

COVID-19: KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Welcome

Dear Kingston First member,

We've detailed a summary of updates this week, including yesterday's confirmation from Government that the lockdown and social distancing restrictions will be in place for 'at least three weeks'.

There has also been new guidance announced by the government on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - full and updated details are [available here](#).

This month Sir Ed Davey, MP for Kingston and Surbiton, will take part in our first online business surgery as part of our 'Voices For Kingston' series. This will take place on Monday 27 April at 12pm. To register your attendance or to ask Sir Ed a question about the crisis and its impact to businesses, please email Robyn Smith, robyn.smith@kingstonfirst.co.uk by Friday 24 April.

Our contact details for business support and advice to our members is below. We will continue to keep you updated.

Stay safe and well.

Best wishes.

Kirsten Henly, Chief Executive,
and all the team at Kingston First

BUSINESS SUPPORT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATED GUIDANCE

LOCKDOWN EXTENSION CONFIRMED

What: Yesterday, the Foreign Secretary and First Secretary of State, Dominic Raab, confirmed the lockdown and social distancing restrictions would remain in place for 'at least three weeks'.

Five criteria the Government will consider before changing restrictions were outlined which were that they required:

- Evidence that the NHS can cope
- Evidence showing a fall in daily death rates
- Data showing the infection rate is decreasing
- Sufficient operational resources and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available
- Confidence that adjustments to restrictions would not risk a second peak of infections

Find out more: The Government's full statement is [available here](#).

BUSINESS SUPPORT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATED GUIDANCE

CORONAVIRUS JOB RETENTION SCHEME UPDATES

Additional guidance in this scheme has been released by Government this week. Updates include:

SCHEME EXTENDED TO JUNE

What: Today the Government has announced the scheme will be extended until the end of June. It had previously been running to the end of May. More information on the announcement is [here](#).

EMPLOYEE CUT-OFF DATE EXTENDED

What: The Government announced on Wednesday that businesses will be able to add employees onto the furlough scheme who have been on the PAYE payroll on or before 19 March – this has been extended from the 28 February.

APPLICATION PORTAL OPEN DATE CONFIRMED

What: This week the Chancellor confirmed the online portal developed to process payments of furloughed staffed will be open 'on or around' Monday 20 April. The system will be available 24/7 with a call line available for businesses. The Chancellor also confirmed that payments are expected to be processed within four to six working days of received the claim, meaning that funds will be received by the end of the month.

CORONAVIRUS BUSINESS INTERRUPTION LOANS

What: There continues to be considerable concern in Kingston and across the country about this scheme, its ability to process loan applications for businesses and the personal information requested by banks. This week there has been further media attention given to the fact that access to support is not being offered quickly enough to provide small and medium size businesses with the emergency loans needed. Despite this the government issued latest figures to show that as of Tuesday a total of 6,020 loans worth £1.1bn had been issued this is nearly double the number that were issued last week. We continue to raise this with our MP, Kingston Council and national industry bodies.

Find out more: Government Business Support England Helpline is open Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm on 0300 456 3565.

APPRENTICES ARE NOW ALSO ELIGIBLE FOR THE SCHEME

What: This week it was announced that the Furlough Scheme applies to apprentices in the same way as other employees. Whilst on Furlough (like other employees) apprentices can continue to be trained. To be eligible for this scheme, businesses must pay at least the Apprenticeship Minimum Wage/London Living Wage.

Find out more: To see the updated guidance and full Government update, [visit the Government's website](#).

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS SUPPORT HELPLINES:

- HMRC Helpline - set up to support businesses and those who are self-employed and concerned about not being able to pay tax bills. This line is open Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm on 0300 200 3200.
 - HMRC free webinars on measures to support employers and employees. Watch recorded webinars [here](#) or register for future webinars [here](#).
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Kingston Council Update

GRANTS AND BUSINESS RATES RELIEF UPDATE

What: Kingston Council have paid over £15.3m to businesses that are eligible for one of the government's package of grants. This includes businesses eligible for small business rate relief, and many businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. To receive the non-repayable grants you must [complete the online application form](#).

Find out more: See the [message from the Leader of Kingston Council, Cllr Caroline Kerr here](#), and visit the Council's [website](#).



Sector Support

UK HOSPITALITY CALLS ON HM TREASURY TO ABOLISH £51K MINIMUM RATEABLE VALUE THRESHOLD

What: In an open letter to the Chancellor The British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA), British Institute of Inn keeping (BII), Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) and Hospitality (UKH) warned that some local authorities are not distributing grants quick enough. The letter also warned that too many businesses facing critical cash flow issues fall outside of the threshold for grants and have called for the abolishment of the £51,000 maximum rateable value threshold and push councils to deliver cash urgently.

Find out more: [Visit the UK Hospitality website](#).

RETAILERS FAILING TO GET SUPPORT

What: Over the weekend, the British Retail Consortium called for action from the Government to support retailers who are falling through the gaps of the coronavirus finance packages or else retailers face job losses in the coming weeks. This is in response to a Retail Weeks 'secret retailer' series where one CEO warns the Chancellor that without the government support package the retail industry will without doubt see thousands of job losses.

Find out more: Visit the BRCs [Coronavirus hub](#).

INSIGHTS AND EVENTS

- This week the Office for Budget Responsibility presented possible scenarios on how the economy will respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. Their scenarios included a three-month lockdown which led to 35% reduction in GDP in the second quarter, bouncing back over the year. [Read more about the ORB analysis](#).
- The Confederation of British Industry are running daily Coronavirus webinars. To register, [visit their website](#).

FOR FURTHER SUPPORT AND INFORMATION VISIT KINGSTON FIRST:

Kingston First: [Covid-19 Business Advisory Service](#) or speak to our team, please contact us 9am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, by:

Phone: 0208 547 1221 | **Email:** support@kingstonfirst.co.uk

Or follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for the latest updates