

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Businesses and Employers Bulletin – 24 September 2020

This bulletin is issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and provides the latest information for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19). All coronavirus business support information can be found at [gov.uk/business-support](https://www.gov.uk/business-support)

- [Chancellor outlines Winter Economy Plan](#)
- [Restrictions on businesses and venues in England](#)
- [Working from home and working safely guidance](#)
- [New and Updated Guidance](#)

Chancellor outlines Winter Economy Plan

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak has [outlined additional government support](#) to provide certainty to businesses and workers impacted by coronavirus across the UK.

Job support scheme

- A new [Job Support Scheme](#) will be introduced from 1 November to protect viable jobs in businesses who are facing lower demand over the winter months due to coronavirus. Under the scheme, which will run for six months, the government will contribute towards the wages of employees who are working fewer than normal hours due to decreased demand.
- Employers will continue to pay the wages of staff for the hours they work - but for the hours not worked, the government and the employer will each pay one third of their equivalent salary. In order to support only viable jobs, employees must be working at least 33% of their usual hours. The level of grant will be calculated based on employee's usual salary, capped at £697.92 per month. The Job Support Scheme will be open to businesses across the UK even if they have not previously used the furlough scheme, with further guidance being published in due course.

Self-employment income support scheme

- The Government is continuing its support for millions of self-employed individuals by [extending the Self Employment Income Support Scheme](#) Grant (SEISS). An initial taxable grant will be provided to those who are currently eligible for SEISS and are continuing to actively trade but face reduced demand due to coronavirus. The initial lump sum will cover three months' worth of profits for the period from November to the end of January next year. This is worth 20% of average monthly profits, up to a total of £1,875. An additional second grant, which may be adjusted to respond to changing circumstances, will be available for self-employed individuals to cover the period from February 2021 to the end of April.

Tax cuts and deferrals

- The temporary 15% VAT cut for the tourism and hospitality sectors will be extended to the end of March next year. In addition, business who deferred their VAT bills will be given more breathing space through the New Payment Scheme, which gives them the option to pay back in smaller instalments. Self-assessment taxpayers will be able to benefit from a separate additional 12-month extension from HMRC on the "Time to Pay" self-service facility, meaning payments deferred from July 2020, and those due in January 2021, will now not need to be paid until January 2022.

Giving businesses flexibility to pay back loans

- Businesses who took out a Bounce Back Loan will be given the option to repay their loan over a period of up to ten years through a new Pay as You Grow flexible

repayment system. Interest-only periods of up to six months and payment holidays will also be available to businesses.

- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme lenders will be given the ability to extend the length of loans from a maximum of six years to ten years if it will help businesses to repay the loan.
- The government is extending four temporary loan schemes to 30 November 2020 for new applications: As a result, more businesses will now be able to benefit from the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme and the Future Fund.

Restrictions on businesses and venues in England

From 24 September, businesses selling food or drink (including cafes, bars, pubs and restaurants), **social clubs, casinos, bowling alleys, amusement arcades** (and other indoor leisure centres or facilities), **funfairs, theme parks, and adventure parks and activities, and bingo halls, must be closed between 10pm and 5am.** This will include take-aways, but delivery and drive-thru services can continue after 10pm.

In both indoor and outdoor licensed premises, food and drink must be ordered from, and served at, a table. Licensed and unlicensed businesses must also take all reasonable steps to ensure that the customer remains seated whilst consuming the food or drink on the premises. Cinemas, theatres and concert halls can continue beyond 10pm, but only if the performance started before 10pm, and food and drink cannot be served after 10pm.

From 28 September, businesses and organisations will face stricter rules to make their premises COVID-19 secure

- A wider range of leisure and entertainment venues, services provided in community centres, and close contact services will be subject to COVID-19 Secure requirements in law and fines of £1000, and rising up to £10,000 for repeated breaches.
- Employers must not knowingly require or encourage someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work.
- Businesses must remind people to wear face coverings [where mandated](#).

[This guidance](#) applies to England, except for where local restrictions apply.

Working from home and working safely guidance

- **To help contain the virus, office workers who can work effectively from home should do so over the winter.** Where an employer, in consultation with their employee, judges an employee can carry out their normal duties from home they should do so. Public sector employees working in essential services, including education settings, should continue to go into work where necessary. Anyone else who cannot work from home should go to their place of work. [More here](#).
- **Business conferences, exhibitions and large sporting events in England will not be able to reopen from 1 October** as previously planned.
- **Guidance for early years and childcare providers** has been [updated](#) with new content in a number of areas.
- **Guidance covering personal trainers and coaching** has been [updated](#).
- **Guidance for restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services** has been [updated](#) with information on penalties for breaching the rules and guidance on Test and Trace data and display of NHS QR codes.
- **Safer transport guidance for operators** has been [updated](#) with changes to guidance on working from home; on wearing face coverings in retail and hospitality venues

located within transport hubs; and on the requirement for passengers to wear face coverings in taxis and private hire vehicles.

New and Updated Guidance

NEW Guidance

Measures from the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act extended to relieve pressure on businesses dealing with coronavirus: [Measures](#) put in place to protect businesses from insolvency will be extended to continue giving them much-needed breathing space during the coronavirus.

NHS COVID-19 app launched across England and Wales: The [NHS COVID-19 app](#) has launched to help control COVID-19 transmission alongside national and local contact tracing. From today certain businesses in England are required by law to display [NHS Test and Trace QR codes](#) so customers with the NHS COVID-19 app can use them to check-in. QR codes will help businesses meet their legal requirement to log contact details and allow public health leads to send alerts based on whether people have checked in at venues.

New package to support and enforce self-isolation in England: A new [package](#) has been announced to support and enforce self-isolation, including a payment of £500 for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result. New fines for those breaching self-isolation rules will start at £1,000 but could increase to up to £10,000 for repeat offences and for the most egregious breaches, including for those preventing others from self-isolating.

HM Land Registry – New coronavirus practice guide: A new [Practice guide 80: useful information for conveyancers](#) provides information about changes made to facilitate conveyancing and registration before and during the coronavirus outbreak.

Consultation: National Insurance Contributions holiday for employers that hire former members of the armed forces: The government is seeking views from employers of veterans, software providers and accountants on the National Insurance contribution holiday for veterans announced at Spring Budget 2020. This relief will be available to employers of veterans from April 2021. Find out more and respond [here](#) before 5 October.

Other useful links

Some aspects of business support are devolved. Specific information for businesses and employers in [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) is available. In England, [Growth Hubs](#) can advise on local and UK Government business support. You can also find helpful business case studies and other useful information on the [Coronavirus Business Support Blog](#).