

More than a million businesses now eligible for Help to Grow as software scheme receives a boost

- The government's Help to Grow: Digital scheme is nearly tripling in reach, supporting up to 1.2 million UK businesses to adopt the latest digital technology
- businesses with 1 to 249 employees can now access discounts worth up to £5,000 on approved software
- from today, eCommerce software has been added to the scheme, helping businesses to sell online and reach new markets

A flagship government scheme that slashes the price of leading software, boosting productivity and growth of the UK's small businesses, will benefit even more firms from today (Monday 25 July).

With Customer Relationship Management software proven to boost firms' productivity by 18% on average, the Help to Grow: Digital scheme offers businesses discounts worth up to £5,000 on approved software.

Previously, only businesses with more than 5 employees were eligible for the scheme. From today, businesses with at least 1 employee are now eligible to benefit. This boosts the number of eligible businesses by 760,000 so that it now reaches up to 1.24 million.

Today it's also announced that eCommerce software is available through the scheme to help businesses ramp up sales of products and services online. This includes helping them to manage their inventory, take payments and gather data and insights on customers' needs. Businesses which adopt eCommerce software see on average [a 7.5% increase in employee sales over 3 years](#).

This means businesses can now access a £5,000 discount on 30 software solutions from 14 leading technology suppliers for eCommerce, Digital Accounting and CRM software.

Additionally, the government has announced that Help to Grow: Digital will support one-to-one advice for SMEs on how best they can adopt digital technology. The government will be launching applications for advice platforms to partner with the scheme from today, and the advice service will go live later this year.

Business Minister Lord Callanan said:

"Boosting productivity isn't some abstract concept to be sniffed at – for individual SMEs it means bigger sales and breaking into new markets. It can add £100 billion to the British economy overall, creating jobs and opportunity across the country.

"Adopting the latest technology is proven to help businesses make the most of their potential, and by making more than one million firms eligible for the scheme, we're helping to level up the UK economy and bolster the ability of our businesses to compete with the best worldwide."

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury Alan Mak said:

"Extending our Help to Grow: Digital scheme will enable thousands more SMEs to become more innovative, more competitive, and more profitable."

"Helping them adopt new technology to support customers, manage accounts and sell online will save them time and money. This will boost productivity and help create jobs and prosperity across the UK."

The Help to Grow: Digital sits alongside the Help to Grow: Management scheme as the government's flagship programme to help small and medium-sized businesses to scale-up and grow. Help to Grow: Management offers business leaders 50 hours of leadership and management training across 12 weeks, with government covering 90% of the costs involved.

The schemes help businesses to boost their productivity and grow, which can lead to more high-skill, high-wage jobs. This is part of the government's commitment to grow the economy to address the cost of living and level up opportunity across the UK, alongside standing behind businesses by cutting fuel duty and raising the Employment Allowance.

Martin McTague, National Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) said:

"We are very pleased to have worked hard with BEIS to adopt our ask to expand the eligibility criteria of the Help to Grow: Digital scheme to support more small businesses getting the software they need."

"Our research shows the smallest firms are least likely to have adopted tech products because of the lack of resources although they would make the most productivity gains through adoption."

"It's good that Ministers are listening. Together with the addition of e-Commerce software and one-to-one advice for SMEs on technology adoption, this will help small businesses enhance their operations and drive efficiency and growth."

Murray Lambell, Vice President and General Manager, eBay UK said:

"This is extremely welcome news for a significant number of the 300,000 small businesses who use eBay every day to grow their business. Many of our commercial sellers are micro-businesses who are extremely entrepreneurial but inevitably time poor."

"Being able to purchase e-commerce and other productivity-enhancing software at a discount could really help give rocket boosters to what are already fast-growing businesses. And given that three quarters of our small businesses are based outside London and the South East, this also has the

potential to boost the government's Levelling Up agenda.”

Notes to editors:

Fear and insecurity mean workers do not report underpayment

Press release

Low Pay Commission report looks at labour market enforcement in Leicester's textiles sector.



The Low Pay Commission (LPC) today publishes [a report on non-compliance and enforcement of the minimum wage in Leicester's textiles manufacturers](#). Since 2020, multiple agencies have carried out large-scale joint enforcement operations in Leicester, partly in response to persistent reports of exploitation and underpayment. Low Pay Commissioners heard evidence on the forces driving non-compliance and what enforcement bodies have found.

At the heart of this evidence is a disconnect: enforcement bodies have found relatively modest non-compliance in Leicester, while Commissioners spoke to other bodies and individuals who believed non-compliance to be widespread and flagrant. Today's report looks at three potential explanations for this disparity.

- Firstly, on the positive side, recent changes within the textiles industry mean some evidence of underpayment may be historic and so less reflective of current situation.
- Secondly, the vulnerability of workers means they may be reluctant to provide information.

- Thirdly, there remains potential for employers to conceal underpayment from investigating bodies.

Bryan Sanderson, Chair of the LPC, said:

The evidence we heard from workers in Leicester was striking. Despite some positive recent progress, job insecurity, a poisonous workplace culture and low expectations leave workers trapped in poor-quality jobs and vulnerable to exploitation. These same factors mean they are unlikely to report abuses, which undermines efforts to enforce workers' rights.

The case of Leicester is not unique. Across the UK, workers in precarious positions face the same obstacles, with the same consequences for enforcement. The problem demands comprehensive action, including to give these workers greater security over their hours and incomes.

Low Pay Commissioners make several recommendations for Government:

- The process for reporting abuses does not work for the most vulnerable low-paid workers; but it also fails to engage the third-party bodies whom workers may trust more, or wider industry networks. Commissioners recommend HMRC looks at ways to address these problems.
- There is an 'information gap' between what industry and civil society groups think they have reported to official bodies, and what those official bodies are able to share and act on. A forthcoming official review of enforcement operations in Leicester should take into account evidence from both sides of this gap.
- Insecure work and uncertainty over hours and incomes are central to the vulnerability of workers to exploitation. Low Pay Commissioners urge the Government to take action on the measures recommended by the Commission in 2018 to address these issues.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The report published today is the Low Pay Commission's fifth standalone report on non-compliance and enforcement, but the first to focus on a single sector and location.
2. The report draws on meetings in March and April 2022 with workers,

retailers, supply chain auditors, manufacturers, local government officials and enforcement officers.

3. The Low Pay Commission is an independent body made up of employers, trade unions and experts whose role is to advise the Government on the minimum wage. It will submit recommendations on minimum wage rates for 2023 by the end of October.
4. The Low Pay Commission made recommendations in 2018 on the problem of 'one-sided flexibility'. These recommendations were: a right to switch to a contract which reflects your normal hours; a right to reasonable notice of work schedule; compensation for shift cancellation or curtailment without reasonable notice; provision of a written statement of terms from employers detailing the rights Commissioners proposed. That report can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/low-pay-commission-response-to-the-government-on-one-sided-flexibility>.
5. The current Low Pay Commissioners are Bryan Sanderson, Professor Patricia Rice, Professor Jonathan Wadsworth, Kate Bell, Kay Carberry, Simon Sapper, Matthew Fell, Louise Fisher and Martin McTague.
6. Bryan Sanderson can be contacted via the Low Pay Commission's press office (07341 098734).

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Alok Sharma, COP26 President, to visit Australia to meet the country's new government and build momentum on climate action ahead of COP27

- COP26 President Alok Sharma will meet members of the Australian Cabinet in Canberra as the new parliament meets for the first time
- He will visit the New South Wales Rural Fire Service State Operations Centre to hear directly from first responders tackling the impact of severe weather in the region

- While in Canberra, Mr Sharma will also meet indigenous community representatives to understand their approach to nature-based solutions, as well as engaging with states, businesses and civil society in support of stronger climate actions

COP President Alok Sharma will travel to Sydney and Canberra from 24-26 July 2022 to meet ministers in the first week of the new Australian government as he continues to press for the delivery of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Mr Sharma will discuss Australia's potential as an international climate leader in a number of areas, including climate finance and zero-emission vehicles. He will also engage with Australian states and hold discussions with banks, businesses and civil society groups in support of stronger action on climate.

In recent months, more frequent and severe natural disasters have shown the impacts of climate change in Australia, including severe flooding in New South Wales. Mr Sharma will speak with first responders to these disasters at New South Wales Rural Fire Service State Operations Centre

On Monday, the COP26 President will be in Canberra, where he will visit a local nature reserve. He will hear first-hand from Nggunawal Indigenous leaders who will explain the impacts of climate change in Australia, as well as traditional land management practices.

COP26 recognised the role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in the Glasgow Climate Pact. As stewards of 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples are leaders in how to develop nature-based, resilient and effective solutions to climate change, through their knowledge and innovations, technologies, and spiritual values.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President, said:

Australia is turning a fresh page with its climate commitments and I look forward to working with the new Australian government on its path towards increased commitments and leadership in crucial areas such as climate finance, deforestation and support for less developed nations in the Indo-Pacific.

The "Powering Australia Plan" is an innovative centrepiece of the new government's clean energy and industrial decarbonisation policy and paves the country's path to net-zero by 2050 and increasing its clean energy capacity.

During my time in Australia I will meet Indigenous representatives, business leaders, government ministers and more, providing a great opportunity to discuss ways we can work together for effective climate action.

UK High Commissioner to Australia, Vicki Treadell said:

We're delighted to welcome Alok Sharma to Australia where he'll hear first-hand how the region is impacted by the climate emergency.

We know that the Glasgow Climate Pact was a historic collective achievement, keeping 1.5C alive. Now is the time to deliver on those commitments. This visit by the COP President to Australia and Fiji outlines how important the Indo Pacific is to tackling climate change within the decade.

Following the COP President's visit to Australia, he will travel on to Fiji, a climate leader in the Pacific region. Like other Pacific countries, Fiji is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The UK is focussed on working with Fiji and Pacific countries to keep adaptation, loss and damage and climate finance on the top of the agenda in the lead up to and at COP27 in Egypt.

Support continues for Hong Kongers building new lives in the UK

- Over 40 national and regional organisations to share £3 million to deliver projects
- £3.6 million more for Welcome Hubs across the UK
- Continued cash for English language in England

Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders building new lives in the UK will continue to receive vital support after the government today (23 July) confirmed the next phase of the Welcome Programme.

Today's package will help individuals and their families on the BN(O) visa to come and settle in the UK. Since its launch at the start of 2021, over 123,000 eligible Hong Kongers and their family members have chosen to take up this offer and applied for the BN(O) visa.

The Welcome Programme will continue to provide:

- a further £3 million for over [40 voluntary, community, and social enterprise \(VCSE\) organisations](#) to deliver their national and regional

projects across mental health, social integration, employability and tackling hate crime

- £3.6 million more to continue the network of 12 Welcome Hubs across the UK which support people to get to know and connect with services in their local area
- further support for English language classes, and destitution support for those who need it (England only)
- and updates to the Welcome pack on GOV.UK, available in [English](#) and [Cantonese](#)

Levelling Up Secretary Greg Clark said:

We have strong ties with the people of Hong Kong and we want those who have chosen to build a home here to be supported to settle successfully.

I'm pleased that our new neighbours will continue to benefit from the expert support of councils, dedicated welcome hubs and fantastic grassroots projects thanks to this funding.

[Since February](#), VCSE organisations have been providing much needed support across the country, making a huge difference to people's lives, including:

- help for parents and carers who want to know which schools to send their children to and how to connect with other parents
- help to get into work – across the UK, there have been seminars, one to one coaching sessions and entrepreneur networking events to boost skills, confidence and provide interview practice to help people get jobs that match their experience
- a dedicated mental health helpline to support young people and adults who may be struggling to start over in a new country
- a range of events and activities to integrate BN(0)s, including art classes, visits to museums, and organised walks around cities, with opportunities for communities to learn about Hong Kong culture through Dragon Boat festivals and Lunar New Year celebrations

One such project is FaithAction, which runs a Café Connect space in Solihull for arrivals from Hong Kong to meet others in the community, and direct them

to local support and advice.

One arrival said: "Café Connect is a very good place for me because I want to know about English history and culture. I want to be part of life here. It's good that I can speak to English people as my understanding improves and one day I will speak to everyone like they do."

Wai Yin Society, based in Manchester, helped Ms L who arrived in the UK from Hong Kong in 2021 with her husband and daughter and was feeling disorientated and socially isolated. They helped her to get a job as a lunch time assistant at a local school and are now supporting her to complete a food hygiene course to help build on her existing skills.

Ms L said: "I am happy that Wai Yin gave me advice and support."

One individual accessing support from Hongkongers in Britain through their CV writing clinic said: " It was very helpful since the speaker told me about the job seeking culture in the UK that I didn't know before. I could understand more because the speaker spoke in Cantonese, and also understood what a Hong Konger might be concerned about when finding a job. It is not only about polishing a CV, but also helping me gain more confidence to get a job."

Today's announcements means that organisations can extend their support to reach more individuals and provide tailored services to meet their needs.

The Welcome Programme is also providing funding to create a reporting and support service for Hong Kongers and all other East and Southeast Asian communities in the UK who experience racism or any forms of hate. 'On Your Side', led by Protection Approaches alongside a consortium of community organisations, will be launching soon.

The Welcome Hubs across the UK will continue to provide practical advice and support in English and Cantonese through their websites, one to one sessions and local support networks.

Councils across England, which are already playing a key role to ensure BN(0) status holders are warmly welcomed and supported, will continue to provide targeted English language and destitution support where the help is needed.

1,000 personnel to represent the Armed Forces at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022

- Long-planned deployment will see hundreds of military personnel support

smooth running of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

- Six serving Armed Forces personnel competing or coaching at the Games.
- 300 personnel supporting with ceremonial duties.

Around 1,000 Armed Forces personnel will be a part of this year's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham –by supporting security, competing for medals, officiating competitions, participating in the opening ceremony and supporting the delivery of a safe and secure event.

Hundreds of Armed Forces personnel will be deployed to Birmingham to support the West Midlands Police Security Operation, the biggest the region has seen.

An opening ceremony on Thursday 28 July will mark the start of the Commonwealth Games, featuring many of the Armed Forces personnel who are in Birmingham for ceremonial duties, civil engagement or competing as athletes.

The Band of HM Royal Marines will provide a fanfare of trumpeters during the ceremony. More than 130 Armed Forces flag raisers will be deployed across the venues to lead the over 280 medal presentations taking place throughout the Games.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey said:

On behalf of the Defence community, I'd like to wish the Armed Forces competitors representing both their nation and their service at the Commonwealth Games the very best of luck.

Alongside our elite athletes in Birmingham will be hundreds of their Armed Forces colleagues, deployed to help ensure the Games run as smoothly and securely as possible.

Commander of the military deployment, Brigadier Matt Pierson said:

I am delighted to be leading the Armed Forces' contribution to the Commonwealth Games. We will play a small but important role in this fantastic sporting event, supporting West Midlands Police and Birmingham 2022.

Our personnel will be raising flags during medal ceremonies, supporting security efforts, and competing for medals. Sport, health and fitness are core elements of the Armed Forces community – this event shows who we are and what we do. I wish every success to those competing.

The British Army and Royal Air Force will be represented by athletes competing at this year's Games, with Armed Forces personnel taking part in boxing, judo and athletics.

Supported by the Armed Forces' elite athletes programmes, competing service personnel have been given time off their normal duties to focus on their training. Among them is Air Specialist (Class 1) Luke Pollard, a paratriathlete guide for world number one ranked paratriathlete David Ellis.

Air Specialist (Class 1) Luke Pollard, competing as a paratriathlete guide, said:

I'm proud to represent not only Team England but also the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Armed Forces. I do feel a sense of pride at representing my service. I'd love to be able to showcase what the RAF has to offer and how much they value sport.

As part of the Government's long-term planning for the delivery of the Games, a Venue Assistance Force (VAF) made up of Armed Forces personnel has deployed to Birmingham to support local authorities.

Like the military flag raisers, the VAF will be working across the Games' venues, on hand to support the security programme led by West Midlands Police. The VAF is made up of both regular and reservists representing a large number of regiments from across the UK.

Defence is providing a range of standard support to enable the safe delivery of the Games including expert advisers and bomb disposal teams.

Assistant Chief Constable Matt Ward, Gold Commander for Birmingham 2022 commented:

WMP have been working on the security plans for Birmingham 2022 since the City won the bid back in 2017 and our partners have been part of that planning every step of the way. If you are visiting the Games, it's likely you'll see a number of different uniforms but we are all working together to deliver a safe and secure Birmingham 2022 for athletes, the Games family, spectators and the public.

This joint approach to security has always been an important part of the overall security plan. We know there's often a real interest in the military being involved with security of events but it's standard practice for them to be part of the planning and delivery of events of this scale.

It's a great opportunity for our officers to get to work with military colleagues and officers and staff from so many different police forces and organisations and there's a fantastic team spirit, not just inside the stadiums and venues but out on the streets with everyone working together towards the same goal, a safe and truly memorable Birmingham 2022.