



Written 20 May 2020

## C19 BUSINESS NEWS UPDATE

### CORONAVIRUS STATUTORY SICK PAY REBATE SCHEME SET TO LAUNCH

Employers will be able to make claims through the Coronavirus Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme from 26 May.

The government has announced a new online service will be launched on 26 May for small and medium-sized employers to recover Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) payments they have made to their employees.

Employers are eligible if they have a PAYE payroll scheme that was created and started before 28 February 2020 and they had fewer than 250 employees before the same date.

The repayment will cover up to 2 weeks of SSP and is payable if an employee is unable to work because they:

- have coronavirus; or
- are self-isolating and unable to work from home; or
- are shielding because they have been advised that they are at high risk of severe illness from coronavirus

You can check if your business can claim back Statutory Sick Pay paid to employees due to coronavirus (COVID-19) here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-back-statutory-sick-pay-paid-to-employees-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

This scheme will allow small and medium-sized employers, with fewer than 250 employees, to apply to HMRC to recover the costs of paying coronavirus-related SSP.

Employers will be able to make their claims through a new online service from 26 May. This means they will receive repayments at the relevant rate of SSP that they have paid to current or former employees for eligible periods of sickness starting on or after 13 March 2020.

To prepare to make their claim, employers should keep records of all the SSP payments that they wish to claim from HMRC.

### Further information

The current rate of SSP is £95.85 per week (before 5 April the rate was £94.25). Employers can choose to go further and pay more than the statutory minimum. This is known as occupational or contractual sick pay.

Where an employer pays more than the current rate of SSP in sick pay, they will only be able to reclaim the SSP rate.

The scheme covers all types of employment contracts, including:

- full-time employees
- part-time employees
- employees on agency contracts
- employees on flexible or zero-hour contracts

Note: Other SSP eligibility criteria apply.

Connected companies and charities can also use the scheme if their total combined number of PAYE employees is fewer than 250 on or before 28 February 2020. Employees do not have to provide a doctor's fit note for their employer to make a claim under the scheme.

Employers can furlough their employees who have been advised to shield in line with public health guidance and are unable to work from home, under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Once furloughed, the employee should no longer receive SSP and would be classified as a furloughed employee. Where an employee has been notified to shield and has not been furloughed, the rebate will compensate up to 2 weeks of SSP from 16 April 2020.

If you need assistance with a claim please contact us.

## **ADDITIONAL £40M FOR CUTTING-EDGE START-UPS**

Innovative businesses and start-ups are set to benefit from a £40 million government investment to drive forward new technological advances. The government is doubling investment in the Fast Start Competition with an additional £20 million. The competition aims to fast-track the development of innovations borne out of the coronavirus crisis while supporting the UK's next generation of cutting-edge start-ups – helping to build the businesses of tomorrow and propel their future prosperity.

Among the successful projects to receive the funding to date, is a virtual-reality surgical training simulator and an online farmers' market platform.

- £40 million of government funding to support the UK's next generation of innovative businesses
- projects to benefit from the funding include virtual reality training platforms for surgeons, virtual farmers' markets and other innovations borne out of the coronavirus pandemic
- funding comes from a £211 million government investment package to encourage businesses developing new technologies

The Fast Start Competition was launched in April in response to the outbreak and is being managed by Innovate UK.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/innovate-uk>

## APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME RESPONSE

Guidance for apprentices, employers, training providers and assessment organisations in response to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19).

See: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response?utm\\_source=df7cee49-94a8-491e-bb5d-1ff1066c2886&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response?utm_source=df7cee49-94a8-491e-bb5d-1ff1066c2886&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

The Government states this is a difficult time for apprentices, employers and providers of apprenticeship training, assessment and external assurance. The government is committed to supporting apprentices, and employers continue to build the skills capabilities the country needs now and in the future.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responding by taking steps to ensure that, wherever possible, apprentices can continue and complete their apprenticeship, despite any break they need to take as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19), and to support providers during this challenging time.

The support they are providing includes:

- supporting employers, providers, and apprentices to work together to mutually agree where and how this training takes place. This includes in the workplace where a provider is able to do so safely and where that workplace meets new 'coronavirus secure' guidelines on ensuring the workplace is safe
- confirming flexibilities to allow furloughed apprentices to continue their training and to take their end-point assessment, and to allow existing furloughed employees to start a new apprenticeship, as long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for their employer
- encouraging training providers to deliver training to apprentices remotely, and via e-learning, as far as is practicable
- allowing the modification of end-point assessment arrangements, including remote assessments wherever practicable and possible - this is in order to support employers, providers and end-point assessment organisation (EPAOs) to maintain progress and achievement for apprentices
- clarifying that apprentices ready for assessment, but who cannot be assessed due to coronavirus issues, can have their end-point assessment rescheduled
- apprentices whose gateway is delayed can have an extension to the assessment time frame
- enabling employers and training providers to report and initiate a break in learning, where the interruption to learning due to coronavirus is greater than 4 weeks
- confirming that, where apprentices are made redundant, it is the ambition to find them alternative employment and continue their apprenticeship as quickly as possible and within 12 weeks
- confirming that where apprentices are made redundant and are ready to go through gateway, that providers and EPAOs are able to make the necessary assessment arrangements to support these apprentices

- confirming that they are extending the transition period onto the apprenticeship service. Funds available for new starts on non-levy procured contracts can now be used until 31 March 2021. All starts will be through the apprenticeship service from 1 April 2021

The Government are keeping the developing situation, and guidance, under review and will continue updating this guidance as new information is available and/or the situation evolves.

The information should be read alongside the government's COVID-19 guidance and support for businesses, in particular the salary support for furloughed employees, which also applies to apprentices.

They have also broken down some of this guidance into articles for employers, training providers and EPAOs, as well as articles for apprentices. These can be found on the Apprenticeship Service Help page.

Employers, training providers and EPAOs: <https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb>

Apprentices: <https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/sections/360003798540-Apprentice>

Read guidance from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) on the delivery of assessment here: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/response-to-covid-19/>