

Support for business



Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Businesses and Employers Bulletin

26 March 2020

This bulletin provides information for employers and businesses on Coronavirus (COVID-19). All guidance, information and announcements can be found at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Organisations should pay particular attention to the [guidance for employees, employers and businesses](#) which is being updated regularly with the latest advice.

The UK Government is supporting businesses and their employees through a package of measures during this period of unprecedented disruption. The [Business Support website](#) helps businesses find the right support, advice and information to help with the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the [support measures that are available](#). This website will continue to be updated as information becomes available. Some aspects of business support are devolved. Specific information for businesses and employers in [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#), and [Wales](#) is available.

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Business Closures and Stay at Home FAQs

To reduce social contact and help stop the spread of coronavirus, the UK Government has ordered certain businesses and venues to close. A list of these businesses can be found [here](#). With the exception of these organisations, the UK Government has not required any other businesses to close – it is important for business to carry on.

Where businesses continue to open, employers should take every possible step to facilitate their employees working from home. Certain jobs require people to travel to their place of work – for instance if they operate machinery, work in construction or manufacturing, or are delivering front line services. If your employees cannot work from home then they can still travel to work, provided they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

Employers who have people in their offices or onsite should ensure that employees are able to follow Public Health England guidelines including, where possible, maintaining a 2 metre distance from others, and washing their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available). Where that is not possible, and there are many types of job where that will be challenging, the PHE/Chief Medical Officer Advice is that it is okay to come to work.

A list of frequently asked questions alongside the appropriate guidance can be found [here](#).

Further Guidelines Regarding the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

The Chancellor had announced a generous package of financial support to small and large businesses across the UK which included the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS). We have sought to make this as easy as possible and are therefore making further clarification on the subject of personal guarantees.

Whether a lender requires a personal guarantee for a loan supported by the (CBILS) is at the discretion of the lender, who is accredited by the British Business Bank. However, a lender is not allowed to take a personal guarantee against a borrower's principal residence under the scheme. So even if a personal guarantee is required under the lender's credit policy, it cannot be taken against the borrower's home.

Some major lenders have announced that they are not going to require personal guarantees on loans under CBILS the scheme (of any size).

If businesses are worried about the specific terms of finance facilities available under this scheme, they should speak to their usual lender. More information can be found [here](#).

New Updates and Guidance

HMRC's tax helpline is changing

HMRC has set up a phone helpline to support businesses and self-employed people concerned about not being able to pay their tax due to coronavirus. The tax helpline number is changing. You can now call them on 08000 241222. Opening hours are from 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday. Calls to the old helpline number will be redirected automatically.

Business Rates Expanded Retail Discount

Guidance on the operation of expanded retail discount 2020 to 2021 [has been updated](#) so that certain properties previously excluded from the relief, but that have been forced to close as a result of coronavirus restrictions, will now be eligible for the relief. Many high street businesses that have closed due to Covid-19 restrictions will now be exempt from business rates including retail, leisure, and hospitality properties, estate agents, lettings agencies and bingo halls.

Vehicle owners to be granted MOT exemption in battle against coronavirus

Temporary exemption will enable vital services to continue, frontline workers to get to work, and people to get essential food and medicine. Further information can be found [here](#).

Producing hand sanitiser and gel for coronavirus (COVID-19)

HMRC have produced guidance on temporary changes to the use and supply of denatured alcohol and duty-free spirits, to help businesses who produce hand sanitiser and gel. All guidance on the production and supply of hand sanitiser can be found [here](#).

Government launches Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp

The UK Government has launched a GOV.UK Coronavirus Information service on WhatsApp. The new free to use service aims to provide official, trustworthy and timely information and advice. To use the free GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp, simply add 07860 064422 in your phone contacts and then

message the word 'hi' in a WhatsApp message to get started. Further information can be found [here](#).

Hotel accommodation to support key workers and vulnerable people

Guidance has been updated to clarify the [exemption for hotels, hostels, and B&Bs to open](#) so they can offer accommodation to key workers and support rough sleepers to keep them off the streets and in suitable accommodation. Further guidance can be found [here](#).

MHRA guidance on coronavirus

Updates have been made to [new guidance](#) on exemptions from Devices regulations during the outbreak.

Requests for Business Intelligence and Assistance

Call for rapid sanitising technology for ambulances

Do you have an innovative or novel approach to get ambulances cleaner quicker to help combat Coronavirus? The Defence and Security Accelerator has launched a new Innovation Focus Area as part of its [Open Call for Innovation](#) seeking industry's help to identify rapid sanitising technology solutions that can be demonstrated in a live trial on an ambulance. [More information is available here](#).

Help us reach businesses to urgently raise awareness of available support

We need your help to reach businesses across the UK to urgently raise awareness of the new coronavirus government Business Support campaign and the assistance available. [A new toolkit](#) includes content and messaging for you to share on your social media, websites, internal channels and newsletters to amplify campaign messages. The toolkit will help ensure all businesses have the best and most up to date information on the support that is available to them in a fast-moving situation.

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