

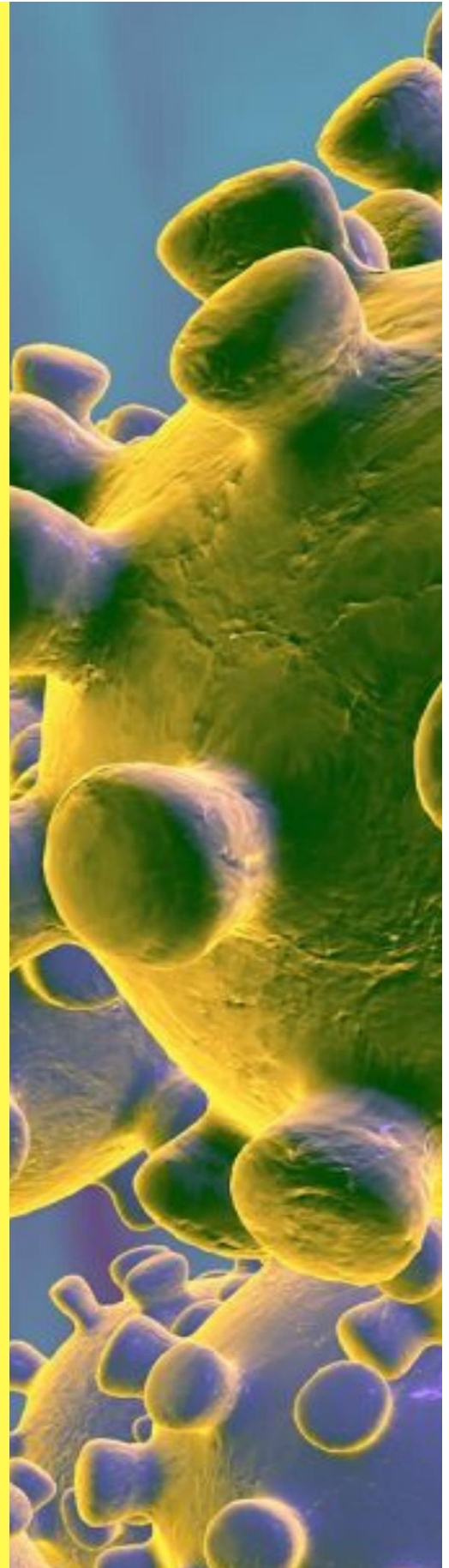
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COVID-19

SMALL BUSINESS SURVIVAL PACK

by Kubi Springer

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Covid-19

Small Business Survival Pack

In light of Covid-19 we at She Builds Brands Worldwide Ltd have collated a range of information to help your small business to survive the crisis. This pack has been pulled together based on information made available from the respective resources on 14th March 2020.

When reading this information we highly recommend that every bit of information in this pack be used at your own discretion, and we advise you to strongly undertake your own due diligence both for your own country rules and regulations, and for your individual business needs.

This pack is a guide only, please therefore seek independent advice to support this guide and ensure you keep up-to-date with how the information is changing in your country and within your specific industry.

As a member of our BossSquad we are supporting this pack with online mentoring should you have any questions please bring these to the sessions.

What is a BCP?

Business Continuity Planning (BCP) is best described as the planning and preparation that will keep your business afloat during any operational emergency. Business owners need to plan for the threats and risks their company faces, and implement safeguards to protect the business in case of disaster.

Although you know the risks (flooding, cyber-attack, terrorism, Covid-19, to name a few), the effects these have on you are often unique to your business. There is no standard response. Your business is complex with many highly interconnected and synchronised components known only to you, so rebuilding it (whilst continuing to operate) is rarely easy or straightforward, even with help.

- Business Continuity Planning helps your business survive a major disruptive event
- Insurance doesn't cover all aspects of Business Continuity risk, since it can't cover any issues arising from a slow response
- Build timescales to ensure your IT gets back on track as quickly as possible in case of major disruption

- Coordinate emergency response with your business recovery at the same time in case of high impact on Covid-19 to your business.
- In case of damage or destruction to infrastructure, your facilities managers will have a plan in place to either relocate or rebuild quickly
- Finally, getting up and running again soon after sends a powerful messages to your customers, reassuring them that they will never be left uncertain or under-supplied if the business suffers disruption.

How to create a contingency plan for your small business

A contingency plan is a vital document to have for your organisation as this plan of action can make or break your business.

Every contingency plan will vary for each business depending on the depth of the disaster and how it could possibly affect your business. That said, here is the key components needed to write a contingency plan:

Prepare

- The idea of the contingency plan is to enable your business to operate despite the disaster, or at least keep the business closed for a minimal amount of time.
- Your contingency plan should be simple and easy to follow by everyone in your team.
- Make a list of all the most vital operations that you have in place for you to run your business day-to-day and analyse how long it could take you to have those individual operations up and running again.

Assessing risks

- To get started on assessing the risks, ask yourself three questions:
 - What could happen?
 - What is the most suitable response on your part?
 - What are you going to do to prepare yourself and your business?
- You need to highlight all the disasters that could happen to your business. These can vary from natural disasters, the death of someone vital, on site accidents, robbery or [data breach/loss](#). With Covid-19 research how this disaster can effect businesses in your industry, look to trade publications and websites in your industry that is providing specific solutions n your sector.

Identify scenarios

- Once you have assessed all of the risks to your business, make a list and put them in order of their likeliness to happen. For example, if your local area has been a victim of robberies you may want to prepare and put that higher on the list. You would for example put a robbery higher than a natural disaster like an earthquake, which has never happened in your region before. If you have minimal cases of Covid-19 in your area but do have a high likelihood of government lock down, then put these in order of preparation.
- For all the scenarios listed, find ways and ideas to reduce the risks and the impact of them on your business. For example with a robbery you could reduce the risk through investing in a better security system. With business closer and staff working remotely, think about how you can use technology to support staff communication.

Update contingency plan

- After creating a contingency plan, you must ensure that you have made all your employees aware of its existence as well as its location. Store it where is easily accessible.
- Test it out – this can be a challenging and you may even have to close your business for a day to see how you could manage and start the business back up.
- You must revisit your plan periodically and maintain and update it accordingly.

Here are four steps you can use to build your own small business contingency plan.

1.) Assess the Risks.

In order to adequately plan for the unexpected, you have to take some time to look at where you are most vulnerable. This can break down into several subcategories, mainly:

Staff/Partners:

How will your business operate if specific people are unable to work? Do you have people cross trained and able to step in if needed? What partner relationships are integral to your business and what's the back-up plan should something happen to them? Does one person hold all the intellectual property? How are you going to get that knowledge transferred to someone else should something unexpected happen to them?

Technology:

If you rely on technology to run your business, what plans do you have in place to protect your data? Do you have a team you can turn to should your equipment stop working or your

website go down? What will you do if there is a natural disaster and you don't have electricity or an internet connection? Do you have a plan in place to save and restore key data? What course of action will you take if your system is breached?

Inventory:

Do you have inventory or assets you need to protect? What plans do you have should acts of nature, fire or theft occur? Are your interests insured? How do you keep inventory clean using your governments health guidelines?

Legally/Crisis Management:

Do you have your bases covered legally? Are there protections in place that protect you from lawsuits? Are there federal or local laws that impact your business directly or indirectly of which you need to stay abreast? Do you have a solid communication plan or partners you can lean on should you face some sort of media crisis?

This list can go on and on. The point is to stop and think about the aspects of your business that **MUST** be running for your business to function and what your plan B will be should something unexpected occur.

2.) Prioritise and Write the Plan.

You've analysed the risks; now it is time to prioritise which scenarios would have the most impact on your business and write your contingency plan accordingly. Maybe there are some functions or people that are integral to your operation while other aspects could wait a bit or be less impactful to your customers. Your plan should clearly reflect these priorities. Don't forget to outline communication plans for your customers, partners that will be counted on to step in, and timelines your team will need to follow when implementing the contingency plan. You may have to map out different plans for each contingency, but, by prioritising, you'll know which areas necessitate the most time and resources from you.

3.) Get Your Team Ready.

It is one thing to have a concept of what your contingency plans are, but another thing altogether to be equipped to execute those plans. The next important step is to get your team ready to implement the backup plan. Assign and explain everyone's roles and responsibilities. Walk through them the plan to be sure everyone is on the same page. Solicit their feedback as you do this because they may be more familiar with a given process or potential resources that could be tapped into. Cross-train your team if needed and conduct regular practice drills. If everyone is familiar with the plan, they will be ready to jump in and keep things moving should something occur.

4.) Repeat the Process Annually.

Businesses and their processes, staff, and even products can be quite fluid. That's why it is important to review and update your contingency plan each year. Your current team could probably use a refresher, new people will need training, and it pays to think about the risks and how you prioritise those risks from year to year.

Hopefully, you will never have the need for a small business contingency plan. But, if something unexpected does occur, a plan will safeguard your livelihood and give you peace of mind as you weather the storm.

What would you add to this list? Share an unexpected circumstance you have faced and what you learned from it. If you already have a contingency plan, have you ever had to implement it, and what was your experience?

COVID-19: guidance for employers

Updated 10 March 2020 - from UK government site.

What to do if an employee or a member of the public becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19

If the person has not been to specified areas in the last 14 days, then normal practice should continue.

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace and has travelled to China or other affected countries, the unwell person should be removed to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people. If possible find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.

The individual who is unwell should call NHS 111 from their mobile, or 999 if an emergency (if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk) and explain which country they have returned from in the last 14 days and outline their current symptoms.

Whilst they wait for advice from NHS 111 or an ambulance to arrive, they should remain at least 2 metres from other people. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

If they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available.

Returning from travel overseas to affected areas

People who have returned from Hubei Province, including Wuhan, Iran, Daegu or Cheongdo in the Republic of Korea, and any area within Italy under containment measures in the last 14 days should avoid attending work. They should call NHS 111 for advice and stay at home.

Advice is in place for [what to do if you have returned in the last 14 days from specified countries or areas](#) which is being updated on an ongoing basis.

All other staff should continue to attend work.

What to do if a member of staff or the public with suspected COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace

For contacts of a suspected case in the workplace, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for COVID19 are awaited. In particular, there is no need to close the workplace or send other staff home at this point. Most possible cases turn out to be negative. Therefore, until the outcome of test results is known there is no action that the workplace needs to take.

What to do if a member of staff or the public with confirmed COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace

Closure of the workplace is not recommended.

The management team of the office or workplace will be contacted by the PHE local Health Protection Team to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.

A risk assessment of each setting will be undertaken by the Health Protection Team with the lead responsible person. Advice on the management of staff and members of the public will be based on this assessment.

The Health Protection Team will also be in contact with the case directly to advise on isolation and identifying other contacts and will be in touch with any contacts of the case to provide them with appropriate advice.

Advice on cleaning of communal areas such as offices or toilets will be given by [the Health Protection Team](#), and is outlined later in this document.

When individuals in the workplace have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

If a confirmed case is identified in your workplace, the local Health Protection Team will provide the relevant staff with advice. These staff include:

- any employee in close face-to-face or touching contact
- talking with or being coughed on for any length of time while the employee was symptomatic
- anyone who has cleaned up any bodily fluids
- close friendship groups or workgroups
- any employee living in the same household as a confirmed case

Contacts are not considered cases and if they are well they are very unlikely to have spread the infection to others:

- those who have had close contact will be asked to stay at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case and follow the [home isolation advice sheet](#)
- they will be actively followed up by the Health Protection Team
- if they develop new symptoms or their existing symptoms worsen within their 14-day observation period they should call NHS 111 for reassessment
- if they become unwell with cough, fever or shortness of breath they will be tested for COVID-19
- if they are unwell at any time within their 14-day observation period and they test positive for COVID-19 they will become a confirmed case and will be treated for the infection

Staff who have not had close contact with the original confirmed case do not need to take any precautions and can continue to attend work.

Certifying absence from work

By law, medical evidence is not required for the first 7 days of sickness. After 7 days, it is for the employer to determine what evidence they require, if any, from the employee. This does not need to be fit note (Med 3 form) issued by a GP or other doctor.

Your employee will be advised to isolate themselves and not to work in contact with other people by NHS 111 or PHE if they are a carrier of, or have been in contact with, an infectious or contagious disease, such as COVID-19.

We strongly suggest that employers use their discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to stay at home due to suspected COVID-19, in accordance with the public health advice being issued by the government.

Advice for staff returning from travel anywhere else in the world within the last 14 days

Currently, there are minimal cases outside the listed areas and therefore the likelihood of an individual coming into contact with a confirmed case is extremely low.

These staff can continue to attend work unless they have been informed that they have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

If individuals are aware that they have had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should contact NHS 111 for further advice.

The latest country information is available on the [NaTHNac Travel Pro website](#).

Handling post, packages or food from affected areas

Employees should continue to follow existing risk assessments and safe systems of work. There is no perceived increase in risk for handling post or freight from specified areas.

Cleaning offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

Coronavirus symptoms are similar to a flu-like illness and include cough, fever, or shortness of breath. Once symptomatic, all surfaces that the person has come into contact with must be cleaned including:

- all surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids
- all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time in (such as corridors) but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected.

If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned using disposable cloths and household detergents, according to current recommended workplace legislation and practice.

Rubbish disposal, including tissues

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks if used, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for storage until the result is available. If the individual tests negative, this can be put in the normal waste.

Should the individual test positive, you will be instructed what to do with the waste.

What if you have to close your business due to COVID-19?

Think about how your business insurance will work if your business closes due to an outbreak of the virus. Advice from FSB Insurance Service is: Check your policy wording: Standard policies may not include any protection if your business suffers due to an outbreak of disease, regardless of circumstance.

- Firstly, you need to check your policy, or confer with your broker to see if you have **Business Interruption cover in your commercial insurance policy**. Business Interruption insurance covers the income that you lose after a disaster, and often comes up when discussing terrorism cover (for example, after the London Bridge attack, local businesses that were forced to close for a period of time would have been able to claim for revenue lost under this clause).
- Once you have **confirmed that you have Business Interruption cover, you will need to check whether you have an extension for “notifiable diseases”**. If you have this in your policy wording, you will need to reach out to your broker/insurer to confirm whether coronavirus is covered. The UK Government has declared COVID-19 a notifiable disease. Holyrood has declared coronavirus a notifiable disease in Scotland.
- If it isn't, you may be able to ask for it to be added by your insurer, but they are within their rights to refuse, or to ask for an increased premium.

What are my duties as an employer?

Employers have a duty under health and safety legislation to take steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all their employees, so far as reasonably practicable, including those who are particularly at risk for any reason. Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of people they work with. They must cooperate with their employer to enable it to comply with its duties under health and safety legislation. Employees who refuse to cooperate, or who recklessly risk their own health or that of others in the workplace, could be disciplined where this is appropriate.

However, at this stage managing employees' fears around contracting the virus is more likely to be an issue for employers than that of the consideration of the measures required to protect staff.

There is no requirement at present to undertake a separate risk assessment in the workplace for the coronavirus and currently the control measures for prevention should be approached like every other viral disease in the workplace. For those that have been in contact with suspected cases (as opposed to confirmed cases), no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for coronavirus are awaited. For those that have been in contact with confirmed cases of coronavirus, or for those who have returned from high risk countries, the advice on self-isolation for a period of 14 days applies (employees may, for example, work from home during that period where practicable).

Individuals in self-isolation should, where possible, avoid having visitors to their home, but it is fine for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off deliveries etc.

Employers are advised to keep an eye on the current Government advice and to refer employees to it where they may be concerned about their individual risk. The advice is reviewed by the Government on a daily basis:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>

The Government has produced guidance for employers, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>

What about employees returning from high risk areas?

The more obvious risk will be where employees have returned to the UK from holiday from a high-risk area. The Government has listed high risk areas/countries by category 1 (being the highest risk areas) and category 2 areas. Government advice is that employees who are symptomless but have returned from a category 1 area within the last 14 days should self-isolate for a period of 14 days from their return.

Employees who have returned from a category 2 area within the last 14 days and who develop symptoms should also self-isolate. As they will also be unfit for work (i.e. will be sick) they would also qualify for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) subject to meeting eligibility requirements. Employers should be sensible about insistence on medical evidence as a

condition of paying sick pay where they have been unable to obtain this due to the requirement to self-isolate.

The Government has published a list of category 1 and category 2 high risk areas and countries, which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas-with-implications-for-returning-travellers-or-visitors-arriving-in-the-uk>

Individuals who have returned to the UK from any of these areas in the last 14 days and who have developed symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath (even where those symptoms are minor), should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu (i.e. self-isolate)
- call NHS 111 to inform them of their recent travel to the country

In Scotland, individuals should phone their GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours. Individuals in Northern Ireland should call 0300 200 7885.

Do I need to pay Statutory Sick Pay to employees required to self-isolate?

Employees who develop symptoms will of course be unfit for work. They will be entitled to SSP subject to meeting the qualifying criteria. Additionally, an employee is deemed to be incapable of work for SSP purposes if they:

- are a carrier of, or
- have been in contact with an infectious or contagious disease of a kind specified in Regulation 2(3) of the Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations 1982 and has been issued with a statement from a registered medical practitioner advising them not to go to work due to it being known or reasonably suspected that they have been in contact with or infected by one.

The ACAS guidance on coronavirus states, in brief, that there's no statutory right to pay if someone is not sick but cannot work because they:

- have been told by a medical expert to self-isolate
- have had to go into quarantine
- are abroad in an affected area and are not allowed to travel back to the UK

But it's good practice for their employer to treat it as sick leave and follow their usual sick pay policy or agree for the time to be taken as holiday.

Clearly if employees have been told to self-isolate on medical advice because it is known or reasonably suspected they have been exposed to the virus, rather than just as a precautionary measure, they would be entitled to SSP (subject to meeting eligibility criteria).

At present it is very unlikely that individuals will be exposed to the virus in the UK given the low numbers of confirmed cases presently, such that there would be few cases where the requirement to pay SSP due to deemed incapacity would apply.

Should employees be required to wear face masks to protect themselves from infection?

Employees are not recommended to wear facemasks (also known as surgical masks or respirators) to protect against the virus. Facemasks are only recommended to be worn by symptomatic individuals (advised by a healthcare worker) to reduce the risk of transmitting the infection to other people.

Public Health bodies recommend that the best way to reduce any risk of infection is good hygiene and avoiding direct or close contact (closer than 2 metres) with any potentially infected person.

Any member of staff who deals with members of the public from behind a full screen will be protected from airborne particles.

Face masks play a very important role in clinical settings, such as hospitals but there's very little evidence of widespread benefit from their use outside of these clinical settings. Facemasks must be worn correctly, changed frequently, removed properly and disposed of safely in order to be effective.

The advice from the World Health Organisation states that if you are healthy, you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with a suspected coronavirus infection.

Are employees entitled to pay where employers require them to stay away from work?

Employers may choose to go further than the advice from the Public Health bodies and, as a precautionary measure, choose to quarantine symptomless employees who have returned from a category 2 area, by asking them to stay away from the workplace. In this scenario, as the employer is forcing the employee to stay away from work when they are not sick or do not have medical confirmation that they have been exposed to the virus, they will need to pay them their normal salary for this absence. This is because the absence is at the employer's request and is not sickness absence. Alternatively, employers may choose to ask employees to work from home if this is an option in which case, of course, they would receive their usual pay.

How should employers respond where employees refuse to work?

Symptomless employees who have returned from a category 2 area but choose to self-isolate and not attend work as a precautionary measure, would probably not be entitled to SSP. However, their absence should not be treated as unauthorized or be treated as a disciplinary matter unless the employer has reasonable grounds for believing, based on compelling evidence, that they are using the virus as an excuse not to attend work.

Employees may be anxious about the risks of being exposed to the virus due to travelling to work on public transport or by attending the workplace. They may even refuse to attend work on this basis. Whilst their absence in this circumstance is likely to be unauthorized, again, unless there is clear evidence that the employee's concerns are not genuinely held, the best approach would be to assuage employees' anxieties by referring them to published advice from Public Health bodies and making it clear that the risk of catching coronavirus at work is low. Employers may choose to be cautious about permitting those employees to work from home or otherwise stay away from the workplace where they do not wish to set what

employees may construe as “a precedent” by doing so; and where there is no good public health reason for them to stay away from the workplace.

General measures

Whilst the coronavirus is not at present a pandemic in the UK, it is advisable to adopt basic precautionary measures in the workplace. Please refer to our factsheet on employment issues during a pandemic virus for guidance on workplace health and safety measures. In short, the best way to protect employees and others from infections like coronavirus is to encourage them to follow simple hygiene practices, such as washing hands frequently with soap and water or use a sanitiser gel where this is not available, as well as carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, and disposing of used tissues appropriately. Employers should remind employees of any existing risk assessments for reducing the risk of infection in the workplace and should ensure that these are still relevant and sufficient.

Budget 2020 support for those affected by COVID-19

In response to the global outbreak of Covid-19, the UK Government introduced a raft of measures in the budget to support businesses experiencing increases in costs or financial disruptions. Measures include:

- Refund for businesses and employers required to access Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)
- A 100 per cent Business Rates retail discount for one year and expanded to include leisure and hospitality sectors
- Additional £2.2 billion funding support for those small businesses that pay little or no Business Rates because of Small Business Rate Relief (SBBR)
- A new temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme
- 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

Business support announced in the Budget

In today’s Budget (11 March 2020) the Chancellor announced a package of measures to provide support for public services, individuals and businesses to ensure the impact of COVID-19 is minimised.

A new Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, delivered by the British Business Bank, will enable businesses with a turnover of no more than £41 million to apply for a loan of up to £1.2 million, with the government covering up to 80% of any losses with no fees. This will unlock up to £1 billion pounds to protect and support small businesses.

For businesses with fewer than 250 employees, the cost of providing 14 days of statutory sick pay per employee will be refunded by the government in full. This will provide 2 million businesses with up to £2 billion to cover the costs of large-scale sick leave.

A dedicated helpline has been set up to help businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities receive support with their tax affairs. Through this, businesses may be able to agree a bespoke Time to Pay arrangement. If you are concerned about being able to pay your tax due to COVID-19, call HMRC's dedicated helpline on 0800 0159 559.

There will be a £3,000 cash grant to 700,000 of our smallest businesses, delivered by Local Authorities, and worth a total of £2 billion.

Finally, the government is temporarily increasing the business rates retail discount in England to 100% for 2020-21 for properties below £51,000 rateable value. Nearly half of all business properties will not pay a penny of business rates.

What's the most important thing to know?

A range of measures are being introduced to support small businesses, from loans to grants. Annoyingly though, the government hasn't been very clear who they consider to be a "small business".

This means that whether you're a sole trader, a PSC limited company, or a limited company with a couple of employees on payroll, it's tough to say exactly how you're impacted and what you could be eligible for.

Rather than guess and miss out or get it wrong, we heartily recommend you **get in touch with HMRC** and ask them to clear it up for you.

You're also welcome over at **our forum, Coconut Bite**, to ask the community and share your views.

Income tax allowances are staying the same

In previous Budgets, chancellors have increased the amount self-employed sole traders and regular employees can earn before you pay income tax, known as the personal allowance. That's not the case this time.

The amounts will remain the same for the 2020/21 tax year. This means there's still a threshold of £12,500 before you start paying 20% income tax, and a threshold of £50,000 before you start paying 40% income tax.

Corporation tax is staying the same

Well, this was unexpected news for limited companies.

The government has decided to keep corporation tax at 19% rate instead of decreasing it to 17% for the 20/21 tax year as they've suggested in the past.

The national insurance threshold is going up

One promise from the government was a tax break regarding national insurance – and they've delivered on this.

The current threshold sees employees and self-employed people paying contributions once they earn an annual salary of £8,632 a year or £166 per week. From 6 April, you'll start paying when you earn £9,500.

Class 2 NICs for sole traders are going up

Class 2 NICs (National Insurance Contributions) are what self-employed people pay HMRC to get access to benefits such as the Basic State Pension, Bereavement Benefits and the Maternity Allowance.

The amount is increasing from £3 a week to £3.05 a week for the 2020/21 tax year.

The employer NIC allowance is going up

Do you have employees on your books? From 6 April 2020, you could get up to £4,000 a year off your national insurance bill. That's an increase on the previous allowance of £3,000. In other words, this could spell an extra £1,000 for you.

The allowance means employers only start to pay Class 1 (secondary) National Insurance Contributions when they run their payroll after they've used up the £4,000 or until the tax year ends, whichever comes first. Beyond that they'll have to pay the standard rate of 13.8%. [More info here](#)

Enterprise tax relief has been reduced

From 11 March 2020, the lifetime limit on gains eligible for Entrepreneurs' Relief has been reduced from £10 million to £1 million. Entrepreneurs' Relief means you'll pay tax at only 10% on all gains on qualifying assets, such as selling a business. [More info here](#)

The annual capital gains tax exemption is going up

If you've made money from capital gains this year – that's where you sell an asset such as stocks, shares and bonds for more than you paid for it – the amount you can earn tax-free is going up from £12,000 to £12,300 from 6 April 2020.

Flat rate "use of home" deduction is going up

If you work from home and claim a flat rate for household expenses (such as electricity and water (instead of calculating a percentage of your overall bills), the amount you can offset against the tax you pay is going up from £4 per week to £6 per week from 6 April 2020.

For self-employed individuals:

There are two types of benefit to mention here.

Firstly, if you're not eligible for sick pay, you could be able to claim the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) from day one of "illness" rather than day eight. This is paid to people

who are too sick to work, as long as they meet certain conditions. (Hence “illness” in quotation marks. It’s complicated.)

Secondly, the government is temporarily removing the minimum income level for **Universal Credit** to help compensate self-employed people from losses in income due to COVID-19. This benefit seeks to support low earners, but the change means people could still be eligible when they’re off work due to sickness or if they’re self-isolating. The rules around Universal Credit are already less complicated than for Employment and Support Allowance, and it’ll be even easier to access while the pandemic lasts: it’s now possible to apply by phone or online as well as in a job centre. Furthermore, a new £500 million hardship fund is also being made available for councils to use to support economically vulnerable people in their area.

For limited companies:

The government will support businesses that struggle with increased costs and cash flow trouble due to COVID-19.

This includes a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme that enables banks to offer a further £1 billion in loans to SMEs.

There will also be a dedicated helpline for limited companies who need to defer their tax payments till a later date.

For companies that lease a commercial property:

This applies to small businesses that are currently eligible for Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief. (Business Rates are the tax that’s usually charged on a commercial lease, and some small businesses don’t have to pay them.)

The government will provide £2.2 billion of extra funding to local authorities in England to help these small businesses meet their ongoing business costs. Around 700,000 companies will benefit from £3,000 each.

For a commercial property with a “rateable value” (annual rental value as estimated by the council) of £12,000, this shakes out as 3 months of rent. Most properties that are eligible for Small Business Rate Relief will have a lower rateable value, which means this funding will cover an even bigger chunk of their yearly rent.

Pension tax breaks for higher earners are changing

Previously you could contribute up to £40,000 a year to a personal pension if your income was less than £110,000 a year, or up to £10,000 a year if you earned more than that. Under the new Budget, you can now invest up to £40,000 a year if your income is less than £200,000, but if it exceeds that threshold, you can only invest up to £4,000.

(The cap on your contributions applies to your total pension pot if you have more than one, not per person.)

HMRC has set up a phone helpline to support businesses and self-employed people concerned about not being able to pay their tax due to coronavirus (COVID-19). The helpline allows any business or self-employed individual who is concerned about paying their tax due

to coronavirus to get practical help and advice. Up to 2,000 experienced call handlers are available to support businesses and individuals when needed.

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.

For those who are unable to pay due to coronavirus, HMRC will discuss your specific circumstances to explore:

- agreeing an instalment arrangement
- suspending debt collection proceedings
- cancelling penalties and interest where you have administrative difficulties contacting or paying HMRC immediately

The helpline number is 0800 0159 559 - and is an addition to other HMRC phone contact numbers.

Opening hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, and Saturday 8am to 4pm. The helpline will not be available on Bank Holidays.

Information on healthcare advice for employers and support for businesses.

The NHS provide public information about the virus and the latest advice on how to protect yourself. If you need medical help, please use the 111 online coronavirus service.

If you are an employer or a business owner we encourage you to read and follow the guidance for employers and businesses.

This guidance will assist employers and businesses in providing advice to staff on:

- the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)
- how to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19
- what to do if someone with suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in a workplace setting
- what advice to give to individuals who have travelled to specific areas, as outlined by the Chief Medical Officer
- advice for the certification of absence from work resulting from COVID-19

If you would like to receive updates on the government's response to COVID-19 you can sign up for email alerts.

Useful links

NHS Coronavirus overview: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

UK Government Coronavirus latest information and advice <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

ACAS Coronavirus advice for employers and employees: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Additional Resources

- the [government's coronavirus action plan](#) provides detailed information about the government's response
- the government has put a range of support in place for those who do not receive Statutory Sick Pay, including Universal Credit and contributory Employment and Support Allowance
- ACAS has published [information for employees and employers](#), including simple steps to help protect the health and safety of staff
- a number of private lenders are also making funds available to small businesses impacted by COVID-19, including £2 billion from [Lloyds Banking Group](#) and £5 billion from [NatWest](#)

If you have a query that isn't covered by this guidance you can contact the [Business Support Helpline](#).

References

<https://www.companybug.com/how-to-create-a-small-business-contingency-plan/>

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/about-us.html>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-helpline-to-support-businesses-affected-by-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.theworkathomewoman.com/biz-contingency-plan/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-employees-employers-and-businesses>

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