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Support for businesses through the 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.

If you cannot cover staff costs and are considering making people redundant, you may be able to access this scheme.

How to access the scheme

You will need to:

- designate affected employees as 'furloughed workers,' and notify your employees of this change. Designating employees as "furloughed" will mean that they cannot undertake any work for you. They will be kept on payroll rather than being laid off. 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 reimburse 80% of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month. It is not yet clear whether "workers wage costs" includes employer pension contributions and employer NI contributions. You will need to make all payments, and they will then be reclaimed via HMRC.

HMRC are working urgently to set up the systems for submitting this information and for reimbursement to employers. Existing systems are not set up to facilitate payments to employers.

This scheme is expected to run at least up to 31st May.

If you have already taken action and made people redundant, we believe that this can also be addressed through the scheme – but again, the mechanisms are not yet clear.

You may choose to make up the difference from 80% to 100% of employees' pay but this is not required.

Employees may be able to access additional support through the welfare system, including Universal Credit, if their income is reduced.

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Support for Statutory Sick Pay

Legislation is expected which will 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 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

This rebate scheme is still in development – there is no repayment mechanism available yet. For now, you should maintain careful records of sick leave and sick pay so that the claim can be made in due course.

Pensions and auto-enrolment

Current guidance from The Pensions Regulator indicates that employers need to continue contributing to their employees' pension schemes.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

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