

Chancellor hosts business groups and the unions roundtable

The Chancellor of the Exchequer this afternoon hosted a roundtable with representatives of business groups and the unions. In attendance were: Frances O'Grady (TUC), Carolyn Fairbairn (CBI), Adam Marshall (BCC) and Mike Cherry (FSB).

As outlined in the Chancellor's statement of 17 March, urgent work is underway to announce further measures to support individuals facing financial difficulty as a result of the COVID-19 situation. Today's meeting follows extensive discussions over the past two days.

The Government has already announced expansions in eligibility for welfare support and a hardship fund to support the most vulnerable, as well as support to businesses to help with cashflow and paying wage bills.

All participants agreed on the need to go further and to do so quickly, and on the need for all social partners and the Government to work together to find a workable and sustainable set of solutions that protect people's jobs.

The TUC and business groups shared their assessment of the pressures facing workers, businesses and the self-employed, and their views on possible solutions, and the Chancellor outlined the Government's approach.

Further details will be confirmed in the coming days.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

We are working round the clock to deliver further support to individuals and families whose jobs and incomes will be affected by COVID-19 – and to do so urgently. We are in this together, and will all have to play our part which is why today's meeting was so important.

Frances O'Grady, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, said:

The TUC and unions stand ready to work with government and employers to protect jobs and livelihoods across the UK. As well as providing emergency support to business, it is essential that money goes into workers' pockets now. We must do whatever it takes to stop businesses going to the wall and workers being plunged into poverty.

Carolyn Fairbairn, Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry, said:

Firms will do all they can to help employees through these unprecedented times. But the exponential growth of the economic impact requires an urgent, bold new approach to protect pay and livelihoods. The Chancellor's commitment to go further, at speed is right – together we must deliver it within days, not weeks.

Adam Marshall, Director-General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

Businesses are facing urgent and difficult decisions as they meet the challenges posed by Coronavirus. With insight from business communities across the UK, we are advising government on the immediate financial support firms on the ground need to continue their operations and protect people's livelihoods.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

It's vital that money is available on the front-line now. We have seen an escalation in the health response; now it is right for there to be an escalation in the economic response and FSB is working constructively with the government to secure as much support as possible for the UK's 5.8 million small businesses and the self-employed. We need to save people's livelihoods, to protect jobs, communities and the economy.

Further information

- Pictures can be found on [our Flickr](#).
- The Chancellor's statement on COVID-19 of 17 March is available [here](#).