

# QASSS

## Coronavirus

### Business Round-Up

We are in extraordinary times and we want to support home improvement and renewable companies as much as possible during this period. We've put together a business round-up with advice and updates on a number of key areas to help you navigate the confusion.

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The QASSS logo, featuring a stylized 'Q' icon followed by the text 'QASSS' in a bold, sans-serif font.The DGCOS Ombudsman Scheme logo, consisting of a blue circle with the text 'DGCOS' in white and 'Ombudsman Scheme' in smaller white text below it.The HIES Consumer Code logo, consisting of a green circle with the text 'HIES' in white and 'Consumer Code' in smaller white text below it.The HICS Consumer Protection logo, consisting of a purple circle with the text 'HICS' in white and 'Consumer Protection' in smaller white text below it.

# Business Finance

To keep you up to date with Government measures, we've put together a summary of the headline initiatives that have been announced to help businesses and the self-employed.

## VAT and Income Tax Payments

### VAT

- Businesses will be supported by deferring VAT payments for 3 months.
- The deferral will apply from 20 March 2020 until 30 June 2020.
- All UK businesses are eligible.
- This is an automatic offer with no applications required.
- Businesses will not need to make a VAT payment during this period.
- Taxpayers will be given until the end of the 2020/2021 tax year to pay any liabilities that have accumulated during the period.
- VAT refunds and reclaims will be paid by the government as normal.

### Income Tax

- If you're self-employed, Income Tax payments due on 31 July 2020 under the Self-Assessment system will be deferred until 31 January 2021.
- If you are self-employed you are eligible.
- This is an automatic offer with no applications required.
- No penalties or interest for late payment will be charged in the deferral period.

# Business Interruption Loans

## Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)

The new Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme supports SMEs with access to working capital (including loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance) of up to £5 million in value and for up to 6 years.

The government will pay to cover the first 12 months of interest payments and any lender-levied fees, so smaller businesses will not face any upfront costs and will benefit from lower initial repayments. The government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan (subject to a per-lender cap on claims) to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance to SMEs. This scheme is being delivered through commercial lenders, backed by the British Business Bank. On loans under £250,000 lenders have now been banned from requesting personal guarantees.

### Eligibility

You are eligible for the scheme if:

- Your business is UK based, with turnover of no more than £45 million per year
- Your business meets the other British Business Bank eligibility criteria

### How to access the scheme

The scheme is now open for applications. To apply, you should talk to your bank or one of the [40 accredited finance providers](#) (not the British Business Bank) as soon as possible, to discuss your business plan. You can find out the latest on the best ways to contact them via their websites.

All major banks are offering this scheme. If you have an existing loan with monthly repayments you may want to ask for a repayment holiday to help with cash flow. The full rules of the scheme and the list of accredited lenders are available on the [British Business Bank website](#).

The loan scheme provides the bank with a Government-backed guarantee which will enable your business manager to approve it, whereas, without that guarantee, your request for a loan may have been declined. Please note: it's important that you are aware that you, the borrower will always remain 100% liable for the debt. The CBILS guarantee is to the lender, not you.

### The New Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS)

The new Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) will provide a government guarantee of 80% to enable banks to make loans of up to £25 million to firms with an annual turnover of between £45 million and £500 million. Loans backed by a guarantee under CLBILS will be offered at commercial rates of interest and further details of the scheme will be announced later this month.

# Support for Businesses through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all UK employers will be able to access support to continue paying part of their employees' salaries for those employees that would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis.

## What it means:

- HMRC will reimburse 80% of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.
- HMRC is working urgently to set up a system for reimbursement. Existing systems are not set up to facilitate payments to employers.
- The scheme, lasting for an initial period of three months, will be extended "if necessary".
- The employer can choose whether to top-up the remaining 20% of employees' pay.
- The wage subsidy will apply to workers who have already been laid off since 1st March, due to the pandemic, provided the employer brings them back onto the payroll.
- The scheme is to help employers keep their staff on the books, rather than lay them off. It isn't targeted at the self-employed.

## You will need to:

1. Designate affected employees as 'furloughed workers,' and notify your employees of this change. To 'furlough a worker' means that you have laid them off due to no work, but you have not yet made them redundant. Changing the status of employees remains subject to existing employment law and, depending on the employment contract, may be subject to negotiation.
2. Submit information to HMRC about the employees that have been furloughed and their earnings through a new online portal (HMRC will set out further details on the information required).

# Statutory Sick Pay

Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees.

Legislation will be introduced to allow small and medium-sized businesses and employers to reclaim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paid for sickness absence due to COVID-19.

## The eligibility criteria for the scheme will be as follows:

- The refund will cover up to 2 weeks' SSP per eligible employee who has been off work because of COVID-19.
- The government will refund £94.25 per week, maximum £188.50, to your company for the 2019/20 tax year. The figures for the 2020/21 tax year will be £95.85 and £191.70 respectively.
- This SSP will be paid from the first day of absence for anyone self-isolating due to coronavirus from 13 March 2020.
- Employers with fewer than 250 employees will be eligible - the size of an employer will be determined by the number of people they employed as of 28 February 2020. If you're a director of a limited company with less than 250 employees, you can pay yourself two weeks of SSP if you need to self-isolate subject to meeting the minimum payroll requirement for SSP.
- Employers will be able to reclaim expenditure for any employee who has claimed SSP (according to the new eligibility criteria) as a result of COVID-19.
- Employers should maintain records of staff absences and payments of SSP, but employees will not need to provide a GP fit note. If evidence is required by an employer, those with symptoms of coronavirus can get an isolation note from [NHS 111 online](#) and those who live with someone that has symptoms can get a note from the [NHS website](#).

The government will work with employers over the coming months to set up the repayment mechanism for employers.

## How to access the scheme

A rebate scheme is being developed. Further details will be provided in due course.

Understand that you will not reclaim this SSP through your real-time information (RTI) submissions when processing payroll. The government will work with employers over the coming months to set up the repayment mechanism for employers as soon as possible.

# The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme

The new [Self-Employed Income Support Scheme](#) is designed to support the self-employed who have been adversely affected by the Coronavirus, whereby the government will pay a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly **profits** over the last 3 years, up to a maximum of £2,500 a month.

## The details:

- The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme is open to any self-employed with income up to £50,000 who have lost trading/partnership trading profits due to COVID-19.
- It will be available to people who genuinely earn more than half of their income through self-employment.
- It will be available to those who are already in self-employment and who have submitted their Self Assessment tax return for the tax year 2018-19. The government has allowed anyone who missed the filing deadline in January, 4 weeks to submit their tax return i.e. before 23 April 2020.
- You must be trading when you apply and intend to continue to trade in the tax year 2020-2021.
- HMRC is working on the scheme and they expect people to be able to access the scheme no later than the beginning of June.
- If you are eligible, HMRC will contact you directly and ask you to fill out a simple online form.
- HMRC will pay the grant directly into your bank account, in one instalment.
- The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will be open for 3 months. The government may extend this if necessary.

## What about now?

For anyone who is struggling right now, the government points to the following measures:

- Self-employed people can access the Business Interruption Loans (more detail on this on page 3).
- Self-assessment income tax payments, that were due in July, can be deferred to the end of January 2021.
- Self-employed people who have no income will be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and/or Universal Credit (dependant on eligibility).

# Business Interruption Insurance

## **Does standard business interruption insurance provide cover for businesses who are not able to operate due to the effects of Covid-19?**

Business insurance policies are designed to cover standard risks and are therefore unlikely to provide cover for the effects of global pandemics like Covid-19. This includes forced closure by the authorities. Businesses may have chosen to purchase cover that will specifically provide for business interruption arising from notifiable or infectious diseases. For certain notifiable disease extensions, cover may apply if other policy conditions are met. However, this type of extension is not commonly included as standard. Furthermore, the likely costs to businesses of cover that includes more unusual risks – such as those posed by new diseases – would be prohibitive. Businesses who are concerned about the impacts of Covid-19 should check the scope of their cover with the insurance company or broker.

## **Does a 'notifiable disease' extension cover my business for Covid-19?**

Most notifiable disease extensions tend to cover specific diseases that will be named in the cover. If Covid-19 is not specified, then cover may not apply. Some notifiable disease extensions are more general and do not specify certain diseases. In these cases, business interruption cover for Covid-19 may apply if it is present in the business. If you are unsure about what your policy covers, check with your broker or the insurer if you purchased it directly.

## **Are there any other extensions to business interruption that may provide cover?**

Some coverage may exist if the business has purchased a 'non-damage, denial of access' extension to a business interruption policy. Again, purchase of these extensions tends to be rare and this is not generally covered under standard business interruption policies. Generally, 'denial of access' cover applies to cordoned off areas and loss of trade resulting from a denial of access to premises. If a business is forced to close or is told to close by an appropriate authority or is cordoned off, this could trigger a claim under a 'non-damage, denial of access' business interruption extension if the infectious disease cover is unspecified or if it includes Covid-19.

## **Here is some advice from QASSS**

Most businesses are unlikely to be covered, as standard policies are dependent on damage to property and will generally exclude pandemics. However, we strongly recommend businesses check to see if cover applies for Covid-19 and if so, the specific terms and conditions that apply. Insurance policies can differ significantly, so we'd encourage you to contact your broker or insurer who will be able to help.

If you do have insurance that covers Covid-19, your insurance company is likely to use a Loss Adjuster to represent them. We would strongly advise businesses who have cover in place, to access specialist advice in helping them to prepare, present and negotiate claims.

**At QASSS, we can help with the claims process and can arrange access to a Loss Adjusting service, should you need independent advice regarding complex, major or difficult claims. To find out more about this specialist service, contact Scott Robinson our Commercial Director via [s.robinson@qasss.co.uk](mailto:s.robinson@qasss.co.uk)**

# Cyber Security

## BEWARE of COVID-19 cyber scams – **think before you click**

Cybercriminals are taking advantage of this unprecedented situation which has led to a huge spike in malicious COVID-19 'phishing' emails, which attempt to trick users into clicking on bad links, leading to loss of money or sensitive data.

These emails can range from HMRC fake emails, donation type emails, Coronavirus medical advice and even ones relating to finding a cure! The BBC has put together some [useful examples](#). The best advice for everyone is **'think before you click'**.

### **What do I do if I think I've received a fake or phishing email?**

If you believe you've received a phishing email, mark it as Spam/Junk or Suspicious, this will move the email out of your Inbox, and notify your email provider that it is potentially unsafe.

- DO NOT forward the email to colleagues or others
- DO NOT click any link within the email
- DO NOT open any attachments within the email
- DO NOT reply to the email

### **What if I've already clicked?**

- Do not provide any data and disconnect from the internet.
- If you're using a device provided by your company, contact your IT Department straightaway – remember do not forward the original scam email.
- If you have anti-virus software, open this and run a full scan on your device and follow the instructions.
- If you have provided your password as a result of following the link, change your passwords on all other accounts.
- If you have been tricked into handing over money or giving access to online bank accounts, contact your bank immediately and also report it as a crime to [Action Fraud](#).

### **It's not just emails**

Phishing links can also be found in text messages, mobile app messages, social media posts and Google calendar invites.

### **Remember - think before you click**

If you believe you have received a phishing link in any format, 'think before you click' on whatever device you're using. If in doubt don't click it

**At QASSS, our IT support solution provides comprehensive services that can help you with network and security, alongside a host of other services. We can deliver a range of bespoke solutions to meet your changing needs and budget. We can also help you with urgent issues and advice. Call Nisar Raja, IT Infrastructure Manager, on 0330 335 3354 or email [it.solutions@qasss.co.uk](mailto:it.solutions@qasss.co.uk)**



# QASSS Support Services

During these tough times, you may be looking at supplier costs or indeed be overwhelmed with customer enquiries. Using our in-depth experience in the home improvement and renewables sector, we've launched 2 new bespoke services for companies that could help you reduce costs and ensure business continuity and service during this unprecedented period.

## IT Support Services

Our IT support solution provides comprehensive services and a technical team that understands the needs of home improvement and renewable companies.

We can help you **reduce costs and ensure business continuity** and service during this unprecedented period. At QASSS we are proactive in our approach so that clients can feel confident that their business-critical infrastructure is in safe hands. We do not see ourselves as just a provider of IT services, but as **a trusted partner** to the home improvement and renewables sectors.

We can deliver a range of bespoke solutions and innovative IT services to meet your changing needs and budget, including:

- Network and security
- Infrastructure services and support
- End-user computing and management
- Web management
- Business process auditing



Professional, fast and future-ready solutions



Security at the heart



Breadth and depth of expertise



Bespoke and fully managed services



Industry leading solutions



Friendly IT advice and insights

**We offer a free no-obligation comparison quote against your current costs/suppliers. If you'd like to find out more, contact Nisar Raja, IT Infrastructure Manager, on 0330 335 3354.**

# QASSS Support Services

## Complaint Handling Support

You may be inundated at the moment with general enquiries which may be impacting on your capacity to handle complaints quickly and efficiently to prevent them escalating into full disputes. Our complaint handling solution can help plug capacity gaps, even if on a temporary basis, or help with longer-term planning to free up internal management resources and reduce costs.

Our team is award-winning and industry-leading for speed of resolution with in-depth expertise in the home improvement sector. Our highly trained complaint handlers can help with first-line (or frontline) complaints, delivering either a 'light touch' service or a fully branded 'white-label' solution.

**Monthly management charges start at just £199 exc. vat per month and for new clients, we also run an introductory offer with 50% off your months' first subscription. To see how we can help, call Vicky Rispin, Marketing Director, on 07341 084400 or email [v.rispin@qasss.co.uk](mailto:v.rispin@qasss.co.uk)**

## Alternative Dispute Resolution

At QASSS, we provide a CTSI approved, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) service for businesses in the home improvement, building repairs and renewable sectors. Our team are award winning and industry leading with an average resolution time of just 3.59 days and with 98.4% of disputes being resolved in-house. Our alternative dispute resolution (ADR) service enables all parties to take advantage of a **quick, confidential and cost-effective service.**



Save time and money



Avoid going to court



Drive better outcomes



Improve conversion & retention

**We provide flexible options, including a monthly subscription service or per case pricing. To find out how we can help, call Laura Holmes, Service Delivery Manager, on 0330 335 3354 or email [l.homes@qasss.co.uk](mailto:l.homes@qasss.co.uk)**