

Applications for Self-Employment Income Support Scheme open early

- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme opens for applications today
- those eligible will receive government grant worth up to £7,500
- money expected to be in bank accounts by 25 May

From 8am this morning self-employed individuals or members of partnerships whose business has been adversely affected by coronavirus will be able to apply for a Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant worth 80% of their average monthly trading profits.

Millions are expected to benefit from the scheme with the payments – to be paid in a single instalment covering three months and capped at £7,500 – expected to land in bank accounts within six working days of each claim.

Everyone eligible for the SEISS, which is one of the most generous support schemes announced by any government in response to coronavirus, will be able to receive the government grant by 25 May, or within six days of a completed claim.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

We're working ahead of time to deliver support to the self-employed and from today, applications open for the millions of people eligible for the scheme.

With payments arriving before the end of this month, self-employed across the UK will have money in their pockets to help them through these challenging times.

From today, people will be able to make their claim on a specified date between 13-18 May, based on their Unique Tax Reference number. HMRC has assigned eligible self-employed individuals a specific date to apply on and this can be checked on HMRC's online checker.

The SEISS is part of a comprehensive package of support for self-employed people, including Bounce Back loans, income tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays and the various business support schemes the government has introduced to protect businesses during this time. Derek Cribb, CEO of IPSE (the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed) said:

For the self-employed, Coronavirus is not only a health crisis, but also a pressing income crisis. It is therefore very welcome that the Government has managed to get this new scheme in place ahead of schedule, and that a section of the freelance community can now get

the help they need early. We are delighted that the government has heeded much of IPSE's advice by setting up the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, which extends a much-needed lifeline to those self-employed people who are eligible for it.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

The self-employment income support scheme represents a lifeline for the millions of self-employed people who are expected to qualify. I would encourage all those who think they are eligible to use the online checker if they've not done so yet, and to apply on the date allocated.

We are particularly pleased to see the scheme opening earlier than scheduled, with a simple fast-track application and a promise for speedy payment. Getting the system designed and built ahead of schedule is impressive. Just like the Job Retention Scheme portal we hope it will cope with the high expected demand. I would like to pay tribute to the staff of HMRC for the behind the scenes work to get this scheme off the ground.

Brian Berry, Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders said:

The self-employed account for 40% of the construction workforce so the government's decision to bring forward the payment to the end May will be very welcome news for the many independent tradespeople who operate in construction. The government's support package to date has been targeted at businesses so the self-employed will be welcoming this cash boost at a time when they need it most.

Further information

Individuals are eligible if their business has been adversely affected by coronavirus, they traded in the tax year 2019 to 2020, intend to continue trading, and they:

- earn at least half of their income through self-employment
- have trading profits of no more than £50,000 per year
- traded in the tax year 2018 to 2019 and submitted their Self Assessment tax return on or before 23 April 2020 for that year

HMRC calculate the amount to be paid to each eligible claimant based on an average of the tax returns for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Customers have been invited to claim their SEISS grant on a specified date, from 13 – 18 May. They won't be able to apply before their claim date but can make a claim after that day.

People can check their date using HMRC's online checker at any time.

<https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/self-employment-support/enter-unique-taxpayer-reference>

For further information, please read HMRC's guidance or speak to your tax agent. If you need further support, please use HMRC's webchat service or call the Covid-19 Helpline on 0800 024 1222.

Government to support businesses through Trade Credit Insurance guarantee

Trade Credit Insurance provides cover to hundreds of thousands of business to business transactions, particularly in non-service sectors, such as manufacturing and construction. It insures suppliers selling goods against the company they are selling to defaulting on payment, giving businesses the confidence to trade with one another. But due to Coronavirus and businesses struggling to pay bills, they risk having credit insurance withdrawn, or premiums increasing to unaffordable levels.

To prevent this from happening, the government will temporarily guarantee business-to-business transactions currently supported by Trade Credit Insurance, ensuring the majority of insurance coverage will be maintained across the market. This will support supply chains and help businesses to trade with confidence as they can trust that they will be protected if a customer defaults on payment.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen said:

This country's businesses are crucial in helping us to kick start the economy as we get back to work, and I will do everything I can to help support them through this difficult time. By guaranteeing business-to-business transactions currently supported by Trade Credit Insurance, we will help to maintain a vital cog in our economy.

This is on top of an unprecedented package of support we have put in place to help protect individuals, businesses and the economy.

Business Minister, Paul Scully, said:

Giving businesses the confidence to continue trading is vital to seeing us through this crisis. This guarantee will be essential as

we seek to reopen new sectors of the economy and get the UK back to work in a way that is safe for everyone.

The guarantee will be delivered through a temporary reinsurance agreement with insurers currently operating in the market.

The government will work with businesses and the industry on the full details of the scheme to ensure firms are supported and risk is appropriately shared between the government and insurers.

The guarantees will cover trading by domestic firms and exporting firms and the intent is for agreements to be in place with insurers by end of this month.

The guarantee will be temporary and targeted to cover CV-19 economic challenges, and will provisionally last until the end of the year. It will be followed by a review of the TCI market to ensure it can continue to support businesses in future. Further details will be announced in due course.

Further information

- in whole of 2018 £450 million was paid in TCI premiums to cover over £350 billion in business activity
- as of April 2020 there was over £171 billion business activity insured, covering transactions between around 13000 suppliers and 650,000 buyers

Groceries survey shows supermarket behaviour at a record high

The UK's supermarkets have achieved a record improvement in their dealings with groceries suppliers, Christine Tacon's seventh and final GCA survey has revealed.

Early analysis of suppliers' responses to the comprehensive annual groceries sector survey shows that retailer compliance with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice is at an all-time high.

A record of nearly 1,500 direct suppliers to the 13 regulated retailers completed the survey and just 36% said they had experienced a Code-related issue at any point in the past 12 months – down from 41% in 2019.

This was a particularly striking result as the survey period included three weeks when the sector was facing the challenge of huge increases in consumer buying of certain products as the COVID-19 emergency hit. And it represents significant progress since the first survey was conducted in 2014 when 79% of suppliers said they had experienced issues.

In addition, direct suppliers recognised improvements across every Code-related issue. The most common issues experienced by suppliers in 2020 related to forecasting, delay in payments and de-listing. Each of these is now at its lowest reported level – at 13%, 12% and 12% respectively.

In comparison, 35% of suppliers reported experiencing delay in payments in 2014, 33% experienced issues with forecasting and 22% with de-listing. The most reported issue in 2014 – forensic auditing – which 45% of suppliers highlighted, is now at just 5%.

Ms Tacon said:

This is my final survey as GCA as I will be stepping down later in 2020 after seven years in the role and it tells an extremely positive story.

I am delighted to report that in a year when an additional retailer – TJ Morris – was included in the survey and the sector faced the challenge of COVID-19 my survey demonstrates that UK supermarkets continue to make substantial progress.

The survey period included three weeks when the sector was under huge pressure but the data shows no adverse impact on compliance with the Code as retailers and suppliers raced to keep supermarket shelves filled.

Indeed it corroborates my own discussions with the retailers who have told me not one supplier has raised an issue with their Code Compliance Officers or asked for an issue to be escalated. I made it clear in my position statement issued on 17 March that suppliers should not wait to raise issues with retailers.

This is a testament to the stronger and more effective communication between retailers and suppliers which the GCA has fostered over the past seven years and which has proved so valuable during this emergency.

It also demonstrates that the Code has provided the flexibility retailers need to maintain a vital and efficient supply chain that is getting groceries to the consumer.

The GCA is continuing to analyse the details of the survey carried out on its behalf by the independent polling company YouGov and will publish more information, including how suppliers rank the retailers for Code compliance, in the coming week.

Notes to editors:

New partnership to sequence human genomes in fight against coronavirus

- Genetic susceptibility to coronavirus to be tested in ground-breaking nationwide study
- Genomes of thousands of patients with coronavirus will be sequenced to understand how a person's genetic makeup could influence how they react to the virus
- Genomics England partners with University of Edinburgh to lead research drive to support the search for new treatments

A major new human whole genome sequencing study will take place across the NHS, involving up to 20,000 people currently or previously in an intensive care unit with coronavirus, as well as 15,000 individuals who have mild or moderate symptoms.

Genomics England, is partnering with the GenOMICC consortium, Illumina and the NHS to launch the research drive, which will reach patients in 170 intensive care units throughout the UK.

The project is backed by £28 million from Genomics England, UK Research and Innovation, the Department of Health and Social Care and the National Institute for Health Research. Illumina will sequence all 35,000 genomes and share some of the cost via an in-kind contribution.

The study, facilitated by the University of Edinburgh and multiple NHS hospitals, will explore the varied effects coronavirus has on patients, supporting the search for treatments by identifying those most at risk and helping to fast-track new therapies into clinical trials.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

As each day passes we are learning more about this virus, and understanding how genetic makeup may influence how people react to it is a critical piece of the jigsaw.

This is a ground-breaking and far-reaching study which will harness the UK's world-leading genomics science to improve treatments and ultimately save lives across the world.

Since genetic discoveries need very large numbers of patients, the GenOMICC study ultimately aims to recruit every single COVID-19 patient who is admitted to intensive care in the UK.

Patients will only be enrolled in the study if they, or their next of kin, have given their consent.

As part of this study so far, DNA samples have been collected from almost

2,000 patients.

Chris Wigley, CEO of Genomics England, said:

At Genomics England, we are extremely proud to be working with the NHS and other partners in the fight against COVID-19, to understand why people respond differently to this infection.

Our goal with this study is to help the national response to this terrible pandemic, using the experience we have gained through the 100,000 Genomes Project, and leveraging our ongoing work in genomic research and healthcare.

As with all groundbreaking science, we don't know what the answer is yet – but we are convening the finest minds in academia and industry to try to find out.

Genomics England will read the data from entire genomes – or genetic blueprints – of thousands of people who have been most severely affected by coronavirus and compare them to those who experience only mild symptoms.

Dr Kenneth Baillie, Chief Investigator at the University of Edinburgh, leading this study, said:

Our genes play a role in determining who becomes desperately sick with infections like COVID-19. Understanding these genes will help us to choose treatments for clinical trials.

The GenOMICC study was launched before this outbreak and it is recruiting in more than 160 ICUs across the country with tremendous support from the critical care community. We are excited to work with Genomics England to tackle this new and complex disease.

By combining the genome with rich clinical characteristics and comparing those who become severely ill with those that experience a much milder illness, the consortium hopes to gain new insights into how the virus affects us.

This ground-breaking research may help explain why some patients with coronavirus experience a mild infection, others require intensive care and why some patients die from the disease.

By discovering why some people are predisposed to developing life-threatening symptoms, the consortium will be able to identify treatments which have the best chance of success in clinical trials, and potentially identify people at extreme risk if they develop COVID-19.

This work – sequencing human genomes – complements the UK COVID-19 Viral Sequencing Programme (COG-UK) announced in March and its work already

underway to sequence the genome of the virus itself, led by Public Health England and the Sanger Institute.

Professor Sir Mark Caulfield, Chief Scientist at Genomics England, said:

For the first time in a generation we face a global viral pandemic that is life threatening for some people, yet others have a mild infection. By reading the whole genome we may be able to identify variation that affects response to COVID-19 and discover new therapies that could reduce harm, save lives and even prevent future outbreaks.

Whole genome sequencing will be carried out by Illumina at its laboratories in Cambridge, UK, where they successfully delivered the 100,000 Genomes Project together with Genomics England and the NHS.

Paula Dowdy, General Manager and SVP Illumina, EMEA, said:

We have a long-standing partnership with Genomics England and are proud to support this new genomics initiative from our Cambridge-based lab. The results will establish a unique platform for researchers to understand the human response to coronavirus infection, leading towards new treatments and ways to control infection spread.

Today's announcement demonstrates how different parts of the UK's world-leading genomics community are working together to get a full picture of both the spread and impact of the virus.

Data from the person's own genome can be linked to the virus genome data provided via the previously announced viral sequencing programme by the COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium (COG-UK), a partnership of NHS organisations, UK public health agencies, the Sanger Institute and UK academic centres.

Professor Sharon Peacock CBE, Director of COG-UK, said:

This study is a fantastic example of how different parts of the UK genomics community are working together to get a full genomic picture of the spread and impact of the virus.

In COG-UK we have already sequenced over 10,000 virus genomes from patients with COVID-19. Linking this data to the patient's own genome data in the Genomics England-GenOMICC study may provide unique insights into how the patient and virus genomes act together to influence the patient's response to the infection and will help inform and improve our response to future outbreaks.

Professor Sir Mark Walport, Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation

(UKRI), who have given £3 million in funding to the project, said:

The UK is a global leader in the genetic analysis of disease. By applying this expertise to examine the role of genetic factors in COVID-19, including in young severely impacted patients without known underlying health issues, this study could identify important risk factors and disease mechanisms, which may lead to new diagnostic and therapeutic approaches.

Part of the overall genomic study will also focus on children and young adults severely affected by COVID-19.

The NIHR BioResource is partnering with GenOMICC and Genomics England to provide infrastructure, expertise and £1 million funding to investigate this by collecting samples from these young patients and their parents.

Professor John Bradley CBE, Chief Investigator of the NIHR BioResource, said:

The NIHR BioResource is delighted to build on our established partnership with Genomics England and work with GenOMICC to understand in particular why some children and young adults are so severely affected by COVID19.

These initiatives will enable novel insights into the virus, as well as possible human factors that influence the effects of the disease, and whether a combination of both shape outcomes for NHS patients.

Professor Dame Sue Hill, Chief Scientific Officer and SRO for Genomics at NHS England and NHS Improvement said:

This study has the potential to dramatically improve our understanding of COVID-19 – it could help us to identify whether underlying genomic differences play a part in how people react to the virus and why some people have few or no symptoms whilst others can get very ill.

I am very grateful to all the staff, patients and families who are working on and participating in this study, at what is a very challenging time.

The data that is collected during the study will also inform global strategic planning for possible later waves of the pandemic, and for new pandemics in the future.

For now, the prospect of this study's findings should not detract from the fact that we must all continue to follow the government's guidance, which at the moment involves staying home and staying safe.

Since genetic discoveries need very large numbers of patients, patients who have already had COVID-19 and have now recovered are invited to volunteer to take part in the study.

[Find out how to register interest to take part in the GenOMICC study](#)

[New guidance on spending time outdoors](#)

- From today, people are allowed to spend more time outdoors
- They will be able to go to parks and beaches to sunbathe, have a picnic and go fishing
- Outdoor sports courts can reopen, including tennis and basketball courts as well as golf courses
- People will also be able to see one person from another household, as long as they follow social distance guidance
- This follows scientific advice that the risk of infection outside is significantly lower than inside
- All of the new regulations are subject to social distancing rules

From today (13 May 2020) people in England can spend more time outdoors and enjoy a wider range of activities for any length of time, subject to social distancing rules.

People and their households can relax in the park, sunbathe, go for a picnic and go fishing.

They will also be able to spend time with one member of another household, one-on-one, as long as they adhere to strict social distancing guidelines at all times, staying 2 metres apart.

Outdoor sports facilities can reopen including outdoor tennis courts, golf clubs and basketball courts meaning that people can play a greater range of sport. Again, they will be able to do this alone, with their household or one other person, while adhering to social distancing.

Guidance that said people could only go out to exercise once a day have also been removed.

People will also be able to travel further to enjoy their time outside, with no restrictions on how far they can go to get to the countryside, National Parks and beaches in England.

The advice remains that everybody should continue to avoid public transport other than for essential journeys. Therefore, people should only make these journeys by cycling, walking or driving in a private vehicle.

People also should check in advance of visiting places like National Parks

and beaches to make sure they are prepared for visitors.

Today's advice is strictly limited to spending time with your household or with one other person and is subject to social distancing rules.

It remains the case that you cannot gather with more than one member of another household for example to play sports. You also cannot:

- go on holiday
- visit and stay overnight at a holiday home or second home
- visit the homes of friends and family, unless it's to help a vulnerable person, for medical reasons, or to take a child to another household with whom parental responsibilities are shared

More stringent enforcement measures for non-compliance with the new rules have also come into effect today.

Fines have been increased, and will now start at £100, which will be lowered to £50 if paid within 14 days. This will double on each further repeat offence up to £3,200.

This is vital to send a clear message to the small minority who break the law, and to safeguard the country's recovery.

The police will continue to use their common sense, discretion and experience when people are not following the guidelines. As they have throughout, they will engage, explain, encourage and only as a last resort consider enforcement by way of fixed penalty notice.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Spending time outdoors, exercising or just enjoying the countryside is essential for our physical health and wellbeing. The restrictions have impacted everyone, but particularly those without much living space or a garden.

We want to make life as healthy, bearable and social as possible, whilst controlling the virus and saving lives. That is why we have worked to find safe ways to enable more people to spend more time outdoors.

Environment Secretary Rt Hon George Eustice MP said:

We know that spending time outdoors in green spaces and the countryside is important for our physical and mental wellbeing, especially during this challenging period.

Our updated guidance advises how to do this safely and I urge people to follow it, continuing to maintain social distancing in order to protect yourself and others.

Culture Secretary Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP said:

Sport and exercise has huge benefits for our physical and mental health, which is why we need everyone to stay as active as possible.

Allowing unlimited outdoor exercise will be welcome news to many, but it remains absolutely vital that everyone practices strict social distancing whilst playing sport to keep themselves and others safe.

National Police Chiefs' Council Chair Martin Hewitt said:

The efforts of the public mean police officers have rarely had to enforce the government regulations so far. I am confident the vast majority will continue to do their bit and follow guidance in this next stage.

We are all now able to spend much more time outdoors and each of us need to take responsibility for doing that within the social restrictions set out by the government. Our approach will continue use common sense and discretion, and to engage, explain, encourage and, only as a last resort, enforce.

To support this change in advice, the government is also publishing guidance on how to do it safely. This includes [guidance on accessing green spaces](#).

Safer public places during coronavirus in urban centres and green space guidance, also published today, sets out how high streets and areas around transport hubs and parks can be managed and operated safely, giving people confidence to return to public spaces.

This also suggests practical measures owners and operators can take to help people socially distance in public places including making more room for pedestrians and making it easier for people to cycle or walk to work.

Measures suggested in the guidance include:

- introducing new cycle paths or extending existing paths
- making high-streets streets pedestrianised or introducing one-way traffic
- separate entry and exit routes in shops
- changing car parking layouts
- widening footpaths, temporary barriers or spray markings outside shops to support queueing
- signs to encourage people to wait to allow others to pass on footpaths

Developed with local councils and town and city managers as well as landowners, commercial landlords and management companies, the guidance also

sets out measures for land around commercial buildings, transport hubs and green spaces including parks and cemeteries.

The government is also publishing guidance today (13 May 2020) on outdoor sport and recreation, to increase people's access to local, outdoor physical activity.

The guidance details how the public can carry out more regular and diverse exercise, and how outdoor sports courts and facility providers can consider reopening, in line with the government's advice.

The government's [COVID-19 Recovery strategy](#) can be read online.

People in the shielded group with very specific medical conditions who are likely to be at the greatest risk of serious complications from coronavirus, have been advised to continue to shield until the end of June and to do everything they can to stay at home. The government has a support scheme in place to provide help with access to food and basic supplies, care, medicines and social support.

This guidance is for people in England. When visiting Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, you must adhere to the advice of the devolved administrations at all times.

From today, people in England are able to:

- spend time outdoors, including exercise, with one person who is not in your household as long as you stay 2 metres apart
- exercise more than once a day
- go for a picnic, to sunbathe or relax and read a book
- spend time at sports courts, including outdoor tennis, basketball courts and golf courses
- go fishing on their own, with their household, or with one other person while adhering to social distancing rules
- drive to outdoor open spaces irrespective of distance. You can travel to outdoor open spaces, in a private vehicle, alone or with members of your own household
- travel to beaches and beauty spots. But you should check first if facilities, such as car parks, are open to receive visitors
- travel to the countryside – but continue to follow the Countryside Code by respecting the local community and protecting the natural environment
- go swimming in either lakes or the sea as part of daily exercise provided that social distancing guidelines are observed – advice against using public indoor and outdoor pools remains in place.

This new provision enabling increased outdoor activity does not allow people to:

- go on holiday
- visit and stay overnight at a holiday home or second home
- visit the homes of friends and family, unless it's to help a vulnerable person, for medical reasons, or to take a child to another household

with whom parental responsibilities are shared

- gather with more than one member of another household for recreational reasons e.g. to play group sports
- swim in a public pool
- use a playground or outdoor gym
- exercise in an indoor fitness studio, gym, swimming pool, or other indoor leisure centres or facilities
- visit a private or ticketed attraction

The full Safer public places guidance will be published online on Wednesday 13 May.

[Access to green spaces guidance](#) can be read online and will be updated on Wednesday 13 May.

Business like pubs, clubs, restaurants, and theatres will also remain closed.

Owners and operators of public spaces will need to consider the impact of any new measures on people with disabilities and other affected groups and ensure clear information is made available to all users on how they can continue to access public places in a safe way.

The Safer public places guidance also encourages owners and operators of public places to increase cleaning at touch points such as handrails and gates, and to ensure there are facilities available for people to maintain good hygiene.

Suggestions include replacing hand dryers with paper towels, minimising use of portable toilets and increasing rubbish collections in public places.