

Business Helpsheet regarding Coronavirus pandemic

19th March 2020

Throughout the Coronavirus outbreak, our main priority is the health and safety of our staff and clients, closely followed by continuing to provide an excellent service to our clients.

As such, we ask that you choose alternatives to face-to-face meetings whenever possible. Telephone and video calls can be arranged, and documents can be brought into the office as usual. Our office is currently open to staff and we have taken the time over the last week to test our I.T. systems to ensure that we can work from home, and therefore client work will progress seamlessly should government guidance change again.

We will update you with further information as necessary, and in the meantime have collected together below information and resources we feel are useful to our clients at this time. We are always available to answer any queries on **01642 606003**.

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

The government is proposing to guarantee up to £350bn of loans made to UK companies during this crisis period, via the British Business Bank. Companies big and small across the UK are under enormous pressure, with cash flow being a particular concern as a result of unprecedented reductions in turnover, but no comparative reduction in fixed costs.

Without this government-backed guarantee, banks would be less likely to lend money to large numbers of businesses in the current environment and, even if they were to, they could be expected to insist upon significant guarantees from directors.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) should limit impact on the economy long term, by overcoming what we all hope will be a short term cash issue.

CBILS is not a grant. It is a loan, and Directors will need to be comfortable that their businesses can sustain this additional debt over the medium to long term. The government has advised that CBILS will offer favourable interest, with the first six months of the loan being interest free.

[Click here to visit the British Business Bank website for further information.](#)

Business Rates Holidays

Business rates have been scrapped on all commercial properties in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.

The Chancellor explicitly stated that this will extend to all shops, pubs, theatres, music venues and restaurants. We could infer from this that cinemas, clubs, leisure centres, hotels, and entertainment venues will also be exempted.

Again, the speed of this crisis means that details remain unclear, and there may yet be examples which aren't covered by these changes.

[Click here to read the Government's Guidance for Businesses.](#)

SSP Relief

Legislation is to be brought forward to allow employers to recover Coronavirus-related SSP from the government.

This will be limited to employers with fewer than 250 employees (as at 28 Feb 2020), and will cover up to two weeks' SSP.

This will only apply once the new regulations are in force.

[Click here to read the Government's Guidance for Employers.](#)

Business Grants

Business grants of £25k will be made to retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, subject to them having a property with a rateable value of between £15k and £51k.

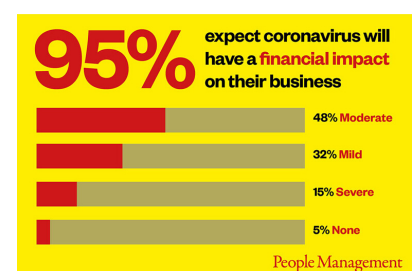
The 'smallest' businesses in the country, across all sectors, will also be able to seek grants of £10k. The purpose of these grants is to cover some of the company's fixed costs.

The government has issued guidance on what is meant by a small business. It said that it will apply to all businesses in receipt of *small business rate relief* or *rural rate relief*.

We know that these grants will be paid by local authorities. Conditions are as yet unclear but please be wary of anyone contacting you offering help to apply.

[Click here to read the Government's Guidance for Businesses.](#)

Financial Impact



Credit: People Management (click here)

Tax Bill Payment Plans

Contact HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) as soon as possible if you have missed your payment or if you cannot pay your tax bill on time. You will have to pay interest if you pay late but may avoid penalties by contacting HMRC as soon as possible - or instructing us to do so.

Payment plans are set on a case by case basis, and HMRC now have a helpline specifically if you cannot pay because of Coronavirus.

Telephone: 0800 015 9559
Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm
Saturday, 8am to 4pm

[Click here for further information.](#)

Companies House - late filing penalties

We want to issue a reminder that if you submit company accounts and reports late, the law imposes an automatic penalty.

If, *before the filing deadline*, it becomes apparent that accounts will not be filed on time due to effects of Coronavirus, you may make an application to Companies House to extend your deadline.

[Click here for guidance from Companies House.](#)

HR Helpline

Our HR partners, Avensure (North East), are offering an onsite or telephone consultation free of charge to Davies Tracey clients, to assist businesses in managing fallout from the Coronavirus.

Senior HR consultant Russell Smith can either visit your premises or carry out a telephone consultation.

You may wish to discuss the following:

- Introducing or implementing 'lay off and short time working' policies
- Utilising a 'variation of terms' policy
- Planning for potential large-scale absenteeism
- Considering alternative ways of working (change to job roles, shifts, weekend and evening working)
- Calculating the cost of redundancy
- Dealing with staff consultations in a transparent way
- Flexible working requests
- Avoiding the discrimination trap
- Working from home or other locations
- What happens if the MD or owner falls sick?
- Employees told to self-isolate who insist on coming into work

To arrange a consultation, please call Sophie Coleman-Doyle on 0330 100 7634.

Business Interruption Insurance

Official guidance, as announced by the Chancellor on 17 March, is that those businesses that have cover for pandemics and government-ordered closures, and operate pubs, restaurants etc. should be entitled to claim from their insurers.

This is notwithstanding that the government has not forced the closure of these venues, but simply has advised against anyone visiting them.

[Click here for more on this from the Association of British Insurers.](#)

Limiting the risk of infection

Like every business we've talked to recently, we have increased the rigour of our office hygiene and cleaning protocols, and ensured that all staff are able to recognise Covid-19 symptoms and self-isolate if necessary.

But what else can you do to limit the risk of infection in your office?

It's good practice for employers to:

- keep everyone updated on actions being taken to reduce risks of exposure in the workplace
- make sure everyone's contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date
- make sure managers are clear on any relevant processes, for example sickness reporting and sick pay, and procedures in case someone in the workplace shows symptoms of the virus
- encourage everyone to wash their hands regularly (visit washyourlyrics.com for a fun take on timing 20 seconds)
- provide hand sanitiser and tissues for staff
- limit all non-essential travel

Most importantly, keep up to date with the latest government Coronavirus advice on GOV.UK

[Click here for more employer specific advice from ACAS.](#)

How you can help us

We ask for your understanding at this time, particularly if your usual Davies Tracey contact becomes unavailable. We have a dedicated and well informed team and are confident that, even in the case of a full office closure, we will be able to continue to provide a full service to you.

We will shortly be writing out to those clients for whom we file their personal Tax Returns to set out the information that we will need to give attention to the Return for the y/e 5 April 2020. Giving early attention to the personal Return for the above year, and trading accounts if relevant, will enable us to advise you of and make any tax reclaim due; if possible reduce the level of the 31 July 2020 advance payment and advise you as to the level of the 31 January and 31 July 2021 payments. *This is especially important in that those payments, which might be subject to change, could well be coming payable at a time when your next trading results have been affected by the current crisis.*

The same rationale also applies to our limited company clients for whom early notification of Corporation Tax liabilities will be of great importance.

Please speak with your usual contact if you would like to discuss your Return and accounts obligations in more detail.

Coming soon

We are busy preparing a video recording of our Corona Contingency Information Session so that it is available online for all clients to watch. Please keep checking our website at www.daviestracey.co.uk/news/practice-news