



Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Business Readiness Bulletin Issue 4 – 19 March 2020

This business readiness bulletin for trade associations, business representative bodies and business intermediaries provides important information for you and your business members and networks on Coronavirus (COVID-19). We suggest that organisations providing advice to business continue to ensure that the latest [GOV.UK information](#) is available on their websites to support members and networks. Specific information is available for businesses, who should read and follow the online [guidance for employees, employers and businesses](#). Specific information for businesses in [Wales](#) and [Scotland](#) is also available. These pages are updated regularly. If you have a query that isn't covered by this guidance you can contact the Business Support Helpline on [0300 456 3565](tel:03004563565)

Contents

1. **Business Support announced by the Chancellor**
2. **Business Support Measures in Detail**
3. **New Coronavirus Updates and Guidance**
4. **ACAS Webinars for Employers**

1. **Business Support announced by the Chancellor**

On 17th March, the Chancellor announced [unprecedented support for business and workers](#) – to support the economy and businesses large and small. You can find his full speech [here](#).

The package of government-backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses, making available an initial £330bn of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of GDP. That support will be delivered through two main schemes:

- To support liquidity amongst larger firms, a new lending facility with the Governor of the Bank of England to provide low cost, commercial paper.
- To support lending to small and medium sized businesses, extending the new Business Interruption Loan Scheme announced at the Budget.

The Chancellor also announces tax cuts of nearly £20bn for British businesses.

The measures provide a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent response to what is a serious and evolving economic situation. As the wider economic picture becomes clearer, the government will do whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and stand ready to announce further action wherever necessary.

2. **Business Support Measures in Detail**

We will keep you up to date with the latest information on how businesses can access support as further details become available.

Business Rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure

- All businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors will pay no business rates in England for 12 months from 1 April 2020.
- There will be no rateable value threshold on this relief – businesses large and small will benefit.
- Guidance for local authorities on the application of the holiday has [been published](#). Any enquiries on eligibility for, or provision of, the reliefs should be directed to the relevant local authority.

Small Business Grant Scheme

- The government will provide additional funding for local authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no business rates.
- This funding will provide a one-off grant of £10,000 to businesses currently eligible for small business rate relief (SBRR) or rural rate relief.
- A £25,000 grant will be provided to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses operating from smaller premises, with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000.
- If your business is eligible for SBRR or rural rate relief, you will be contacted by your Local Authority – you do not need to apply.
- The Business Secretary will write to all Local Authorities by the end of the week with information on this scheme, and to encourage them to prepare to deliver this quickly.

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

- A new temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, delivered by the British Business Bank, will launch next week to support businesses to access bank lending and overdrafts.
- This will help ensure that eligible businesses facing short-term cash flow difficulties can continue to access finance as they respond to the temporary impact of the coronavirus outbreak on cash flow.
- By providing an 80% government guarantee on eligible lending, this scheme will give lenders the confidence to keep lending to businesses. The government will provide as much capacity as required for this scheme. There will be no fee for lenders or borrowers to benefit from this guarantee.
- The Scheme will support loans of up to £5 million in value. Businesses can access the first 6 months of that finance interest free, as government will cover the first 6 months of interest payments.
- The scheme is open to businesses with a turnover of less than £41m (as long as the business is long-term viable and is UK based) which meet the scheme's eligibility criteria. Full details on the eligibility criteria will be announced shortly.

The first loans will be available next week and further details of the new scheme will be announced shortly. Businesses worried about accessing finance now should speak to their usual lender.

3. New Coronavirus Updates and Guidance

NEW – [Government to grant permission for pubs and restaurants to operate as takeaways as part of coronavirus response.](#)

- Planning rules will be relaxed so pubs and restaurants can operate as hot food takeaways during the coronavirus outbreak.

NEW - [Temporary relaxation of the enforcement of EU drivers' hours rules: drivers supplying supermarkets](#)

- Temporary relaxation of the EU drivers' hours rules for a 30 day period, for drivers supplying supermarkets with food and other essential items

[see over]

NEW - [Schools, colleges and early years settings to close](#)

- Schools will close from Monday, except for children of key workers and vulnerable children.
- Examples of key workers include NHS staff, police and supermarket delivery drivers who need to be able to go to work to support the country's fight to tackle coronavirus.
- To support nurseries at this time, they will be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year and the Government will continue to pay funding to local authorities for [free childcare entitlements](#).

NEW - [Complete ban on evictions and additional protection for renters](#)

NEW – [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – delivering our public services](#)

- Our public-facing services are continuing to operate. On this page there will be updates if services are affected. Services include the redundancy payments helpline, bankruptcy and director interviews and support for business.

4. ACAS Webinars for Employers

Employers can join a free ACAS webinar 'Coronavirus – an advisory webinar for employers'. The webinar provides practical advice for employers to help manage the impact of coronavirus in the workplace. It includes:-

- steps that can help reduce the spread of the virus
- effective ways of communicating with employees
- self-isolating, time off, sickness certification and sick pay
- altering working hours, shift patterns and working arrangements
- remote working and the use of technology

Businesses can find out more and [register here](#).

[end]

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Business Intelligence and Readiness Directorate
sed@beis.gov.uk
19 March 2020