



COVID-19 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYERS

NORTHERN IRELAND

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-business-and-employers>

Please refer regularly to these websites as Government support is changing regularly.

This website provides information on the following:

- managing staff health, leave and absence
- managing business operations
- help with tax
- help with late payments
- managing cash flow pressures
- claiming insurance
- assistance with business rates

For more information visit: <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/campaign/coronavirus-updates-support-your-business>

INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYERS

❖ **Financial support for businesses in Northern Ireland**

There are a number of UK wide government schemes that businesses in Northern Ireland can access. These include:

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- Business Interruption Loan Scheme
- Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees
- VAT payments for the next quarter will be deferred

For more information visit the [nibusinessinfo.co.uk website](https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

❖ **Business support helplines**

HMRC tax helpline

HMRC has set up a helpline for businesses and self-employed people who are concerned about paying their tax due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

If you run a business or are self-employed and are concerned about paying your tax due to coronavirus, you can call HMRC's helpline for help and advice: 0800 0159 559.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-helpline-to-support-businesses-affected-by-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=covid19

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Invest NI helpline

Get help with your business online, or by calling the Invest NI Helpline <https://www.investni.com/support-for-business> / Telephone: 0800 181 4422

❖ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-support-available-through-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

Under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all UK employers will be able to access support to continue paying part of their employees' salary for those employees that would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis. All UK businesses are eligible.

You will need to:

- designate affected employees as 'furloughed workers,' and notify your employees of this change - changing the status of employees remains subject to existing employment law and, depending on the employment contract, may be subject to negotiation
 - submit information to HMRC about the employees that have been furloughed and their earnings through a new online portal (HMRC will set out further details on the information required)
- HMRC will reimburse 80% of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

HMRC are working urgently to set up a system for reimbursement. Existing systems are not set up to facilitate payments to employers.

❖ **Deferring VAT and Income Tax Payments**

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-deferred-vat-payments>

The Government will support businesses by deferring Valued Added Tax (VAT) payments for 3 months. If you're self-employed, Income Tax payments due in July 2020 under the Self-Assessment system will be deferred to January 2021.

VAT

For VAT, the deferral will apply from 20 March 2020 until 30 June 2020. All UK businesses are eligible.

How to access the scheme

This is an automatic offer with no applications required. Businesses will not need to make a VAT payment during this period. Taxpayers will be given until the end of the 2020 to 2021 tax year to pay any liabilities that have accumulated during the deferral period. VAT refunds and reclaims will be paid by the government as normal.

Income Tax

For Income Tax Self-Assessment, payments due on the 31st July 2020 will be deferred until the 31st January 2021.

If you are self-employed you are eligible. This is an automatic offer with no applications required.

No penalties or interest for late payment will be charged in the deferral period.



HMRC have also scaled up their Time to Pay offer to all firms and individuals who are in temporary financial distress as a result of Covid-19 and have outstanding tax liabilities.

❖ **Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees**

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-support-paying-sick-pay-employees>

The Government will make legislation to allow small and medium-sized businesses and employers to reclaim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paid for sickness absence due to COVID-19. The eligibility criteria for the scheme will be as follows:

- this refund will cover up to 2 weeks' SSP per eligible employee who has been off work because of COVID-19
- 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 28th February 2020
- employers will be able to reclaim expenditure for any employee who has claimed SSP (according to the new eligibility criteria) as a result of COVID-19
- employers should maintain records of staff absences and payments of SSP, but employees will not need to provide a GP fit note. If evidence is required by an employer, those with symptoms of coronavirus can get an isolation note from NHS 111 online and those who live with someone that has symptoms can get a note from the NHS website
- eligible period for the scheme will commence the day after the regulations on the extension of SSP to those staying at home comes into force
- the government will work with employers over the coming months to set up the repayment mechanism for employers as soon as possible.

You are eligible for the scheme if your business is UK based and your business is a small or medium-sized and employs fewer than 250 employees as of 28th February 2020.

There is no action for you. This will apply to your next council tax bill in April 2020. However, local authorities may have to reissue your bill automatically to exclude the business rate charge. They will do this as soon as possible.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/calculate-your-business-rates> where you can estimate the business rate charge you will no longer have to pay and further guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>

❖ **Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-small-businesses>

A new temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, delivered by the British Business Bank, will launch this week to support primarily small and medium-sized businesses to access bank lending and overdrafts.

The government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan (subject to a per-lender cap on claims) to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance to SMEs. The government will not charge businesses or banks for this guarantee, and the Scheme will support loans of up to £5 million in value.



Businesses can access the first 12 months of that finance interest free, as government will cover the first 12 months of interest payments. You are eligible for the scheme if:

- your business is UK based, with turnover of no more than £45 million per year
- your business meets the other British Business Bank eligibility criteria

How to access the scheme

The full rules of the Scheme and the list of accredited lenders is available on the British Business Bank website: <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/>

All the major banks will offer the Scheme once it has launched. There are 40 accredited providers in all.

You should talk to your bank or finance provider (not the British Business Bank) as soon as possible and discuss your business plan with them. This will help your finance provider to act quickly once the Scheme has launched. If you have an existing loan with monthly repayments you may want to ask for a repayment holiday to help with cash flow.

The scheme will be available from early week commencing 23rd March.

❖ Support for Businesses and self-employed people paying tax: Time to pay service

All businesses and self-employed people in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's Time to Pay service.

These arrangements are agreed on a case-by-case basis and are tailored to individual circumstances and liabilities. You are eligible if your business pays tax to the UK government and has outstanding tax liabilities.

If you have missed a tax payment or you might miss your next payment due to COVID-19, please call HMRC's dedicated helpline: 0800 0159 559. If you're worried about a future payment, please call them nearer the time.

❖ Insurance

Businesses that have cover for both pandemics and government-ordered closure should be covered, as the government and insurance industry confirmed on 17th March 2020 that advice to avoid pubs, theatres etc. is sufficient to make a claim as long as all other terms and conditions are met.

Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers. Most businesses are unlikely to be covered, as standard business interruption insurance policies are dependent on damage to property and will exclude pandemics.

❖ Business Support Grant Schemes

The Executive announced last week a grant of £10,000 to be provided to all small businesses who are eligible for the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme and a grant of £25,000 to be provided to companies in the hospitality, tourism and retail sectors with a rateable value from £15,000 up to £51,000.

Together these schemes will provide circa £370m of assistance to some of the most vulnerable businesses by helping their immediate cash flow pressures.



The Department for the Economy (DfE) states it understands the pressing need for this scheme and that demand is high. Officials in DfE are currently working in order to ensure that payments are made as quickly as possible.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-business-support-grant-schemes>
