



Coronavirus – summary and information

Summary

- On 10th May, the Prime Minister encouraged those who could not work from home to return to work if it was safe to do so. The government advised workers to continue to avoid public transport where possible and to travel by car, or cycle or walk to work.
- **Those who can work from home should continue to do so**
- **‘Covid-19 Secure’ Guidelines have been published to help employers keep workplaces safe when staff return to work**
- A Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Bounce Back Loan Scheme for SMEs and a Self-employed Income Support Scheme are now open
- Many small businesses can benefit from business rates relief and grants, especially those in the retail, leisure or hospitality sectors. A further discretionary fund to help those who do not pay rates directly has been announced
- A business support finder tool to help you identify what you might be eligible for is here: <https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder>
- The Government has asked all British travellers to return home, and advised against all non-essential travel
- A quarantine period for travellers arriving in the UK has been announced, but is not yet in place
- Much of the information provided in this document can also be found on the government’s business support website: <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/>
- A recording of the North East England Chamber of Commerce’s update webinar (8 Apr) is [available here](#). Sign up for the [next update on Weds 13 May at 3pm here](#)

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1 Isolation, social distancing and mental wellbeing advice and guidance

The Government has asked that all those who can work at home to do so. Those who are unable to work from home are now encouraged to return to work if safe to do so. However, those travelling for work are encouraged to avoid public transport and to travel by car, cycle or walk.

'Covid-19 Secure' Guidelines have been published, with details of how to ensure workplaces are safe for staff to return to work, where they are allowed to do so. These guidelines are detailed later in this document.

Please be aware, there is now different advice in place between England and the devolved nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Please check local guidance where working across internal borders.

1.1 Isolation

The current advice is for individuals who have either a high temperature or a new, continuous cough to stay at home for 7 days.

Additionally, if you live with other people, you should all stay at home for a period of 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms.

There is specific advice on the length of individual and household isolation periods, and on how and when to end them from [Public Health England here](#).

The full advice is available from the [NHS](#) and from [Public Health England](#).

1.2 Testing

The government has expanded testing to include:

- Everyone in England aged over 65 with coronavirus symptoms, and those who live with them
- Symptomatic workers unable to work from home
- Essential workers and those who live with them if either are showing symptoms. The purpose of this is to allow those with a negative result to return to work quickly.

They are also rolling out testing for asymptomatic NHS and social care staff and care home residents.

Individuals are able to apply for and book a test themselves, or their employer can do so on their behalf. Essential workers continue to be prioritised. A list of essential workers included in this scheme, as well as details of how to [apply for a test are here](#).

Mobile testing sites are being set up, including across the North East, and are bookable through the same website – the mobile sites will appear as a test location option for the dates they are set up. They are usually in place for 2-3 days. There are also a limited number of home testing kits available and you are able to state a preference for this. A little bit more information is available in a PDF on the North East England Chamber of Commerce's website neechamber.co.uk/covid-19 – this information looks specifically at Co Durham and Darlington, but gives an indication of the national testing plan and answers a few FAQs.

Once you have booked you will be given a time to go to the testing site and a QR Code, which must be brought with you to the appointment and will significantly reduce the waiting time. On average you will likely be at the test site for an hour and asked to remain in your vehicle.

Testing is in extremely high demand, and so slots are booking up extremely quickly and you may find the website closed daily as limits are reached. The government has promised expanded testing capability.

1.3 Social Distancing

Social distancing and lockdown measures for individuals are beginning to be eased, with additional exercise and outdoor activity now allowed, whilst maintaining social distancing. The changes announced are here.

The updated guidance is available here.

The Government has asked that everyone stay at home, apart from:

- for work, where you cannot work from home
- going to shops that are permitted to be open – to get things like food and medicine, and to collect goods ordered online or on the phone
- to exercise or spend time outdoors for recreation
- any medical need, to donate blood, avoid injury or illness, escape risk of harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person

There is additional guidance on what to do if you think someone in your household has COVID-19, this is available here.

A list of examples of what you can now do under eased restrictions is here. The Government has issued a Coronavirus outbreak FAQ document, answering common questions about when to leave the house and how to observe social distancing measures.

There is sector-by-sector guidance on social distancing in the workplace available here. This can be viewed in addition to the 'Covid-19 Secure' Guidelines detailed later in this document.

Schools

Schools will be closed from Friday 20 March. There has been an indication that schools will reopen for some pupils from 1st June. The only exceptions to the current closure are the children of key workers and those most vulnerable pupils. Guidance is available on which children are considered vulnerable here, and on which professions count as key workers here.

All non-essential shops and community spaces, other than those outdoor spaces listed, should remain closed

The Government has issued updated guidance here.

1.4 Mental Wellbeing

This is a time of great concern for everyone, with the potential for long periods of self-isolation to be particularly difficult. As a result, Public Health England is also signposting to the NHS's Every Mind Matters website which has resources to help improve mental wellbeing and deal with issues like stress and anxiety.

There is some additional advice [on mental health and wellbeing here](#).

2 Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

THIS SCHEME IS NOW OPEN, WITH ALL EMPLOYEES ON PAYROLL ON 19 MARCH 2020 ELIGIBLE – [GO HERE TO CLAIM](#)

AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF THIS SCHEME IS EXPECTED TODAY (12 MAY)

Under this scheme, businesses will be able to claim a grant for 80% of wage costs of employees who are placed on furlough – paid leave – rather than made redundant.

Employers are able to claim up to a cap of £2,500 towards wages, plus their associated National Insurance Contributions and the minimum level of automatic employer pension contribution.

The scheme is open to any UK organisations with employees, including businesses, charities, recruitment agencies paying agency workers through PAYE and public authorities.

Employees must have been on your payroll on 19 March 2020, but can be full-time, part-time, or on agency or flexible/zero-hour contracts. For new starters, HMRC must have been notified by an RTI submission on or before 19 March. It also covers those who have been made redundant since 28 February 2020, if they are rehired by their employer then furloughed.

It does not cover employees put on reduced hours or reduced pay.

Employees must be furloughed for a minimum of 3 weeks, up to a current maximum of 3 months (although this maybe extended).

The 80% is based on the employee's actual salary before tax, not including fees, commission or bonuses. Employees are then taxed as normal on the 80%.

The level is set based on the higher of the same month's earnings from the previous year, or an average of monthly earnings from the 2019/20 tax year. For those employed for less than a year, take the average of their monthly earnings since they started work.

[FULL GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS IS AVAILABLE HERE](#)

[FULL GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES IS AVAILABLE HERE](#)

Making an Application

- [A step-by-step guide can be found here](#)
- [Guidance on working out 80% of your employees' wages \(including worked examples\) is here](#)
- **[GO HERE TO CLAIM](#)**

You will need to be registered for [PAYE Online](#) to make a claim.

Once you have submitted a claim, you will be paid in six working days

Applications must be made in one sitting and uncompleted applications cannot be saved and returned to – prepare everything using the step-by-step guide and calculate wages beforehand, as the portal times out after 30 minutes of inactivity.

[You must retain all records and calculations in case you are contacted by HMRC.](#)

The Future of the Job Retention Scheme

On 12 May, the Chancellor announced that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme would be extended until the end of October.

The scheme would be unchanged until the end of July – with businesses receiving a grant of 80% of a furloughed worker's pay up to £2,500 a month.

From August until October, the payment received by furloughed workers will remain the same, but with the government contribution will fall over time. This means businesses will be required to contribute to make up the difference.

The government is also adding extra flexibility to the scheme, allowing those who are currently making use of the scheme to bring workers back part time from August.

The full details of future government contributions and part-time flexibility aren't yet known, but are expected by the end of May.

3 Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)

THESE LOAN SCHEMES ARE NOW AVAILABLE

This loan scheme is designed to help businesses which are experiencing cashflow disruption as a result of reduced or deferred income.

Key details are:

- Loans of up to £5m repayable over periods of up to 6 years
- 80% guarantee from government – the borrower remains liable, but the guarantee can help a ‘no’ decision from the lender become a ‘yes’
- Interest and fees paid by the government for the first 12 months
- This scheme is now available to all viable small businesses, not just those who were unable to secure regular commercial financing
- A personal guarantee is not required to secure ending below £250,000

Eligible businesses will:

- Be UK-based and have a turnover of no more than £45m
- Have a borrowing proposal considered viable by the lender – i.e. be able to show the business was viable long term prior to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic

[DETAILS OF HOW TO APPLY ARE HERE; AN FAQ DOCUMENT IS HERE;](#)

[A QUICK ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST IS HERE; A LIST OF ACCREDITED LENDERS IS HERE](#)

[THE FULL GUIDANCE FROM THE BRITISH BUSINESS BANK IS AVAILABLE HERE](#)

The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme

- **This is due to open on Monday 20 April**
- Businesses with a turnover of more than £45m will be able to apply for up to £25m of finance
- Those with turnover of more than £250m will be able to apply for up to £50m

[INITIAL DETAILS OF THIS SCHEME FROM THE BRITISH BUSINESS BANK ARE HERE](#)

This scheme was updated on Fri 3 April after low initial success rate for applications, the Chancellor’s statement on changes made to speed up the process and remove the need for personal guarantees for smaller loans, as well as a pledge to speak to banks to improve outcomes [is here](#).

4 Coronavirus Bounce Back Loan scheme

THIS SCHEME IS NOW OPEN WITH APPLICATIONS VIA INDIVIDUAL LENDERS

This scheme was announced by the Chancellor on 27 April, having come under pressure over the slow delivery of loans to the smallest businesses through the CBILS.

The loans are available to UK-based businesses impacted by coronavirus which were not an 'undertaking in difficulty' on 31 December 2019.

Initial details published so far are:

- Loans of up to £50,000 (or 25% of turnover) with no fees, interest of repayments due in the first 12 months
- Loan terms of up to 6 years
- No forward-looking tests of viability
- No complex eligibility criteria, with a simple online application process
- Payment within 24 hours, or in a 'matter of days'
- 100% government guarantee
- Sole traders and those who are members of small partnerships are eligible, but with some personal assets potentially at risk
- An interest rate cap of 2.5% has been set by the Chancellor
- The scheme will initially remain open until 4 November 2020

[Overview information is online here.](#)

[An overview from the British Business Bank is here](#)

[Guidance on how to apply is here](#)

[An FAQ, including details of eligibility, repayment terms and the differences between this and the CBILS, is here](#)

5 Coronavirus Self-employment Income Support Scheme

HMRC HAVE BEGUN CONTACTING THOSE THEY BELIEVE ARE EIGIBLE FOR THIS SCHEME

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A DATE FROM 13 MAY ON WHICH TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION

YOU SHOULD THEN RECEIVE PAYMENT BY 25 MAY

This scheme offers a taxable grant of 80% of trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 per month for the months of March, April and May. It will be paid in a single instalment to the end of May, or six working days after you complete your application

To be eligible, you must:

- Have submitted a self-assessment tax return for 2018-19 (the deadline for late filing was 23 Apr)
- Have traded in 2019-20 tax year, be currently trading, or have been were it not for COVID-19, plan to continue trading and have lost profits due to COVID-19
- Earn the majority of your income through self-employment, and have trading profits of less than £50,000. [Guidance on how trading profits will be calculated is here.](#)

HMRC have delivered this scheme quicker than they expected, the anticipate delivery timeline of early June has been brought forward to the last week of May.

[FULL GUIDANCE ON THE SCHEME IS AVAILABLE HERE](#) – this includes details of what you'll need when you make your claim

[AN ELIGIBILITY CHECKER IS HERE](#) – to use this you'll need your Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) number and your National Insurance number. If you are not currently listed as eligible, you can ask HMRC to review your case.

You may continue to work and still claim under this scheme, but for those who are not able to work during this period, the Government continues to point them towards Universal Credit in the meantime.

[You can make your claim here.](#)

6 Full list of support measures and general government guidance for employers and employees

The full details of these schemes are available on the Government's business support website, or via the Gov.uk guidance pages:

- [Business Support website](#)
- [Guidance on support for business](#)
- [Guidance for employers and businesses](#)
- [Guidance for employees](#)

In some cases, additional details are available via links in the status column of the table.

Guidance on social distancing in the workplace for those unable to work from home is here.

[A business support finder tool, to help you identify what your business might be eligible for is here.](#)

6.1 Measures Announced since 20 March 2020

Measure	Date Announced / Updated	Status
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - Government grants to cover 80% of the salary of retained workers up to a total of £2,500 a month	20 March Online portal due to open by 20 April	All businesses will be eligible for these grants, but only workers officially designated as 'furloughed' will be covered – for a period of at least three months, with the option of backdating to 1 Mar. No system is currently in place to reimburse businesses, but HMRC are working urgently on it. Government are expecting this to be in place for the end of April.
Deferring VAT payments for next quarter to the end of the financial year	20 March (NB/ Import VAT is being decided on a case by case basis, please contact HMRC)	The deferral will apply from 20 March until 30 June 2020, and will be automatically applied meaning no payment will be due until the end of the tax year. NB IF YOU PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT YOU SHOULD CANCEL THIS NOW TO AVOID MONEY BEING COLLECTED
Commercial Tenants protected from eviction if they are unable to pay their rent	23 March	Similar to the protection for individual renters, no business will be forced out of their premises for a missed rent payment in the

		next three months. Statement here.
Businesses will be given a 3-month extension period to file their accounts	25 March	Companies citing the impact of COVID-19 will be given a three month extension to file their accounts, with no penalties. They must apply for this using a process which should take 15 minutes. The ministerial statement is here.
CHARITY SUPPORT - £750m of additional funding to charities on the frontline of dealing with the impact of the virus	8 April	Aimed at hospices, St Johns Ambulance, victims charities, vulnerable children charities and Citizens Advice. Delivered directly through Gov, through Lottery funding and through BBC appeal. Announcement here.
FUTURE FUND – match-funded government loans to innovative businesses	20 April Due to launch in May	These scheme aims to help those who might not be eligible for the CBILS as they rely on equity investment. Loans range from £250,000 to £5m, providing you can attract match funding from third party investment. Initial details here.
Temporary ban on the use of statutory demands and winding up petitions to protect from aggressive rent collection	27 April	Initial details are here. The government is encouraging those able to pay their rent to do so, but moved to protect those who can't by banning statutory demands (1 Mar-30 Jun) and winding up petitions (27 Apr – 30 Jun).
Bounce Back Loans – of £2-£50,000 for SMEs	27 April (Launch 4 May)	Initial details are here. 100% government guaranteed loans for SMEs, with a simplified application process and no fees, interest or repayments in the first 12 months.
INDIVIDUAL MEASURE – Increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit allowances by £1,000 a year	20 March	No further details
INDIVIDUAL MEASURE – increases to housing	20 March	The Local Housing Allowance will now cover at

benefit and Universal Credit to support renters		least 30% of market rents. No further details.
SELF-EMPLOYED MEASURE – allow self-employed people to access Universal Credit in full	20 March	No further details. However, this is intended to allow self-employed people to access support at the same rate as Statutory Sick Pay for employees.
SELF-EMPLOYED MEASURE – Income Tax payments due next quarter deferred until January 2021	20 March	This should be applied automatically and no tax payment need be made, you will have until the end of January 2021 to pay any liabilities. NB IF YOU PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT YOU SHOULD CANCEL THIS NOW TO AVOID MONEY BEING COLLECTED
SELF-EMPLOYED MEASURE – 80% grants for trading profits for the next three months	26 March	A grant for 80% of three months of average trading profits, available in one bulk instalment from June.

6.2 Measures Announced 11-19 March 2020

Measure	Date Announced / Updated	Status
Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) relief for SMEs – allowing SSP to be reclaimed for every employee off work due to COVID-19	11 March	No repayment mechanism is currently in place, government will work with employers over the coming months to set up the repayment mechanism ‘as soon as possible’
Business Rates Relief for retail, leisure and hospitality sectors – 100% discount for 2020/21 tax year for those with a rateable value under £51,000.	11 March	Local Authorities are responsible for business rates, and so those eligible should automatically receive a new bill. Any queries should be directed to your Local Authority – the guidance to them has been issued and is available here . (NB/ this contains a list of the types of businesses considered eligible and those not eligible for the relief) Guidance for businesses is here .
£10,000 grant for those eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rates Relief (NB/ this	11 March (updated 17 March) 2 May – a further discretionary fund for LAs to	This will be distributed by Local Authorities to those already eligible for those forms of relief. On 17 March, the Chancellor announced this

was initially a £3,000 grant, increased on 17 March)	help businesses who do not pay rates directly, such as those in managed offices, <u>has been announced</u> . Further details to follow.	grant would be increased to £10,000. Details and funding for this scheme will be available from early April. <u>Some further details are available here.</u>
Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme – government backed loans with 80% guarantee up to a value of £5m. Initially £1.2m loans and a £1bn package, but now £330bn.	11 March (updated 20 March, 3 Apr) SCHEME NOW AVAILABLE (Large Business version for £45-500m turnover due to open on 20 April)	This scheme is due to open w/c 23 Mar and will be administered by the British Business Bank. Initial <u>eligibility criteria are available here</u> . On 17 March, an increase in the size of the loans available was announced, up to a value of £5m. On 20 March the Chancellor announced these loans would be interest free for the first 12 months.
COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility (Very large businesses only)	17 March SCHEME NOW AVAILABLE	This scheme is aimed at the very biggest firms in the country, and will allow the BoE to take direct action to support them. <u>Some additional details are available on the BoE website</u> , and the scheme is due to start w/c 23 Mar
HMRC Time to Pay – additional support and for businesses with tax liabilities.	11 March	Dedicated helpline (0800 0159 559) with support offered on a case by case basis.
Business Rates holiday to all retail, leisure and hospitality businesses – meaning they will not be required to pay business rates during 2020/21	17 March	No further details announced. Expectation that it will be managed by Local Authorities and that eligible businesses will receive a new bill.
£25,000 grant to retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with rateable value under £51,000	17 March	Businesses who are eligible for the business rates holiday announced on 11 March will also be eligible for this. <u>Some further details are available here.</u>
INDIVIDUAL MEASURE – mortgage lenders will offer a 3 month mortgage holiday to those in financial difficulty due to Coronavirus	17 March (extended 18 March)	No further details, although on 18 March the Government extended this to cover Buy-to-Let mortgages in an effort to reduce the pressure on the rental sector

INDIVIDUAL MEASURE – protection of energy supply	19 March	The Government has agreed with all UK domestic suppliers to protect the energy supplies of the most vulnerable customers, including both pay as you go and prepayment services – initial details are here
INDIVIDUAL MEASURE – ban on evictions for the next three months to protect renters in both the social and private sector	18 March	No new eviction proceedings can take place over the next three months, and the Government has encouraged landlords to work with tenants who are unable to pay their rent to find a solution – initial details here
NON-GOVERNMENTAL MEASURE – Lloyds and NatWest have made additional lending available	10 March	Lloyds - £2bn to businesses of up to £25m turnover. NatWest - £5bn additional Working Capital Support.

6.3 OFFICIAL Guidance for Employers and Employees

Employers and Businesses

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Public Health England has issued guidance to employers.

This covers topics including:

- How to help prevent the spread of COVID-19
- What to do if someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in a workplace setting
- Advice for certification of absence from work
- Encouraging working from home and relevant social distancing measures
- What to do if a member of staff needs time off to look after someone, including dependent children after the closure of schools

THE GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS AND BUSINESSES IS AVAILABLE HERE

/// All non-essential shops should now be closed – full details on that [are available here](#), and a [list of closures and any exceptions is here](#). ///

Guidance on social distancing in the workplace for those businesses which remain open is here.

Employees

BEIS and PHE have also issued guidance specifically for employees.

This covers topics including:

- Staying at home
- Guidance on the law around home working

- Guidance around sick pay entitlement
- Furloughed workers
- Claiming benefits, accessing Universal Credit when self-employed and accessing rent support

[THIS GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES IS AVAILABLE HERE](#)

6.4 OFFICIAL Guidance on support for businesses

A substantial package of measures has been announced on 11, 17 and 20 March. Varying degrees of detail are available on these schemes, although some are due to be available as of 23 March and others will be automatically applied. Official published guidance covers:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme of 80% grants to cover pay for furloughed workers
- Deferred VAT and Income Tax for next quarter (**DDs MUST BE CANCELLED!**)
- Statutory sick pay relief for SMEs
- Business Rate Relief for small businesses
- The £10,000 small business grant
- The business rates holiday for all retail, leisure and hospitality businesses and £25,000 grant for smaller retail, leisure and hospitality businesses
- HMRC's Time to Pay scheme
- The Bank of England's Corporate Finance Facility for larger firms
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

[THIS GUIDANCE ON SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IS AVAILABLE HERE](#)

A Business Support website, [with details on many of the measures available is here.](#)

6.5 OFFICIAL Guidance on closure of educational settings

This includes details of the school closures beginning at the end of the school day on Friday 20 March.

It covers:

- Background to the closure and age groups included
- The cancellation of the upcoming exam period
- Vulnerable children
- Critical workers

[THIS GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE HERE](#)

Also available are [further details of which professions are considered key workers](#), and advice to key workers to contact their local council if their child's school is closed so they can be redirected to the nearest open one.

For anyone who is now homeschooling their children, there is a list of [online educational resources split by topic and age range here.](#)

6.6 Guidance on apprenticeships for employers and training providers

Many apprenticeships will have been disrupted during this period, either through temporary closure of training providers, or disruption experienced by employers.

The guidance covers:

- Relaxed rules around breaks in learning, including that employers and training providers can now request them, in addition to apprentices
- The impact on payments to training providers
- What happens if an apprentice is furloughed or made redundant
- An FAQ covering training, levy and assessment questions

THIS GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE HERE

7 Business Rates and Local Authority / Local Enterprise Partnership sources of information

LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE BEGUN TAKING ACTION ON BUSINESS RATES RELIEF

Many local authorities have been in touch with those businesses in their areas which are eligible for either of the grants available to small businesses or for the business rates holiday. In some cases, payment of what is owed will be automatic, but in other cases you may be required to get in touch to either register for the support or to provide additional details.

THE LATEST GUIDANCE FOR BUSINESSES ON THIS SCHEME IS HERE

If you are unsure whether you are eligible, the government has issued guidance to Local Authorities on which businesses are eligible for the expanded Business Rates Retail Discount – i.e. which businesses fall within the category of retail, leisure and hospitality.

All local authorities, as well as the Local Enterprise Partnerships have details of their business rates and general business support programmes on their websites. Please check via the links below what is required or available in your area:

Area	Business Support Pages
North East LEP	Growth Hub Coronavirus Toolkit
Northumberland	Business Support Pages
Newcastle	Business Support Pages
North Tyneside	North Tyneside Business Forum Support Pages
Gateshead	Business Support Pages
South Tyneside	Business Support Pages
Sunderland	Business Support Pages
Co Durham	Guidance for Businesses (Business Durham) Support for Businesses (Durham CC)
Tees Valley LEP	LEP Latest Information Pages support@teesvalley-ca.gov.uk or 24/7 phone line: 01642 662 777
Darlington	Business Support Pages
Hartlepool	Support for Businesses Pages
Stockton	Business Rates Support Pages
Middlesbrough	Business Support Pages
Redcar & Cleveland	Business Support Pages
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	Northumbria PCC Coronavirus Response Fund (Community Organisations)
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	Community Foundation Coronavirus Response and Recovery Fund (Community Organisations)
National	Arts Council emergency funding (Cultural Organisations)

2 May Update – a significant gap in this support has been those small businesses which do not pay rates directly and so haven't been eligible for these grants.

The Government has announced a discretionary fund to allow Local Authorities to support those who have missed out. [Initial details are here](#), further information will follow.

8 International update

//// The Government has asked all British travellers to return to the UK now. ////

Customs Declarations & Export Documentation

In the 'delay' phase most documentation that requires certification and issuance by the North East England Chamber of Commerce can be done so remotely through their approved electronic platforms.

Export documentations support is available during usual business hours via phone or email, and can be reached on ecert@neechamber.co.uk.

OFFICIAL Guidance for UK Business

The Department for International Trade has issued guidance for global trades, which covers

- Supply Chain Disruption
- Global cashflow support
- Export Funding for disruption

GUIDANCE FOR GLOBAL TRADE IS AVAILABLE HERE.

Travel

The Foreign Secretary has advised ALL BRITISH TRAVELLERS TO RETURN TO THE UK NOW. The full statement is here.

For those who cannot return to the UK, perhaps due to restrictions in the country they are in, there is further guidance here.

Further advice on travel, returning home, visas and foreign quarantine rules is available here.

There are some emergency loans available for booking return travel on commercial flights, where these are still available. Details are here.

A quarantine period for those arriving into the UK is expected to come into force soon, however travel from Ireland and France will not be included in these measures.

Visas

Some additional allowances have been made for certain types of visa, giving additional leeway for those whose leave is due to expire or whose visa has specific work-related criteria.

Please check here for further details.

An FAQ from the North East England Chamber of Commerce on Global issues and COVID-19 is here.

9 Covid-19 Secure Guidelines

A set of guidelines have been published to enable businesses to prepare for the safe return of staff to the workplace.

The guidelines are available in full here.

There are a number of universal points across all workplaces, these are:

- 1) **Work from home where you can**
- 2) **Carry out a COVID-19 Risk Assessment, in consultation with workers or trade unions**
- 3) **Maintain 2 metre social distancing, wherever possible**
- 4) **Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, manage transmission risk**
- 5) **Reinforcing cleaning process**

There's slightly more detail on those here.

Risk Assessments

All businesses are required to carry out a risk assessment as soon as possible.

Businesses with **fewer than five employees do not need to produce a formal document**, but should give consideration to the risks and how to mitigate them.

Businesses should share the results of the risk assessment with their employees, and **those with more than 50 employees are expected to publish their risk assessment on their website.**

Full Guidelines

These are split by work setting, rather than sector or industry, and as such, you may need to consult several sets of guidelines to cover all of the potential work settings involved in your business – e.g. staff could visit your warehouse, travel in a vehicle and work outdoors as part of the working day.

The settings included in guidelines are:

Construction and Outdoor Work	View online	Download
Factories, plants and warehouses	View online	Download
Labs and research facilities	View online	Download
Offices and contact centres	View online	Download
Other people's homes	View online	Download
Restaurants offering takeaway or delivery	View online	Download
Shops and branches	View online	Download
Vehicles	View online	Download

These are likely to be updated regularly, and so should be kept under review.

They currently do not include specific guidelines for those workplaces which are required to remain closed at this stage, under existing rules.

10 Other sources of information

In addition to the official guidance from government and its agencies above, there is also a great deal of advice and support available from independent and commercial sources.

Below are some sources of advice and guidance from independent bodies, service providers and specialists which you may find useful.

ACAS Advice for employers and employees – ACAS are regularly updating this page with information on good practice for employers around dealing with employees on issues like:

- sick pay
- self-isolation
- other caring responsibilities
- dealing with people who are unwell in workplace
- closing workplaces or instituting working from home

Equalities and Human Rights Commission – EHRC have guidance on avoiding discrimination when making decisions around coronavirus, as well as how to continue supporting those with disabilities and long term health conditions in the workplace.

This includes issues around:

- furlough, sick pay and redundancy
- reasonable adjustments for employees
- pregnancy and maternity rights

Newcastle Gateshead Initiative advice for the tourism industry – NGI are compiling and regularly updating advice from Visit Britain's Tourism Industry Emergency Response group.

This includes:

- Updates from travel providers
- Guidance on conferences
- Updates from insurance providers
- Details of global event cancellations and postponements

11 Guidance and advice from specialists

- [Square One Law's Covid-19 hub](#)
- [Square One Law on Coronavirus and commercial agreements](#)
- [Collingwood Legal guidance for employers](#)
- [Sage Gateshead's current advice on their gig, event and class programmes](#)
- [Sage plc's advice on home working, communications, pay and workplace emergencies](#)
- [Virgin Money's advice to their personal and business customers](#)
- [ParentScheme – advice on working at home during a school closure](#)
- [Endeavour Partnership has written an explainer on the employment law aspects of furloughing employees.](#)
- [The North East Regional Cyber Crime Unit has detailed some of the cyber security threats related to Coronavirus](#)
- [Nice Network on becoming a Microsoft Teams pro](#)
- [Learning Curve Group on supporting your employees' mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [Leyton look at how to ease pressure on cashflow, including through R&D Tax Credits](#)
- [Womble Bond Dickinson's coronavirus information pages](#)
- [Towergate Insurance's coronavirus hub](#)
- [Deloitte's coronavirus insights page](#)
- [Chartered Accountants Haines Watts have a Covid-19 hub here](#)
- [Accountants Thorgersens are offering advice and answering queries over email during the crisis](#)

12 How can you help?

- The Government has been looking for support in containing and combatting the outbreak. [There is a webform to complete if you are able to offer support from your business](#)
- Guidance to businesses wishing to **switch production to hand sanitiser** is [available here](#)
- Call for solutions for **rapid sanitising technology for ambulances** – [details here](#)
- **Coronavirus testing** – can you supply testing materials and equipment, supply complete testing methods or provide lab capacity? [Register your business here](#)
 - [There is additional information on supporting testing capacity here](#)
 - [And guidance on tests and testing kits here](#)
- Grants of up to £50,000 are available for **innovation projects** – [details here](#)

This document will be updated regularly to reflect the latest advice and guidance.