

[COVID-19 Guidance: Information for NI Businesses & Employers](#)



To help businesses and employers understand what the measures announced by the Chancellor mean for you, please use this page to navigate the latest guidance for people in Northern Ireland.

Guidance for employees

Read all [the latest guidance and frequently asked questions](#) for employees including details about statutory sick pay and Universal Credit.

Guidance for self-employed workers

The UK Government has launched a Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) which will support self-employed individuals (including members of partnerships) who have lost income due to coronavirus (COVID-19). Details on how to apply can be found [here](#).

Sickness and disability benefits

[Face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits will be temporarily suspended](#) for the next 3 months from Tuesday 17 March. No further action is required by any claimant as a result of this change. They will be contacted with advice on next steps.

Travel

[Find out all the latest travel advice and sign up for travel alerts](#) via the Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) website.

Businesses

General guidance for employers

The UK Government has published extensive [guidance for employers](#), including details on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and what to do if someone is

suspected or confirmed to have the virus.

UK Government support for businesses

The UK Government has set out a package of measures to protect public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19. Businesses in Northern Ireland can access the following schemes and announcements:

- Businesses can receive government grants worth up to 80% of wages to keep workers in jobs. [The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) will pay up to £2,500 per worker. From 1 July, employers can bring employees back to work that have previously been furloughed for any amount of time and any shift pattern, while still being able to claim the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grant for their normal hours not worked. From August, the level of government grant provided through the scheme will be slowly tapered until the scheme ends in October.
- Support for businesses through [the Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#), which will provide loans of up to £5m, with no interest due for 12 months. This scheme will be delivered through the [British Business Bank](#).
- For larger businesses the [Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme \(CLBILS\)](#), will provide a Government guarantee of 80% to enable loans of up to £25 million for firms with an annual turnover of between £45 million and £500 million.
- For innovative companies facing financing difficulties due to the Coronavirus outbreak, the [Future Fund](#) will provide government loans to UK-based companies ranging from £125,000 to £5 million, subject to at least equal match funding from private investors.
- The [Bounce Back Loan](#) scheme will ensure that the smallest businesses can access 100% government backed loans of up to £50,000, with no interest or repayment obligations for the first 12 months.
- [Trade Credit Insurance](#): The UK government will guarantee up to £10bn of business-to-business transactions by protecting against customer defaults or payment delays. The scheme is available on a temporary basis for nine months, backdated to 1 April 2020.
- [Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees.](#)
- [Support for businesses paying tax.](#)

- [VAT payments for the next quarter will be deferred](#), so no business will pay any VAT for the next three months.
- Commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of COVID-19 will be [protected from eviction](#).
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) support is available to employers and the self-employed. You may be eligible for loans, tax relief and cash grants. Use this [business support finder](#) to see what support is available for you and your business.

Northern Ireland Executive support for businesses

Businesses in Northern Ireland can access the following NI Executive schemes and support:

- [COVID Small Business Grant](#) – A small business grant of £10,000 for all businesses with a rateable value up to £15,000. Rental properties with a sole tenant that meet the eligibility criteria may also apply. Registration for this scheme closed on Wednesday 20 May 2020.
- [Hospitality, Tourism and Retail Sectors Grant Scheme](#) – A grant of £25,000 will be provided to companies in these sectors with a rateable value from £15,001 up to £51,000. Registration for this scheme closed on Wednesday 20 May 2020.
- [NI Micro-business Hardship Fund](#): businesses with fewer than 10 employees that are not eligible for either of the above grant schemes may be able to apply for emergency funding for immediate cash-flow difficulties. This scheme is administered by Invest Northern Ireland on behalf of the Department for the Economy. The deadline for applications is Friday 12 June 2020 at 6 pm.
- [Business rates relief](#): A package of measures including a three months rates holiday to all businesses in Northern Ireland and an effective 18% reduction in the Stormont determined portion of business rates compared to 2019-20.
- [Fishing Industry](#): The Executive is supporting the fishing industry through a direct grant scheme for eligible vessels.
- [Creative Support Fund](#): A £1.5 million package to support creative projects. This has two strands. Under the [Artists Emergency Fund](#), artists whose work has been impacted may apply for grants of up to £5,000. This strand of funding is currently closed until further notice.

Under the [Organisations Emergency Programme](#) small and medium sized organisations will be able to apply for maximum funding of £25,000 to help them develop new projects or programmes. The deadlines for funding under this strand is Friday 12 June 2020 at 4 pm.

- [Sports Hardship Fund](#): a £2,000 grant scheme for any organisation delivering sport and physical recreation experiencing short-term financial hardship due to coronavirus. Registration for this scheme closed on Wednesday 20 May 2020. New applications are currently suspended.

Further detail on these NI Executive business support measures is available at [NI Business Info](#), an online service provided by Invest NI.

Business support helplines

HMRC tax helpline

HMRC has set up a [helpline for businesses and self-employed people who are concerned about paying their tax](#) due to COVID-19. The updated helpline number to support customers impacted by coronavirus is 0800 024 1222 and is open from 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday. HMRC have introduced this number to ensure extra capacity on their network so customers can get through to us more quickly. Calls to the old helpline number will be redirected.

Invest NI helpline

Get help with your business online, or by calling the [Invest NI](#) helpline. Telephone: 0800 181 4422

Published 21 March 2020

Last updated 10 June 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 10 June 2020

Updated guidance reflected.

2. 18 May 2020

Updated Government policy

3. 30 April 2020

Updated information.

4. 22 April 2020

Updated information and guidance.

5. 6 April 2020

further updates to the gov.uk link pages

6. 31 March 2020

Further updated weblinks

7. 31 March 2020

Updated website links

8. 27 March 2020

Update with new Self-Employment Income Support Scheme details

9. 21 March 2020

First published.