

LONDON GROWTH HUB

Business Support for the UK's Business Community

Introduction

During these difficult times, we are ever cognisant of our customers' needs to maintain some sort of business continuity. The Government, regional and local administrations have all contributed towards supporting the UK's business community. In order for our clients to access national, regional or more local support as quickly as possible, we have curated the support to date as well as other useful links herein; E&OE.

Business Advice

If your business is based in London and you wish to speak with a business adviser, you may arrange to do so here: [Get Support](#)

There are links further down to support available in the UK's other regions.

Business Support - Government

The following link takes you to the Government's Business Support site which contains a lot of useful information, further links and access to resources to help you through the current crisis: [Business Support](#)

Government Support - Special Measures to Support Businesses through the Pandemic

A quick overview of the special measure introduced to support SMEs to date:

[Business Support | Coronavirus Financial Support](#)

Individual links to the key measures announced to date:

The Job Retention Scheme including guidance for company directors: [Claim for your employees' wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#)

The latest estimate is that the claim process will go live from 20th April.

In the meantime, ACAS has produced some useful templates for any organisation considering furloughing employees: [Furlough letter template](#)

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme for sole traders: [Claim a grant through the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Self-employment Income Support Scheme](#)

HMRC will contact eligible self-employed individuals when the scheme is ready to pay out.

In the meantime, if you have a tax bill due on 31st July, you may defer that payment. Further details here along with general information if you have other tax issues: [If you cannot pay your tax bill on time](#)

For business rates payers there is relief and the possibility of grants available for businesses operating in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Most councils have contacted eligible rates payers but here are links to the schemes available.

Rates relief: [Check if your retail, hospitality or leisure business is eligible for business rates relief due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Rates grants: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): business support grant funding - guidance for businesses](#)

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Rates relief for nurseries: [Check if your nursery is eligible for business rates relief due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Relief for estate agents, letting agents and bingo halls: [Covid-19: Estate agents, lettings agencies and bingo halls to pay no business rates this coming financial year](#)

Please note that letters on how to claim the rates grants have been sent to the majority of business rates payers eligible but some businesses may be locked out of their premises or have difficulties picking up post. If you believe you are eligible for either rates relief and or a grant but have not heard anything, you may attempt to contact the business rates team at your local council but please be patient as councils are overwhelmed with enquiries.

Statutory protection for commercial tenants: [Extra protection for businesses with ban on evictions for commercial tenants who miss rent payments](#)

Deferral of VAT payments: [Deferral of VAT payments due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Statutory Sick Pay: [Claim back Statutory Sick Pay paid to employees due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Changes in rules in respect of annual leave: [Rules on carrying over annual leave to be relaxed to support key industries during COVID-19](#)

Summary of Government business support: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Business support](#)

Link to the Government Business Support site: [Wider Business Support from government](#)

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

There are typically very long delays in the loan process caused by the overwhelming number of applicants and distance working measures employed by the banks. It is important that you have all up to date financial information and documents available to hand at the time of applying in order to satisfy your bank's demand for information. You should, in the first instance apply to your own bank, rather than one of the non-banking lenders. It has been announced that a number of new lenders have entered the scheme such as Oak North Bank and Starling Bank to name a couple.

General overview: [Apply for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#)

More detail from the British Business Bank including how and where to apply: [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme \(CBILS\) - for SMEs and Advisors](#)

For more general information on financing options for SMEs: [The Business Finance Guide: Finance options for smaller businesses](#)

Sector-related support from outside of Government: [Coronavirus support from Business Representative Organisations and Trade Associations](#)

General information in respect of business closures: [Business Closures and Stay at Home FAQs](#)

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On a General note, here are links to Government departments and agencies:

[HM Revenue & Customs](#)

[HM Treasury](#)

[Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#)

[Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#)

[UK Intellectual Property Office](#)

[Innovate UK](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice for employers and employees](#)

[Public Health England](#)

Charities

Guidance for charities from the Charity Commission: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for the charity sector](#)

Financial support measures announced for the charity sector: [Chancellor sets out extra £750 million coronavirus funding for frontline charities](#)

Regional Support

Throughout the UK there is regional support which has been adapted to provide an ongoing service during the Coronavirus crisis.

In England, regional business support is provided through the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) who may be providing different levels of support, depending on resources. You can find yours here: [LEP Growth Hubs](#)

For London businesses, you may book a telephone session with a Business Adviser here: [Get Support](#)

For the devolved parts of the UK, their own administrations provide support which may be found as follows.

Scotland:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Information for individuals and businesses in Scotland](#)

[Find business support in Scotland - Find Business Support](#)

Wales:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Information for individuals and businesses in Wales](#)

[Business Wales | Supporting businesses in Wales](#)

Northern Ireland:

[COVID-19 Guidance: Information for NI Businesses & Employers](#)

[Enterprise Northern Ireland](#)

Other Useful Links

[Find your local council](#)

[Self-employment and Universal Credit](#)

Guidance for Commercial Tenant: [COVID-19: support for businesses](#)

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For businesses based in railway arches, this organisation was set up to help protect your interests following National Rail's disposal of the arches: [Guardians Of The Arches: Home](#)
Online sector advice from the London Growth Hub: [Useful Resources Archive](#)
Curated events and other resources on the London Growth Hub site: [Upcoming Events](#)
Innovation funding opportunities through Innovate UK: [Innovation competitions](#)

Communications

With a large number of people working from home, there will be a serious test of the country's domestic broadband and communications systems; especially the former. When schools close, this is likely to be stretched even further. Some web and app communication tools may become busier than others and to keep in touch with customers or suppliers using different methods, it is advisable to have access to as many means of communication as possible, especially as some may experience heavier than usual demand.

It is important to keep in touch with suppliers and customers, you never know what opportunities may present themselves despite the current situation and it's best to be informed sooner rather than later if supplies are going to be difficult to obtain or a customer is going to have problems paying.

There are many tools for communication and here is a selection all of which are either free or can be upgraded to a premium level.

Google:

Google Messenger has a desktop version which enables SMS communication via a PC.
Instructions for use: [Messages for web](#)

Hangouts enables calls, video calls and messaging via app or desktop:
<https://hangouts.google.com/> and from the Play Store for mobile.

Duo is a multi-platform video calling app and web-based platform: [Google Duo - The simple video calling app.](#)

Microsoft:

For business 365 users, there is Microsoft Teams: [Download Microsoft Teams on any Device](#)

Apple:

Facetime is on all iPhones.

Others:

Whatsapp

Facebook Messenger

Slack: [Where work happens](#) a good replacement for email.

Zoom: [Zoom: Video Conferencing. Web Conferencing. Webinars. Screen Sharing](#)

House Party: [Houseparty | Face to Face Social Network](#)

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There are many other tools but the best advice is to have multiple platforms available to you in order to be able to communicate with people effectively; reliance on one method is probably inadvisable.

Productivity

Google G-Suite (the paid, business version of the familiar Google applications) allows real-time collaboration on documents, spreadsheets and presentations and includes the various communication tools above plus email and calendar. [G Suite: Collaboration & Productivity Apps for Business](#)

Microsoft 365 Business but gets a little pricier to bring it up to the level of capability enjoyed by Google users: [Microsoft 365 Home | Business, Enterprise or Education Suite](#)

Project Management

The following provide either free or freemium (try before you buy) versions:

[The Work Operating System That Makes Teamwork Click | monday.com](#)

[Wrike: Your online project management software](#)

[Trello](#)

Note taking:

If you want an upgrade from a notebook or the simple note-taking apps on your phone or laptop: [Best Note Taking App - Organize Your Notes with Evernote](#)

Parents and Young People

[Guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and local authorities in England on maintaining educational provision](#)

Health

Social distancing will impact some people more than others but is likely to be worse for people that live on their own. Here is an article from the BBC with some useful information about dealing with the current situation: [Coronavirus: How to protect your mental health](#)

More from MIND: [Coronavirus and your wellbeing | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

From the Government: [New advice to support mental health during coronavirus outbreak](#)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

If you have time on your hands and wish to help prepare yourself when normal business activities may be resumed, you may wish to improve your business knowledge through some short courses. MOOCs are usually provided by universities and are mostly free. They are created to encourage people to return to higher education and to prepare them for getting back into study. Here's the offering from the Open University: [All our free](#)

Futurelearn is a collaboration between the Open University and several other UK universities. At a basic level, the courses are free but you can pay to get certificates and other upgrades: [FutureLearn: Online Courses and Degrees from Top Universities](#)