Registered childminders should cease all provision besides emergency childcare for key worker families and vulnerable children. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-letter-to-childminders-about-service-provision/>.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

If you are considering letting staff go, please read the following information:

- **For the first time in history, the UK government is stepping in to help pay people's wages – paying grants to support as many jobs as necessary.**
- **Grants will be paid to any employers who retain their staff.** Any employer in the country – large, small, charitable or for profit – who promises to retain their staff, will be able to apply for a grant from HMRC to cover most of the wages of people who are not working but are kept on payroll, rather than being laid off.
- **Employees who were on the payroll on 19 March or earlier are eligible.** The UK Government has extended the cut off period for those eligible for support. The cost of wages will be backdated to 1 March.
- **Grants will cover 80 per cent of the salary of retained workers up to a total of £2,500 a month –** which is above the average income. Employers will be free to top up the remaining 20 per cent, but this is not mandatory. There will be no limit on the number or total value of grants paid out.
- **The UK Government will also cover the cost of National Insurance and pension contributions.** Employer contributions for furloughed staff will be paid by the UK Government on top of 80 per cent of salary costs. This could save businesses an extra £300 a month for each employee under the scheme.
- Workers on the Job Retention Scheme who are planning to take paid parental or adoption leave will be entitled to pay based on their usual earnings rather than a furloughed pay rate.
- **The scheme has been extended by the UK Government until the end of October.** There will be no changes to the scheme until the end of July. But from the start of August there will be flexibility for employers to return people to work part time.
- Further information on the scheme can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

Your business will not pay VAT until the end of June:

- The UK Government have announced that VAT for April, May and June will be deferred, and businesses will have until the end of the financial year to repay those bills.

Your business may be entitled to reclaim the costs of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for sickness absence:

- **This refund will cover up to two weeks' SSP per eligible employee who are either ill or been told to self-isolate because of COVID-19.** This is in line with the recommended isolation period.
- 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 should maintain records of staff absences, but employees will not need to provide a GP fit note. The eligible period for the scheme began on 13 March.
- The UK 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 designed to facilitate employer refunds for SSP.
- You can now apply online to reclaim the costs of SSP for eligible employees at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-back-statutory-sick-pay-paid-to-employees-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Your business may be eligible for rates relief and grants:

- **If your business occupies a property in the retail, hospitality, tourism or aviation sectors you will be eligible for a 100 per cent discount on your rates bill for 1 year from 1 April 2020.** This will cover a range of businesses, including restaurants, bars, pubs, cafes, shops, cinemas, bingo halls and letting agents. This discount will also cover airports and aviation businesses that are based as airports. Relief will be granted regardless of the rateable value of the property. The property must be occupied in order to be eligible.
- **Your business will be eligible for a 1.6 per cent relief regardless of rateable value.** This measure effectively freezes the poundage rate for the coming year. This will not need to be applied for – it will automatically be applied to your bill.
- You will be eligible for these reliefs even if you are already in receipt of another form of relief.
- **You may be eligible for a grant of up to £25,000** if your business is in the hospitality, leisure and retail sector and occupies a property with a rateable value of between £18,001 and £51,000. If your business occupies more than one property, you may be eligible for a further grant of up to £18,750 for each additional property.
- **You may be eligible for a grant of up to £10,000** if your business is eligible for the Small Business Bonus Scheme or Rural Rate Relief. If your business occupies more than one property, you may be eligible for a further grant of up to £7,500 for each additional property.
- **You should now be able to apply for reliefs and grants via your local authority.** The Scottish Government have said they are working urgently with Scotland's 32 local authorities to ensure these reliefs are administered in the most effective way. Information on how to apply is available at: <https://www.mygov.scot/non-domestic-rates-coronavirus/>.

If your business is not eligible for the grants above, please read the following information:

- **If you pay your business rates through a landlord or are not in the rates system at all then you may soon be eligible for a business support grant.** Existing business support grant schemes are to be extended to include those businesses who occupy a unit in a shared space in which business rates are included as part of rent. Your local authority will administer this grant but we have not yet had confirmation from the Scottish Government that it is up and running.

- **If you own a small bed and breakfast businesses with no business bank account you could be eligible for support.** From 15 June, you should be able to apply for a share of a £3 million fund designed to support small B&Bs. Eligibility criteria and details on how the application process will work are yet to be announced but further details of the commitment can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/news/more-than-gbp-100-million-awarded-to-scottish-businesses/>.
- Further information for businesses in Scotland is available at <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/coronavirus-advice>. Any unanswered questions can be raised with the Scottish Government via email on BESTCovidHub@gov.scot or by calling 0300 303 0660.

If you own a small or medium-sized business that is facing cash flow issues, please read the following information:

- **You can now apply for a UK Government Bounce Back loan of between £2,000 and £50,000.** Small businesses can now apply online through a simple form at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-coronavirus-bounce-back-loan>
- These new loans will be interest free for the first 12 months and backed 100 per cent by the UK Government. No repayments will be due in the first 12 months and the UK Government will pay any fees incurred. The loan term will be up to 6 years.
- The UK Government is working with lenders to ensure that approved loans are paid out within days so that immediate support is available for those that need it the most.
- You will be eligible to apply if your business is UK based, has been negatively affected by the virus and was not an ‘undertaking in difficulty’ on 31 December 2019.
- You will be ineligible for these loans if your business operates as a bank, insurer or reinsurer (but not insurance brokers), a public body or a state-funded school.
- You will not be able to apply if you are already claiming funding through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS). However if you already have a loan with a lender under CBILS terms, you will be able to transfer it to the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.
- **The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), delivered by the British Business Bank, is operational and is ready to support businesses.**
- The scheme is working to provide funding for business through term loans, overdrafts, asset finance and invoice finance.
- The UK Government is providing lenders with a guarantee of 80 per cent on each loan to give them greater confidence in providing loans to small and medium sized businesses.
- If you obtain a loan as part of this scheme, you will not be charged for this guarantee and nor will your lender.
- You will be able to apply for loans worth up to £5 million, from over 40 lenders, interest free for the first twelve months as the UK Government will be covering the cost of the repayments.

- **All viable small businesses will now be able to access the scheme, not just those unable to secure regular commercial financing.**
- The UK Government is stopping lenders from requesting personal guarantees for loans under £250,000 and is working urgently to speed up the application and approval process.
- You should approach your own lender via their website in the first instance to see if you are eligible for funding, before approaching other lenders.
- The latest information is available at <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/for-businesses-and-advisors/>
- You can confirm whether or not you are eligible by reading this check list: <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CBILS-SME-Eligibility-Check-FINAL.pdf>

If you own a large business that is facing cash flow issues, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government has set up the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) to provide loans of up to £200 million, largely guaranteed by the state.**
- At present, CLBILS loans will provide a government guarantee of 80 per cent on loans of up to £25 million for firms with an annual turnover of between £45 million and £250 million.
- At present, CLBILS loans will provide a government guarantee of 80 per cent on loans of up to £50 million for firms with an annual turnover that's greater than £250 million.
- Loans backed by a guarantee under CLBILS will be offered at commercial rates of interest.
- Further details of the scheme are available at <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-schemes/clbils/> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-coronavirus-large-business-interruption-loan-scheme>.
- **Companies commonly sell short term debt, known as 'commercial paper', to the market.** This is a quick and cost-effective way to raise working capital. The UK Government has worked with the Bank of England to set up a new Corporate Financing Facility, that will allow the Bank to buy short term debt from companies.
- 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 information is available from the Bank of England here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/launch-of-covid-19-corporate-financing-facility-cdff>

If you are concerned about facing insolvency, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government is changing insolvency laws to prevent businesses being forced to file for bankruptcy.** Wrongful trading regulations will be suspended retrospectively to 1 March to ensure that

company directors are not held personally liable for continuing to pay staff and suppliers even if there are fears the company could become insolvent.

- Additionally, businesses going through restructuring will not be able to be put into administration by creditors and will continue to be able to access energy, broadband or raw materials.
- Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulations-temporarily-suspended-to-fast-track-supplies-of-ppe-to-nhs-staff-and-protect-companies-hit-by-covid-19>.
- Scotland's insolvency service, Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB), has suspended sale and eviction from property in ongoing bankruptcy administrations until further notice.
- The evidential requirements for individuals seeking debt relief through bankruptcy have been amended to allow faster access, providing protection from debt enforcement.
- AiB is also reducing the need for face to face contact, allowing access to debt relief to be maintained by accepting electronic signatures on protected trust deeds and other documentation.
- If you have an ongoing debt payment plan but are worried about how you will be able to pay, AiB will not be revoking these programmes.
- The latest information is available from Accountant in Bankruptcy here: <https://www.aib.gov.uk/aib-covid-19-business-continuity>.

If you are concerned about water fees, please read the following information:

- A package worth £60 million has been agreed with water companies to help businesses that are facing difficulties with their water charges.
- Scottish Water has agreed to suspend pre-payment charges for licensed providers for two months, beginning with the April payment. This means water suppliers can now be flexible with their customers.
- The Central Market Agency (CMA) has also agreed to suspend all 'performance standard charges' to allow licensed providers to focus on supporting customers.

If you are a business owner, or are self-employed and you are concerned about your tax bill, you may be eligible for support through HMRC's Time to Pay service:

- HMRC may agree, on a case by case basis, to assist with your business' tax bill through the Time to Pay Service.
- These arrangements are tailor made and based on individual circumstances and liabilities.
- More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-helpline-to-support-businesses-affected-by-coronavirus-covid-19>.

If you operate a research-focussed SME or a high-growth company, please read the following information:

- **The UK Government has launched a £500 million Future Fund to support the most innovative businesses in the country.** You may be able to access grants or loans to ensure your company can continue during the crisis.
- This fund is being delivered alongside the British Business Bank and will be open until September. The fund will provide UK-based companies with between £125,000 and £5 million from the UK Government, with private sector investors at least matching that investment.
- To be eligible, a business must be an unlisted UK registered company that has previously raised at least £250,000 in equity investment from third party investors in the last five years.
- Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/future-fund>
- **The UK Government is working with Innovate UK to provide £750 million of targeted support for the most R&D intensive small and medium size firms.**
- Innovate UK will accelerate up to £200 million of grant and loan payments for its 2,500 existing customers. An extra £550 million will also be made available to increase support for existing customers and £175,000 of support will be offered to around 1,200 firms not currently in receipt of Innovate UK funding.
- Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/billion-pound-support-package-for-innovative-firms-hit-by-coronavirus>.

If your business is in the fishing industry, please read the following information:

- **The ‘seafood resilience fund’ has now closed.** Although this fund has now closed, you may still be eligible for support if you have not yet claimed. Please see below for further information.
- If your vessel is under 12 metres in length, you can check if you are eligible for support at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19---emergency-hardship-support-for-scottish-fishing-industry/>.
- If your vessel is over 12 metres in length, you can check if you are eligible for support at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fishing-industry-support-tranche-2/>.
- Marine Scotland will be writing to all vessels and relevant representative Associations with more details. Queries can be emailed to seafisheriesintervention@gov.scot.
- If your business operates in shellfish growing or trout farming, you can check if you are eligible for support at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/aquaculture-covid-19-hardship-fund-application-form/>.
- If you fish inshore, you may be able to access additional fish quotas around the North Sea and West Coast. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.scot/news/additional-quota-for-inshore-fishing/>.

If you are a small or medium sized business in the housebuilding sector, please read the following information:

- **You may be eligible for a short-term loan of up to £1 million.** You will be eligible if your business is based in Scotland, builds 5 or more homes each year, has a turnover of less than £45 million, was financially viable before the crisis, has liquidity issues and cannot secure funding from other sources.
- You will be able to apply for a loan of between £50,000 and £1 million at a fixed interest rate of 2 per cent per annum. Loans will be offered on flexible repayment terms, with the option for capital and interest payments to be offset for 12 months. The majority of loans are expected to be repaid within 24 months. You will be asked to confirm why existing support routes have not been successful.
- Applications are now open. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-liquidity-support-sme-housebuilders/>.

OTHER INFORMATION FOR BUSINESSES

If your business wishes to help the government tackle COVID-19, please read the following information:

- Businesses, third sector or voluntary organisations who wish to offer support should email the Scottish Government at covid19response@gov.scot with details such as your organisation's key contact and their role, what you are offering and how it might be best applied, how quickly your support could be available and whether you are offering this as a donation or a chargeable service.

If you are unsure whether your business should be closed, please read the following information:

- Guidance and details of which businesses should close and which may remain open is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-business-and-social-distancing-guidance/>.
- Specific guidance for the construction sector is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-construction-sector-guidance/>.

If your business is in the retail or manufacturing sector and planning to reopen in the near future, please read the following information:

- New guidance has been published on what steps your business should take as the country begins to ease lockdown restrictions.
- If you own or operate a retail business, further information is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-retail-sector-guidance/pages/operational-guide-and-checklist-for-retailers/>.
- If you own or operate a business in the manufacturing sector, further information is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-manufacturing-sector-guidance/pages/operational-guide-and-checklist/>.

If you own a restaurant or a pub that serves food, you may be able to operate a hot food takeaway without the usual planning process:

- The Scottish Chief Planner has made clear that planning authorities should not restrict pubs or restaurants operating a takeaway service temporarily. More information is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/corona-virus-covid-19---relaxation-of-enforcement-where-public-houses-and-restaurants-offer-a-takeaway-service-during-the-current-outbreak-chief-planner-letter-march-2020/>.

If you are concerned about competition regulation, please read the following:

- The Competition and Markets Authority have made it clear that at this time they have no intention of taking enforcement action against cooperation between businesses or rationing of products to the extent that this is necessary to protect consumers – for example, by ensuring security of supplies. Further information can be found in their guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma->

[approach-to-business-cooperation-in-response-to-covid-19/cma-approach-to-business-cooperation-in-response-to-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-approach-to-business-cooperation-in-response-to-covid-19).

If you are concerned about off-payroll working rules (IR35), you should read the following information:

- The UK Government announced on 17 March that the reform to the off-payroll working rules, known as IR35, that would have applied for people contracting their services to large or medium-sized organisations outside the public sector, will be delayed for one year from 6 April 2020 until 6 April 2021.

If you are concerned about the impact of the deposit return scheme or tourist tax on your business, you should read the following information:

- The go-live date for the **deposit return scheme** has been delayed until July 2022 to ensure that businesses are not burdened with this policy during a time of crisis.
- The legislation to introduce the **Transient Visitor Levy** ('tourist tax') has been halted.

If you are unsure whether your business can make a claim on business interruption insurance, you should read the following information:

- The UK and Scottish Government's medical advice of 16 March is sufficient to enable those businesses which have an insurance policy that covers both pandemics and government ordered closure to make a claim – provided all other terms and conditions in their policy are met. Businesses should check the terms and conditions of their specific policy carefully and contact their providers if in doubt.
- However, most businesses have not purchased insurance that covers pandemic related losses. This means they cannot claim regardless of whether government orders businesses to close. As such they should make use of the government support available to them.

If you are concerned about filing your accounts with Companies House, please read the following information:

- From 25 March 2020, businesses will be able to apply for a 3 month extension for filing their accounts. Those citing issues around COVI-19 will be immediately granted this extension, thereby avoiding an automatic penalty for late accounts.
- Applications can be made online at https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/extensions?_ga=2.254751115.245877806.1584965312-275548448.1583932966.

If your business trades internationally, please read the following information:

- The UK Government are running expert-led webinars to give practical advice to small and medium-sized businesses that trade overseas. You can register to take part for free at <https://www.events.great.gov.uk/ehome/dit-upcoming-webinars/about/>.

INFORMATION FOR CHARITIES

If you are a third sector organisation under financial pressure, please read the following information:

- The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations regularly update their third sector information hub at <https://scvo.org.uk/support/coronavirus>.
- The ‘Wellbeing Fund’ which was set up to support charities has now closed to applications.
- The Scottish Government have also pledged a ‘Third Sector Resilience Fund’ to help organisations with cash flow problems. Interested charities will need to complete an eligibility tracker to determine their suitability for the scheme. Based on the answers provided, interested applicants will be directed to the correct application form depending on their needs. Further information is available at <https://scvo.org/support/coronavirus/funding/for-organisations/third-sector-resilience-fund/guidance-for-applicants>.
- If your charity occupies a property that is in receipt of any charitable or sports rate relief you can now apply to the Small Business Grant Scheme. You will be able to claim £10,000 on the first eligible property and £7,500 on any additional eligible properties. You should be able apply via your local authority. You can find their contact details at <https://www.mygov.scot/find-your-local-council/>.

If your charity works overseas, please read the following information:

- The next UK Aid Direct funding round is open to organisations with an annual income of under £10 million. Those helping to tackle coronavirus or its impact on some of the world’s poorest people will be given priority for the grants, totalling £30 million. Further information is available at ukaidirect.org.
- If you are a small UK charity or non-profit organisation you may be eligible for a grant of up to £50,000 from the Small Charities Challenge Fund (SCCF). Further information is available at: <https://www.ukaidirect.org/apply/sccf/>.

If your charity wishes to help the government tackle COVID-19, please read the following information:

- Businesses, third sector or voluntary organisations who wish to offer support should email the Scottish Government at covid19response@gov.scot with details such as your organisation’s key contact and their role, what you are offering and how it might be best applied, how quickly your support could be available and whether you are offering this as a donation or a chargeable service.