

Job Retention Bonus: ministerial direction

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Eat Out to Help Out Scheme: ministerial direction

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Stable service delivery for tenants continues in social housing sector

Press release

RSH publishes results from its latest Coronavirus Operational Responses

Survey.



The Regulator of Social Housing has today (9 July) published the [results](#) of its third monthly survey of housing associations and local authorities about how they are coping with the coronavirus pandemic.

The responses indicate the sector is continuing to maintain adequate levels of service delivery in the areas surveyed and has begun work towards recovery. Emergency and urgent repairs are being completed, where lower priority health and safety checks had been paused they are being rescheduled, repair backlogs are stable and plans are being made to address them, and care and support settings continue to maintain safe staffing levels and essential services.

Over 90% of providers are reporting either all or most gas safety checks are being completed although due to continuing challenges accessing some properties, a slightly increased number of providers are completing most, rather than all gas safety checks. Providers report starting to address backlogs, but this is balanced in some cases by the number of properties where the gas safety check has just expired.

Fiona MacGregor, RSH Chief Executive said:

We are pleased that housing associations and local authorities are able to report continuing stable service delivery for tenants and further progress towards recovery.

We recognise that some operational challenges still remain and will continue to monitor the situation through these surveys for the time being.

Notes to editors

1. The short survey asked providers to answer a single multiple-choice question on each of five key areas: emergency repairs; statutory gas safety checks; statutory fire safety checks; asbestos, electrical, legionella and lift checks; and care and support staffing levels. For each area it also asked them to identify any key constraints, risks and mitigating actions and the scale of any backlog and how this has changed

since the previous survey.

2. The survey and supporting guidance were made available for providers to complete on RSH's online data collection portal NROSH+ from 19 to 25 June. It was issued to all private registered providers with 1,000 or more properties, local authorities, and to some smaller private registered providers with over 500 properties and/or a high proportion of care and support activity. The next round of the survey will take place between 17 and 24 July.
3. We intend to run the survey monthly for as long as is necessary and will keep the frequency under review. However, where providers believe tenant safety is threatened or viability is under strain, we urge them to inform RSH immediately through their key contact at the regulator, or our Referrals and Regulatory Enquiries team enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or SmallProviders@rsh.gov.uk or by calling 0300 124 5225.
4. Please see our [Coronavirus statements page](#) for the latest updates.
5. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.
6. For press office contact details, see the [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Published 9 July 2020

[SLC Launches New Online Repayment Service](#)

New online repayment service will improve the customer experience for millions of graduates in managing their student loan, understanding their balance and helping to avoid over-repayment

A new online repayment service has been launched to provide millions of graduates with more up to date information about their student loan balance. The new service is part of a revamp of student loan accounts, designed to ensure that future generations of graduates and students receive an outstanding, digital service.

Providing graduates with readily accessible, more up to date information will make it easier for them to avoid over-repaying by switching to direct debit as they reach the final stages of loan repayment. Additional information is also being made available to remind customers that a student loan works very differently to other types of borrowing and that they should consider their position carefully before making additional voluntary repayments.

The online repayment service was announced last year by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson and has been made possible through more regular sharing of repayment information between HMRC and SLC since April 2019.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said: "I am pleased that millions of students and graduates will benefit from the new service, making it easier for them to keep track of their student loan repayments.

"Our student loan system helps anyone with the talent and drive to benefit from university, and we have invested in these improvements to make it as simple and easy for people to use."

Steven Darling, Director of Repayments Strategy at the Student Loans Company said: "Our goal is to make student loan repayment as simple and easy as possible. In these difficult times, most customers want to keep track of their finances and our new online repayment service has been designed for and by customers to make it easier to do so.

"The introduction of the new service also provides us with an additional opportunity to offer information to help all customers understand more about the nature of student loans and their options for repayment."

The new service has been designed for and by customers so that they can view their balance, keep their contact information up to date or make direct repayments from the UK or abroad. Graduates can sign in to their account at www.gov.uk/slc/signin by using their 11 digit customer reference number and password and over the coming months SLC will be contacting all account holders to remind them how they can access their account.

Additional information

- Previously, customers received an annual statement by post containing information which, depending on their circumstances, could be out of date. This could lead to over repayments on student loans, necessitating refunds at a later date.
- Online Repayment Service (ORS) will enable customers to better manage the end of their repayment journey. Through ORS, customers will have

greater visibility of the final stages of their loan repayment enabling them to make the decision to join the direct debit scheme at the right time.

- Following the introduction of ORS, customers will no longer receive an annual paper statement as they will be able to access their balance at any time. Any customer who requires a paper statement however, can still arrange this by contacting SLC through social media @SLC Repayments.
- ORS will be available on Gov.UK and has been accredited by the Government Digital Service (GDS). The design follows GDS standards so, as well as being secure, the look and feel of the service will be simple, accessible and familiar to many users.
- Alongside the introduction of ORS, SLC is providing further information on how a student loan differs from other types of loan and how repayment works. (See detail below and in appendix)

To avoid over-repayment:

- Graduates should switch to the direct debit scheme in the final stages of loan repayment rather than continue with automatic deductions from their salary.
- SLC contacts customers as they enter the final stages of their loan repayment to urge them to set up a direct debit.
- Graduates should ensure that their contact details are up to date using the new Online Repayment Service. Before contacting SLC about an over repayment, customers should check the online repayment service. If their account is in credit they can contact SLC to receive a refund.

For further information contact the Student Loans Company press office on 0141 306 2120 / press_office@slc.co.uk

Thousands of business advisers to offer free services to small firms

The Recovery Advice for Business scheme, supported by the government and

hosted on the [Enterprise Nation website](#), will give small firms access to free, one-to-one advice with an expert adviser to help them through the coronavirus pandemic and to prepare for long-term recovery. The platform is now live.

Advice offered will include bespoke, specialist assistance from accountancy, legal, and advertising to marketing, recruitment and digital to help businesses adapt to difficult circumstances and to bounce back as the UK economy recovers.

Business experts, supported by the UK's major professional and trade bodies, have rallied behind the government-backed initiative, with thousands of expert advisers already on hand and ready to do their bit to help small businesses recover and rebuild.

Small Business Minister Paul Scully said:

We have stood by small businesses throughout this crisis, offering a wide-ranging package of financial support. However, it is also important that business owners get easy access to expert advice and support.

It is incredible to see so many professional advisers stepping up to do their bit for small businesses across the country. This advice platform will help to boost our recovery from the impact of coronavirus, giving small businesses extra support to adapt their business models and come back fighting.

Emma Jones, founder of small business support network Enterprise Nation, said:

The COVID-19 pandemic has left thousands of SMEs facing a set of completely new challenges now and into the future. There has never been a more important time for firms to turn to the trusted advice of a professional and start on a path to recovery.

We've been overwhelmed and astonished by the generosity of the adviser community, thousands of whom have stepped forward to give their time and knowledge to revive, guide and support the nation's small businesses through the pandemic to regain the momentum and restore the economic confidence with which we started the year.

Running a business can be isolating at the best of times, and this initiative will mean founders will not have to face the future alone.

Each adviser has offered at least one hour of free advice a month until the end of 2020 which could deliver a lifeline to thousands of SMEs looking for support.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD), the Institute of Chartered Accountants England & Wales (ICAEW), the Advertising Association, the Law Society and the Management Consultancies Association (MCA) are among the professional bodies to have signed up for the scheme.

Tamzen Isacsson, Chief Executive of the Management Consultancies Association, said:

Despite lockdown, our consultants have been supporting private and public sector clients across the UK enabling businesses to recover, deliver critical new services and plan for an uncertain future. We're proud to be supporting this joint initiative to help restore the UK back to economic growth and help advise small businesses which are the backbone of our economy.

Peter Cheese, Chief Executive of the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, said:

The CIPD is delighted to partner with Enterprise Nation to launch the Recovery Advice for Business scheme, supported by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic people professionals have been at the heart of the organisational response in these challenging times. This new scheme is an important step forward in supporting small firms through the next stages of the crisis.

The CIPD is calling on its members who are independent consultants and have experience in working with small firms to help by volunteering an hour of their time per month to advise on people and organisational challenges. We hope we can play our part as a profession to help lessen the devastating impact the coronavirus crisis could have on businesses of all sizes.

Mark Fox, Chief Executive of the Business Services Association (BSA) said:

Supporting Britain's SMEs is vital to economic rebuilding and the levelling up agenda. BSA members large and small, and from the private and VCSE sectors, stand ready to help.

It is critical that everyone now draws together in common endeavour, just as they did during the pandemic. Our sector has been helping keep the country going during lockdown and now has the capacity and reach to play its full part in recovery – supporting in particular those communities and sectors which have been particularly badly hit.

Sharron Gunn, BFP FCA, Institute of Chartered Accountants England and Wales,

Executive Director, Members, Commercial & Shared Services, said:

Throughout the Coronavirus crisis, ICAEW Chartered Accountants have acted as trusted advisers to businesses of all shapes and sizes. Now, as companies seek to recover and rebuild, we are proud to support the Recovery Advice for Business scheme to better connect firms to the high-quality professional advice they need. Whether it's cash flow management, tax advice or securing access to finance, I know our members will want to help any small businesses who may be struggling, and support the UK to get back on its feet.

Stephen Woodford, Chief Executive of the Advertising Association, said:

We are proud to be part of the Recovery Advice for Business scheme. It is a huge opportunity for our industry to help Britain's challenger brands and businesses as the economy rebuilds, supporting entrepreneurs to get their businesses back on track to fast growth and with real impact.

President of the Law Society of England and Wales, Simon Davis, said:

The coronavirus crisis has significantly impacted small businesses across the country, and now more than ever they need expert legal advice to help weather the storm.

I welcome this opportunity for solicitors to play their part in this effort to support the national recovery by offering valuable legal advice to small businesses.

Participating businesses will be directed to the scheme on the [Enterprise Nation platform](#) via the GOV.UK website and other business support channels.

Businesses will then be asked questions on the 'Make a Plan' diagnostic tool. This will allow Enterprise Nation to assess and identify both the level and specific areas of support needed.

They will then be directed to a personalised dashboard where they will receive a detailed action plan which will include links to suggested tailored advice and relevant professional advisers willing to help.

Advice will focus on key areas:

- accounting and finance
- people and building a team
- planning, strategy and pivoting
- marketing, PR and social media
- Technology and digital tools

Over 12,000 advisers in the existing Enterprise Nation community are available to provide advice through the platform, with more new professional advisers being signed up specifically to support the scheme.

The scheme is open to small businesses and expert advisers throughout the UK.

Advisers will need to belong to a professional or trade body and hold valid Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) to join the platform and offer advice. They will then need their Trade Body Coupon Code, demonstrating their membership of a professional body, and the link to the Enterprise Nation adviser sign-up page. This will enable advisers to sign up as part of the programme, for free membership, for the duration of the programme until the end of December 2020. It will also ensure that all advice is provided by appropriate expert advisers.