

Comprehensive new funding package for councils to help address coronavirus pressures and cover lost income during the pandemic

- Government announces new comprehensive package of support to address spending pressures and in recognition of lost income
- Further £500 million brings funding given to support local councils with pressures to £4.3 billion, part of a package of over £27 billion to help councils, businesses and communities
- New scheme will also reimburse councils for lost income and allow council and business rates tax deficits to be repaid over 3 years instead of one

A major new support package to help councils respond to coronavirus has been announced by Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick today, Thursday 2 July, as part of a comprehensive plan to ensure councils' financial sustainability for the future.

The government has delivered an unprecedented package of support to councils over recent months, and councils in England will now receive a further, unringfenced £500 million to respond to spending pressures they are facing.

Recognising that councils are best placed to decide how to meet pressures in their local area, this funding has not been ringfenced.

In addition to this funding, a major new scheme introduced by the government today will help to reimburse lost income during the pandemic and boost cash flow.

Where losses are more than 5% of a council's planned income from sales, fees and charges, the government will cover them for 75p in every pound lost.

Additionally, to enable them to get on the front foot and build much-needed breathing space into their budgets, the government is also bringing in changes so that they can spread their tax deficits over 3 years rather than the usual one.

Overall, in the last 6 months, government has worked closely with local authorities to understand their needs and provided more than £27 billion to help councils, businesses and communities through COVID-19.

This comprehensive support includes:

- £3.2 billion of new funding to councils
- £600 million to adult social care to support providers through a new infection control fund
- Over £20 billion in support for businesses
- £500 million in council tax hardship funds to offer economic support to the most vulnerable
- £300 million to support track and trace

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick MP said:

Councils are playing a huge part in supporting their communities during this pandemic. From supporting the most vulnerable and keeping vital services running to operating local track and trace, council workers have been at the forefront of this great national effort and are the unsung heroes of this pandemic.

Today I am providing a further package of support that takes our support for councils during this pandemic to £4.3 billion to help meet the immediate pressures councils are facing. I know that the loss of revenue from car parks and leisure centres has created huge difficulties, so I am introducing a new scheme to help cover these losses.

This government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with councils and communities as we recover from this pandemic as we renew our commitment to unite and level up the country.

The package also follows the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday of the fast tracking of £96 million of investment through the Towns Fund to help kick-start activity in town centres and high streets, improve outdoor spaces, build cycle lanes and more. £360 million will also be provided to redevelop brownfield sites to provide much-needed housing.

Scheme to cover councils' lost income

Recognising the unprecedented impact the pandemic has had on councils' income from car parks, museums and other cultural assets, the government is introducing a scheme to compensate them for these losses.

This means that all relevant losses, over and above the first 5% of planned income from sales, fees and charges, will be compensated for at a rate of 75p in every pound.

This balances the need to provide compensation given the scale of the income losses, encouraging councils to manage and minimise loss where they can and giving them the certainty they need.

In the next Spending Review, we will determine what support councils need to

help them meet the pressures of income loss from council tax and business rates.

As part of this, the Local Government Secretary also announced today a proposal for a phased repayment of council tax and business rates deficits over 3 years, rather than requiring complete repayment of deficits next year.

This will allow authorities to pay deficits off in a reasonable timescale and will limit their cashflow pressures.

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Simon Clarke MP said:

Since the start of this pandemic, local councils have been at the forefront of our national effort to tackle the virus, and they will continue to play a significant role as we look towards our recovery.

We are more committed than ever to unite and level up this country and this package will ensure councils have access to vital, additional funding so they can continue to serve their communities as they so admirably have done to date.

Further information

Further details on the allocations of the funding will be made in due course.

The new income loss scheme will involve a 5% deductible rate, whereby councils will pay the first 5% of all lost planned sales, fees and charges income, with the government compensating them for 75p in every pound of loss thereafter.

By introducing a 5% deductible the government is accounting for an acceptable level of volatility, whilst shielding authorities from the worst losses.

In the next Spending Review, the government will agree an apportionment of irrecoverable council tax and business rates losses between central and local government for 2020 to 2021.

Beyond the support provided, any council that is faced with an unmanageable pressure or is concerned about their future financial position should contact Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way to additional funding. The devolved administrations will therefore initially receive almost £100 million in relation to this announcement. This comprises £50 million for the Scottish Government, £30 million for the Welsh Government and £15 million for the Northern Ireland Executive.

Essex beavers give birth to two healthy kits

Back in 2019 a pair of Eurasian Beavers were welcomed back to Essex for the first time in 400 years to help reduce flood risk in Finchingfield.

18 months on we are thrilled to announce the pioneering partnership project with the Environment Agency, Spains Hall Estate, the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, and the Anglian Eastern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) has been a big success – and now there are four extra paws to help them continue their vital flood defence work.

The beaver duo, recently named Woody and Willow, have been working relentlessly over the last year in their Finchingfield enclosure on the historic Spains Hall Estate.

They have been building dams to reduce flood risk to the village and creating wetlands which release water during drier periods.

This is complemented by a human-made natural flood management scheme on a second strand of Finchingfield Brook, which features a “leaky dam” approach.

This consists of securing tree branches or trunks across a watercourse, which helps slow the flow after heavy rain.

We are excited to see how much more the beavers manage with the additional help.

Spains Hall Estate Manager Archie Ruggles-Brise said he was excited to see how much more protection the new additions to the beaver family will bring.

He said: “We are delighted that our beavers have settled in so well that they have bred successfully.

“We always hoped that their woodland home would provide the right habitat to support a family, and the arrival of two kits is fantastic news.

“If they are anything like their parents the two kits will become phenomenal dam builders, and we will be watching closely as they expand the wetland and provide even more protection against flood and drought, and provide homes for loads of other wildlife.

“We are fortunate to have wildlife photographer, Russell Savory, keeping a close eye on the family, and providing everyone with such inspiring insights into their watery world.”

The Environment Agency's Matt Butcher said: "This is a fantastic project for the Environment Agency to be part of.

"It has been really exciting to see how the beavers have engineered their environment by building dams, slowing the flow and holding up water to reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

"The complex habitat they have created along the way is amazing and improving all the time, which makes this a real win-win for people and wildlife.

"The news of the beaver kits has just taken things to another level, and it will be incredible to see what the new members of the family will do to in the coming months and years."

Brendan Joyce, Director of Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust, said: "We are delighted to learn of the birth of two beaver kits at Spains Hall"

"We are very proud of our association with this exciting project and I can't wait for the opportunity to get down there and see the beavers at work.

"It will be fascinating to see what effect the new additions to the family will have on shaping the landscape and creating natural features to reduce flooding"

Darren Tansley, River Catchment Coordinator at Essex Wildlife Trust, says "We always hoped that having beavers present would benefit the wildlife on site, but the changes we have mapped over the past 18 months have exceeded our expectations.

"DNA samples from the main beaver pond recorded everything from deer to tiny pygmy shrews and all this to create the perfect environment for their young kits, the first beavers born in Essex since the Middle Ages. We are thrilled by the addition of two more ecosystem engineers in the county."

The gender of the baby beavers is unsure at the moment but Archie Ruggles-Brise is asking social media users to head to his Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/spainshallestate>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/spainshall>) to vote for what they would like them to be called.

Previous press releases on the beavers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/beavers-to-return-to-essex-for-the-first-time-in-400-years>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/beavers-arrive-in-essex-to-play-their-part-in-flood-prevention>

Arrangements for examinations and assessments in 2020/21

On 18 June 2020 the Secretary of State for Education wrote to Sally Collier, Ofqual's Chief Regulator, to set out his Department's broad policy objectives in relation to exams and assessments in the 2020/21 academic year.

The letter outlines the Secretary of State's determination that students sitting examinations or taking assessments next year should be able to progress to the next stage of their education or employment. It also notes his intention that the overall standard and rigour of examinations and assessments should be maintained wherever possible, given the current unique circumstances.

Call for bids in Kazakhstan: respond to the COVID-19 challenges

World news story

The British Embassy in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan is now accepting project proposals for the 2020/2021 financial year that will end on 31 March 2021.



The British Embassy in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan is now accepting project proposals for the 2020/2021 financial year that will end on 31 March 2021.

This year the British Embassy in Nur-Sultan is seeking to support small projects that aim to address issues and risks that emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The projects should aim at responding to the COVID-19-related challenges through provision of a knowledge and capacity building, analytical and advisory support, etc.

We are particularly interested in project proposals focused on:

1. combatting the potential negative impact of COVID-19 on democracy, political and economic inclusion
2. informing the public of the current human rights situation in the country
3. addressing existing issues in the country's social protection system with a particular focus on vulnerable groups
4. supporting the country's economic recovery by providing advisory support on economic issues, including fiscal policy, financial sector, etc.

The projects should incorporate online components, such as webinars, e-conferences, digital education, etc. which will be comprehensive, self-standing and easily accessible.

The British Embassy in Nur-Sultan is seeking to support Kazakhstan in its COVID-19 response plans, and work closely with the government bodies, civil society organizations, academic institutions, etc.

Bid guidance

- project will be funded in the 2020/2021 financial year that will end on 31 March 2021, with no expectation of continued funding beyond this period
- only projects directly related to COVID-19 will be considered
- maximum budget limit: USD 12,000

Assessment

Bids will be assessed against the following criteria:

- alignment with the above mentioned thematic priorities and outcomes
- outcomes are achievable within the funding period
- project design includes clear monitoring and evaluation procedures
- sustainability demonstrating that project benefits continue after the funding ends
- risk and financial accountability procedures
- the organisation's safeguarding policies that ensure protection of beneficiaries
- overall value for money

Process

1. project proposals must be received by midnight on 17 July 2020. Late proposals will not be considered
2. proposals must be submitted using the attached forms only (Project Proposal and Activity Based Budget)
3. proposals must be submitted to ukinkz@fco.gov.uk
4. project proposals selected for further consideration will be notified on 31 July 2020
5. the British Embassy Nur-Sultan aim to sign grant agreements with successful project implementers by 14 August 2020

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Documents

[Activity Based Budget Template](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 29.9KB) [Project Proposal Form above £10k](#) (MS Word Document, 87.5KB)

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Government launches second phase of independent review into drug misuse

- Professor Dame Carol Black to lead next stage of the independent review into the misuse of drugs
- Second phase to consider the provision of treatment and recovery services for drug users, as well as a focus on how to prevent the misuse of drugs among adults and young people
- Review findings will feed into wider government work to tackle the serious harms caused by substance misuse

Building on an initial phase commissioned by the Home Office, the next stage of the review will focus on treatment, recovery and prevention. The overarching aim will be to ensure that vulnerable people with substance misuse problems get the support they need to recover and turn their lives around in the community and in prison.

The review will consider how treatment services can enable people with a drug dependency to achieve and sustain their recovery – spanning a wide range of services they may interact with across mental health, housing, employment and the criminal justice system.

Professor Dame Carol Black has been appointed to lead the review following her [initial report commissioned by the Home Office](#), which looked at the challenges around drug supply and demand. Her initial report found that:

- drug deaths are at an all-time high
- the market has become much more violent
- drugs are costing society billions of pounds every year

Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

Drug misuse can have a tragic impact on people's health, families and livelihoods, causing suffering to all those involved.

With drug deaths at an all-time high, we must tackle the root causes of substance misuse to improve health outcomes and prevent lives being lost needlessly.

The findings of Dame Carol's first review set out the scale of the challenge. Now our focus must shift to ensuring the appropriate services are in place to support the treatment and recovery of drug users, as well as preventing drug use in our communities in the first place.

I look forward to receiving Dame Carol's recommendations and working with others on the solutions.

The review will make policy recommendations to government, including around funding, as well how services are commissioned and local bodies are held accountable to ensure they are effective in preventing, treating and supporting recovery from drug problems.

Part one of the independent review found children and young people are now more likely to experiment with drugs after years of decline, and so the second phase will include a specific focus to make recommendations on prevention and treatment services for this age group.

Professor Dame Carol Black said:

I am delighted to be starting part 2 of the Independent Review of Drugs. In my foreword to part one I said that behind the thorough analysis of the market for illicit drugs that we had just completed lay a very tragic human story: about the effect on individuals, their families, youngsters caught up in the trade, and the economy.

We showed a decade-long erosion, under previous governments, in almost every aspect of drug addiction, prevention, treatment and recovery.

We now have the opportunity to correct this and build a better world. To do this many stakeholders and government departments must work together as never before.

As part of the next phase of the review, Dame Carol has launched a call for evidence and will engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including hearing from service users and people with lived experience of drug addiction to build a detailed picture of treatment, recovery and prevention.

Dame Carol will be provided with expert support from:

- Dr Ed Day, an NHS substance misuse consultant and government drug

recovery champion

- Dr Keith Humphreys, a US academic and former drug policy advisor to President Obama with substantial expertise in this field and an international perspective

Dr Ed Day, NHS Consultant in Addiction Psychiatry and government drug recovery champion, said:

I look forward to working with Dame Carol Black and her team to help deliver a fully functioning recovery-orientated system of care in every community in England. This will require professionals and people with lived experience of addiction to work together to reduce the harms that drugs cause and maximise the potential of people of all ages.

Dr Keith Humphreys, Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University and former drug policy advisor to President Barack Obama, said:

The first part of Dame Carol Black's review showed a deteriorating situation regarding drugs throughout the UK. This second part presents the opportunity to reverse those trends. Doing so will require a review of how health and social care for people with drug problems are organised, delivered and financed.

Dame Carol is expected to submit initial recommendations in September and her final report in December this year.

The [terms of reference for the review](#) and [call for evidence](#) have also been published. The call for evidence will close on Thursday 6 August.

The government is already responding to Dame Carol's findings with further investment to significantly increase the law enforcement response to county lines and the recruitment of 20,000 extra police officers over the next 3 years.

The government has pledged to address the complex challenges caused by drug misuse, with a cross-government addiction strategy due to be published in early 2021.