

Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for Community Interest Companies (CICs)

Understandably, CICs are concerned about the business and community impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The Regulator's approach to registration and regulation will be as flexible and pragmatic as possible during this period.

In response to the spread of the virus the Regulator's office is following Public Health guidelines. The situation is dynamic and may change quickly so we're preparing for a number of situations.

The Regulator's priority is to ensure compliance with all guidelines to reduce the spread of Covid-19. This includes ensuring social distancing of all staff. As a result of measures in place, paper submissions, such as conversion applications and special resolutions, under the current conditions now take longer to process. Please be assured we are working hard to clear these as soon as possible. The Regulator is investigating alternative methods of considering any paper filings and payments. We're doing this urgently to ensure we can maintain services for CICs.

File Online

Use our online services to help us process your information as quickly as possible. You can:

Many [other online filings](#) can also be completed online via the Companies House website:

- Directors and company secretaries – new appointments, resignations & changes to personal details
- Changing a company name
- Changing a registered office address
- Changing an accounting reference date
- Changes to 'people with significant control' (PSC) information
- Changes to a company's share structure
- Details of new mortgages or mortgages paid

The Regulator recognises that some CICs will have a period of time where they may be unable to provide normal services and meet the community benefit that they were set up to serve. This can be reported in the Annual CIC report, filed with CIC Accounts, to explain any change in the delivery of the community interest company.

What if I can't meet the deadline to file my Accounts and Annual

Report?

The Companies House Registrar is responsible for account filing; late filing penalties and company dissolutions:

Account Filing

CICs, affected by COVID-19, may be eligible to apply for an extension to their filing deadline. Further information is [here](#).

Please note, CICs have to apply for the 3-month extension to be granted, before the date they are due. If an extension is agreed by Companies House, the new account filing date will also apply to the CIC Annual Report as both documents – together with a £15 fee – are filed and placed on the Public Register at the same time.

Late Filing Penalties

Companies House Registrar will:

- Treat late filing penalty appeals sympathetically – if the late delivery of accounts was caused by the coronavirus outbreak. However, if you do not apply for an extension before your filing deadline, and your accounts have been filed late, an automatic penalty will be imposed. The Registrar has very limited discretion to not collect a penalty.
- Provide a break for companies to pay late filing penalties and
- Provide additional support with payment plans for late filing penalties

Further information is [here](#)

Dissolutions

Companies House is, temporarily, easing 'strike off' activity to prevent most companies being dissolved. This will give businesses affected by the coronavirus outbreak time to update their records and help them avoid being struck off the register. This is a temporary measure and the Companies House Registrar will keep the impact of Coronavirus under review & publish further updates on their [website](#).

How do I get support to pay my staff?

The government announced that organisations, including CICs, will get support to help them pay wages via [The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme \(CJRS\)](#). This will support business through paying 80% of the wages of furloughed workers for three months. Employers will be able to contact HMRC for a grant to cover most of the wages of their workforce who remain on payroll but are temporarily not working (furloughed) during the coronavirus outbreak. Any employer in the country – small or large, charitable, CIC and/or non-profit – will be eligible for the scheme.

HMRC are responsible for the job retention scheme and have published further guidance for [employers](#) and [employees](#)

Furloughing, volunteering & return to work

Up until 30th June, people who are furloughed under [The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme \(CJRS\)](#) cannot do any work or volunteer for their employer who placed them on furlough. The employer can agree to find furloughed employees new work or volunteering opportunities whilst on furlough if this is in line with public health guidance.

Individuals who have been furloughed cannot volunteer for the same organisation which has furloughed them.

From 1 July, employers can bring previously furloughed employees back to work, while still being able to claim the CJRS grant for their normal hours not worked. Employees who have been furloughed for any amount of time and shift pattern are eligible for the scheme, and employers when claiming the CJRS grant will need to report and claim for a minimum period of a week.

Closure – The CJRS scheme will close to new entrants from 30 June: employers from that point will only be able to furlough employees that they have furloughed for a full 3 week period prior to 30 June. Meaning that the final date by which an employer can furlough their employee for the first time will be 10 June.

Guidance on the CJRS can be found here for employers and [here](#) for employees. This includes advice on flexible furloughing and how employers should calculate claims.

Can I apply for Government Support?

Yes. The Government is supporting all businesses, including Community Interest Companies, and their employees through a package of measures during this period of unprecedented disruption.

[GOV.UK Coronavirus Business Support](#) has been established to provide the right support, advice and information to help with the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on businesses. This includes:

- Paying your employees
- Paying sick pay
- Paying tax
- Business rates relief
- Business support grant funds

- Support for the self-employed
- Support for small and medium-sized businesses
- Support for large businesses

There is also a 'business support finder' to see what financial support schemes businesses may be eligible for – this can be accessed [here](#).

The Business Support website will continue to be updated as new information becomes available.

Can I access other support available to the non-profit sector?

Possibly. This will depend on the scheme and the nature of your organisation. Many Social Enterprise bodies, who also support community interest companies, are providing bespoke advice and guidance which may be particularly helpful to CICs.

The £200 million Coronavirus Community Support Fund launched on 22 May. The fund, which forms part of the government's £750 million civil society sector support package, is designed to support charities and social enterprises supporting people and communities in England affected by Covid-19. Applications are also invited from organisations facing acute financial difficulties because of the pandemic.

Applications will be assessed in the order in which they are received and the National Lottery Community Fund, which is administering the funding, aims to get funding to organisations as quickly as possible. The funding is for a maximum of six months and there are two application pathways, one between £300-£10,000 and one for bids of over £10,000.

Funding is targeted at:

- Organisations supporting people and communities who experience disproportionate challenge and difficulty as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Organisations providing services and support for vulnerable people, for which there will be increased demand as a result of the COVID-19 crisis
- Organisations which connect communities and support communities to work together to respond to COVID-19

Find out more and apply [here](#)

Big Society Capital Fund

Big Society Capital have created a £100m fund for social enterprises, CICs, charities and small businesses in disadvantaged areas affected by the pandemic. Its Resilience and Recovery Loan Fund run by Social Investment Business will utilise the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to extend loans to organisations across the country. Further details are available [here](#)

Is there CIC specific support?

The Government recognises the pressures that community interest company, and the social enterprise sector more widely, is facing at this time. CICs are therefore eligible to access the range of government support packages being offered to business, subject to the specific requirements of each:

[Coronavirus Business Support](#)

CICs may also be able to access other sources of funding subject to specific criteria. This includes, but is not limited to:

Where can I get further help and guidance for my CIC?

Alongside government, many social enterprises and other bodies are providing advice and support to CICs at this time. They may be able to advise on more detailed enquiries which are outside the remit of the Regulator. These include, but are not limited to:

[Business Support Helpline](#)

[Social Enterprise UK](#)

[SE Mark CIC](#)

[Unltd](#)

[Big Society Capital](#)

[Good Finance](#)

[The National Lottery Community Fund](#)

For the welfare of employees, the main office is now closed.

Should you have any queries or need our help please email our team in the first instance at cicregulator@companieshouse.gov.uk. If you would like to speak to a member of the team directly you can either email your telephone number and/or leave a message on our voicemail number 02920 346228 and one of the team will get back to you within two days if not sooner.

Stay up to date

For the latest information and updates:

More information

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for employers and businesses](#)