

COVID-19 – Business Support & Activities

In these difficult and uncertain times, with the UK in lockdown and individuals being prioritised to protect them from the growing health risk, businesses can feel as if they are being left in the dark. There are several useful resources available to the business community to help guide them to the support they are eligible to receive to make them more resilient and to survive the disruption they are likely to be facing in the coming months.

GOV.UK

The Government's own website is the first result to appear when you Google "business support covid-19." It features up to the minute information on the latest government announcements relating to the business community (and links directly to their advice page for individuals).

The latest information includes:

- **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**
- **Support for businesses through deferring VAT and Income Tax payments**
- **Support for self-employed through the Self-employment Income Support Scheme**
- **Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**
- **Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees**
- **Support for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses that pay business rates** (see information [below](#))
- **Support for nursery businesses that pay business rates**
- **Support for businesses that pay little or no business rates**
- **Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**
- **Support for larger firms through the COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility**
- **Support for businesses paying tax: Time to Pay service**
- **Guidance on Commercial Insurance and COVID-19**
- **Protection from eviction for commercial tenants**
- **Extension of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) arrangements**

Visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses> for further information.

If your business is in the charity sector, the Government has published FAQs with specific information about the coronavirus and charities: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector>

Arts Council

The Arts Council has launched emergency coronavirus funding for organisations in the cultural sector affected by the Coronavirus. The funding streams aren't yet open but there is more information on their website: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19>

Heart of the South West (HotSW) Growth Hub

The Heart of the South West Growth Hub service provides daily updates with links to key services and support. They can provide information advice and guidance through their team of expert business advisors. If you wish to speak with one of their advisors please call 03456 047 047 or visit:

<https://www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk/covid-19-guidance-for-business/>

Business Continuity Helpline

Cosmic are offering a free helpline and toolkit for local businesses and charities to help them set up remote working for staff in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help with business continuity and provide advice and guidance to businesses who need support to put effective homeworking arrangements in place. The helpline phone number is 0330 088 4421 and the line will be open from 9am- 5pm, Monday-Friday.

ACAS

The ACAS website has a dedicated page with information for employers and employees relating to Coronavirus: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

This includes:

- Staying at home and social distancing
- Vulnerable people and those at high risk
- Self-isolation and sick pay
- If the workplace needs to close temporarily
- If an employee needs time off work to look after someone
- If someone has coronavirus symptoms at work
- Good practice steps for employers
- More coronavirus advice

COVID-19 Prompt Action Fund

Devon County Council has launched the COVID-19 Prompt Action Fund to provide flexible resources to organisations working with communities who are disproportionately impacted by coronavirus and the social and economic consequences of this outbreak. Find out how to apply for the [COVID-19 Prompt Action](#) Fund.

MDDC Economic Development

Economic Development is collating ground level information on the issues affecting the local business community and attempting to identify potential problems as early as possible.

The Economic Development team will also share information with the business community as details emerge regarding the business rates related grants and funding announced by the Chancellor.

If businesses are experiencing any issues relating to Covid-19 which aren't being addressed through other support channels, they are advised to contact Economic Development so that the information can be shared confidentially to help shape future activities responding to the outbreak: econdev@middevon.gov.uk

We recognise that not all businesses will be covered by the above listed support. The Economic Development Team is monitoring government updates and will post information on our website as and when it becomes available: <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus-covid-19-service-updates/coronavirus-information-for-businesses-employers-and-employees/>

COVID-19 – Business Information Updates

Enforced Closures and Exceptions

This week, the Government has increased the restrictions on people and businesses including enforcing “non-essential premises” to close. There are a number of exceptions, allowed to remain open, which include:

- Food delivery vehicles and takeaways (including mobile caterers)
- A number of food and essential service outlets such as supermarkets and other food shops, health shops, pharmacies and chemists, petrol stations, bicycle shops, home and hardware shops, laundrettes and dry cleaners, garages, car rentals, pet shops, corner shops, newsagents, post offices, and banks. Market stalls offering essential retail may also continue to operate although all other stalls must close. **NB:** This list was extended on Wednesday 25/03/2020 to include off-licences and licensed shops selling alcohol, including those within breweries.
- Medical services (such as dental surgeries, opticians and audiology clinics, physiotherapy clinics, chiropody and podiatry clinics, and other professional vocational medical services) and veterinary surgeries.
- Some use of business premises for essential community functions as outlined in the full guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close>

Whilst remaining open, all businesses must:

- Ensure a distance of two meters between customers and shop assistants;
- Let people enter the shop only in small groups, to ensure that spaces are not crowded; and
- Establish queue control outside of their premises.

The Government will review these measures three weeks from 23/03/2020, and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

Mid Devon Businesses – [Business Rates Support Measures](#)

The Government will provide 100% business rates retail relief for the current year 2020/21 for the following occupied premises:

- Shops, restaurants, cafés, drinking establishments, cinemas, and live music venues (**NB:** this was extended on Wednesday 25/03/2020 to include estate agents, letting agents and bingo halls)
- Sports, assembly and leisure premises
- Hotels, guest and boarding houses, holiday accommodation, caravan parks

This is in addition to businesses that already receive 100% small business rate relief (SBRR).

In addition to rate relief, the Government has announced two Business Grants – a business support grant fund, and a retail, hospitality and leisure grant fund.

PLEASE NOTE: Eligible Mid Devon businesses are encouraged to sign-up to the Council’s Business Rates [Self-Service Portal](#) to expedite payment of business grants when the funding is released. To comply with the Government’s conditions, all new and existing users of the portal will need to upload a claim form for the grant funding (available to download on the Council’s website).

CAN YOU HELP? Readiness to supply ventilators and ventilator components

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is looking for organisations who can support in the supply of ventilators and ventilator components across the United Kingdom as part of the Government's response to COVID-19. For more information and to register your interest in helping, visit: <https://ventilator.herokuapp.com/>

Other Authorities

For businesses with premises in other local authority areas, information for neighbouring authorities can be found at:

- East Devon <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Exeter City <https://exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/community-safety/coronavirus/>
- North Devon <https://www.northdevon.gov.uk/coronavirus/>
- Somerset West and Taunton <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-information/>
- Teignbridge <https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Torridge <https://www.torridge.gov.uk/coronavirusadvice>
- West Devon <https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/article/6652/Coronavirus-latest-information-and-advice>