

# New hotline launched to report COVID fraudsters

News story

A new hotline has been launched to stop fraudsters illegally targeting COVID stimulus schemes.



In an initiative between government and the independent charity Crimestoppers, the public can now call a new COVID Fraud Hotline (0800 587 5030) anonymously and free of charge to report suspected fraudulent activity.

Over 150 COVID support schemes have been introduced by the government to help those struggling financially, but a minority of individuals have been abusing these schemes by claiming support illegally.

Speaking from the Crimestoppers' call centre today, Cabinet office Minister, Julia Lopez said:

Many people work hard to pay their taxes, so it's a gross injustice that fraudsters are shamefully taking advantage of measures set up to help people during the lockdown.

We cannot let criminals profit from the COVID crisis, as every pound stolen by fraudsters could be invested in our vital public services. This is why we are urging the public to report any information to the Crimestoppers COVID Fraud Hotline.

Chief Executive of Crimestoppers, Mark Hallas OBE said:

Fraud against the public purse denies access to vital funds that benefit us all.

It's crucial that anyone who has information or knows of someone who has fraudulently claimed Government grants or loans to contact

our charity completely anonymously and tell us what you know.

The COVID Fraud Hotline is open 24/7, 365 days a year on 0800 587 5030 or fill in the simple and secure anonymous form at [Covidfraudhotline.org](https://Covidfraudhotline.org). You'll be doing the right thing to help ensure the public purse is protected from fraudsters.

Although fraud is a hidden crime and can take time to be discovered, the public can still look out for tell tale signs. These can include unusual buying activity by companies and individuals, as well as cold calling by those falsely claiming that they are from the government, offering money for schemes.

The government has partnered with the independent charity Crimestoppers to provide an anonymous hotline to gather information to ensure it carefully guards public resources paid for by the taxpayer for vital services like hospitals and schools.

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## [UK Note Verbale 197/20 logged with UN Treaty Section](#)

The Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to a Note-Verbale from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the Secretary-General dated 9 January 2020 (N<sup>o</sup> 03/20 (NY/UN/395)), contained in a Communication by the Secretary-General on 31 January 2020. This concerns the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's extension of the 1994 Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

The United Kingdom rejects the claims contained in the Note-Verbale of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius. The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the territory of BIOT, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the islands that now form BIOT and the United Kingdom does not recognise its claim.

The United Kingdom's position in respect to our continued sovereignty over BIOT is set out in more detail in the United Kingdom's submission to the report of the Secretary-General (A/74/834) dated 18 May 2020.

The United Kingdom therefore continues to extend the 1994 Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea BIOT and apply its provisions.

The United Kingdom Mission kindly requests that the present objection to the Note-Verbale be duly recorded, circulated and published, including in any relevant publication issued by the United Nations.

The Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

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## [54,800 customers claim tax relief for working from home](#)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has received more than 54,800 claims from customers using a new online portal which allows workers to claim tax relief for working at home.

Launched on 1 October 2020, the online portal is simple to use and has been set up to process tax relief on additional expenses for employed workers who have been told to work from home by their employer to help stop the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

From 6 April 2020, employers have been able to pay employees up to £6 a week tax-free to cover additional costs if they have had to work from home. Employees who have not received the working from home expenses payment direct from their employer can apply to receive the tax relief from HMRC.

Eligible taxpayers can claim tax relief based on the rate at which they pay tax. For example, if an employed worker pays the 20% basic rate of tax and claims tax relief on £6 a week, they would receive £1.20 a week in tax relief (20% of £6 a week) towards the cost of their household bills.

Higher rate taxpayers would therefore receive £2.40 a week (40% of £6 a week). Over the course of the year, this could mean taxpayers can reduce the tax they pay by £62.40 or £124.80 respectively.

HMRC's Interim Director General of Customer Services, Karl Khan, said:

We want everyone to get the money that they are entitled to, so we've made the online service as easy to use as we can – it takes just a few minutes to make a claim.

Once the application has been approved, the online portal will adjust an individual's tax code for the 2020 to 2021 tax year. The employee will receive the tax relief directly through their salary and will continue to receive the adjustment until March 2021.

HMRC is also reminding employed workers, for example healthcare workers and care home staff, that they can also claim tax relief on work-related expenses, including cleaning their work uniforms.

The extra money can help thousands of critical workers whose efforts are helping save lives during the coronavirus pandemic.

Employees who clean, replace or repair uniform or tools, or pay fees and subscriptions for their work can apply online directly to HMRC and see instantly if they are eligible for tax relief on work expenses.

In 2018 to 2019, more than 500,000 customers (66% of total expense claims) applied for the tax relief using an agent rather than directly from HMRC and will have had to pay fees or commission. But those who are paid through Pay As You Earn (PAYE) can claim directly to HMRC and keep all of the money which they are entitled to.

Agents will not be able to use the new service to apply for the relief on a customer's behalf. This means customers will receive 100% of the tax relief that is due.

54,800 claims were submitted through the new portal between 1 and 11 October 2020.

Find out more about [claiming tax relief on work related expenses](#).

Access the [online portal for working from home expenses](#).

Employees do not need to provide evidence to show their bills have increased unless they are applying for tax relief on costs above the £6 per week flat rate, in which evidence of the increased costs may be required.

Employees will receive the tax relief that corresponds with the Income Tax rate that they pay. For example, it will differ in Scotland.

Employees may be able to claim tax relief on the cost of:

- expenses for working from home
- repairing or replacing small tools needed to do their job (for example, scissors or an electric drill)
- cleaning, repairing or replacing specialist clothing (for example, a branded uniform or safety boots)
- business mileage (not commuting)
- travel and overnight expenses
- professional fees and subscriptions

Employees can [check if they are eligible for tax relief on their expenses and claim online](#).

The majority of tax relief claims are for repairing or replacing tools and branded uniforms, professional subscriptions and business mileage. Healthcare workers, people working in the food and retail sector and those in the construction industry are most likely to make a claim.

Employees could alternatively receive the tax relief as a lump sum payment if they wait and apply once the 2020 to 2021 tax year has ended.

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The United Kingdom rejects the claims contained in the Note Verbale of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius. The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the territory of BIOT, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the islands that now form BIOT and the United Kingdom does not recognise its claim.

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The United Kingdom therefore continues to extend the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks to BIOT and apply its provisions.

The United Kingdom kindly requests that the present objection to the Note Verbale be duly recorded, circulated and published, including in any relevant publication issued by the United Nations.

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Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

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## Statement on new Chair of Advisory Committee on Packaging

Press release

Deep Sagar has been announced as the new Chair of the Advisory Committee on Packaging.



The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is pleased to announce the appointment of Deep Sagar as the new Chair of the Advisory Committee on Packaging (ACP), following an open selection process.

With over 15 years' experience working in senior management roles for multinational companies, including Coca-Cola and Unilever Bestfoods, Deep also has a broad range of experience as an independent chair in non-executive roles in the public sector. His experience will help provide strategic direction to the Committee as it continues to advise Defra and the Devolved Administrations on reform of the packaging producer responsibility system, as well as ensuring that the continued functioning of the current system.

Defra would like to extend its gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Phil Conran, who stands down later this month having served as the ACP Chair for over five years. Under his leadership, the ACP has played a pivotal role in advising government on the operation of the current system and in developing its proposals for a reformed packaging producer responsibility system.

Following the appointment of the new Chair, Defra will be running a recruitment exercise to fill a number of membership roles on the committee, which will be appointed by the end of March 2021.

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