

### Support for UK businesses

The Chancellor has set out a package of measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

**This includes a package of measures to support businesses including:**

- Statutory Sick Pay relief package for SMEs
- 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England
- Small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- Grant funding of £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000
- A Business Interruption Loan Scheme to support long-term viable businesses who may need to respond to cash-flow pressures by seeking additional finance
- HMRC Time To Pay Scheme

We will be keeping all our clients up to date with these developments including how to apply as and when the details are finalised.

## GUIDANCE FOR OUR CLIENTS – CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Below are some key Government websites where you can access the latest information:

- **Government action plan:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>
- **Guidance on social distancing and stay at home:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
- **Travel advice:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>
- **Support for businesses:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>
- **Tax helpline to support businesses who are concerned about paying their taxes:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-helpline-to-support-businesses-affected-by-coronavirus-covid-19>
- **Guide for employees, employers and businesses:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
- **Budget 2020: tax-related documents:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/budget-2020-tax-related-documents>
- **NHS Coronavirus (COVID-19):**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

## **WORKING FROM HOME - MAKING SURE YOUR EMPLOYEES STAY MENTALLY STRONG.**

With the Government recommending those that can, work from home, it is important to note that for some people it's not the perfect set up.

There is the obvious advantage of no commuting and technology means we can have more autonomy over our time but for some people we will need to monitor their mental health. Put simply working from home doesn't work for everyone.

For some people, working from home can put their mental health at risk, causing feelings of isolation and disconnection and the feedback and encouragement they receive from their fellow workers in the office can be critical to their productivity.

Working remotely may create a pressure "to appear busy" or to be online throughout the working day. This can cause stress.

So, what do the experts recommend?

Working from home is a new phenomenon for many accountants, so issue guidance and be relaxed about the results in the first week or so as people find their way.

### **Suggested guidance for accountants:**

- Guidance will firstly be about technology and then setting the parameters that it's OK to work in the morning and take a couple of hours out.
- Let people know they should set up a "work zone or space" and not the sofa!
- Encourage "self-care time" for meditation or exercise. One firm we know does a group video meeting with a personal trainer 3 times a week for basic fitness (let's be honest we are all different shapes and sizes!).
- Hold a team Skype, GoToMeeting, Facebook Messenger call or other group telephone call for 20 minutes each morning at 9.00am. Seeing your co-workers is a boost and just to know "you are all in it together" helps.
- Encourage a down time of between 12 and 2 and no work after 5.
- Recommend no emails before 12 so people can get their heads down and do the processing or preparation of returns and accounts they are hired for.
- If you are not paperless then allocate someone to fetch and carry files to employee's home addresses.
- Go paperless for all working papers (email 2020 if you need guidance).
- Let people come into the office alone if they need a day away from home.
- Send your people fruit and deliveries of "goodies" from time to time.

### **Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees:**

The Government will pass legislation shortly 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 28 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
- eligible period for the scheme will commence the day after the regulations on the extension of Statutory Sick Pay to those staying at home comes into force

We will keep you fully informed of any developments on when the repayment mechanism for employers will be finalised.

### **Support for businesses that pay business rates**

There will be a business rates retail holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.

Businesses that received the retail discount in the 2019 to 2020 tax year will be rebilled by their local authority as soon as possible.

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.

Any enquiries on eligibility for, or provision of, the reliefs should be directed to the relevant local authority. Guidance for local authorities on the business rates holiday will be published by 20 March.

We will keep you informed of these developments as and when they happen.

### **Support for businesses that pay little or no business rates**

Additional funding for local authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no business rates because of small business rate relief (SBRR) has been announced by the Government. This will provide a one-off grant of £10,000 to businesses currently eligible for SBRR or rural rate relief, to help meet their ongoing business costs.

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.

Funding for the scheme will be provided to local authorities by government in early April.

Guidance for local authorities on the scheme will be provided shortly.

We will keep you up to date with the latest news.

### **Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

A new temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, delivered by the British Business Bank, will launch shortly to support 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 6 months of that finance interest free, as government will cover the first 6 months of interest payments.

Details will follow and we will support any clients needing assistance with obtaining this support.

### **Support for businesses paying tax**

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.

If you are concerned about being able to pay your tax due to COVID-19, call HMRC's dedicated helpline on 0800 0159 559. Please talk to us if you want our help here.