

**COVID-19**  
coronavirus job retention scheme

# Support through difficult times

## Background

On Friday 20th March 2020, the Government introduced a new scheme that aims to keep people employed through the Coronavirus outbreak.

The government has announced that it intends for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to run for at least three months, but they have said they will extend this if necessary.

## What does the scheme do? How does it work?

The scheme enables employers to claim 80% of staff costs if they cannot cover them themselves due to the Coronavirus.

*In order for employers to be able to access the scheme you must be officially furloughed, which means the following requirements must be met:*

- You are enrolled for PAYE
- You are told that you will be kept on your employer's payroll
- You will not be undertaking any work for your employer

This furlough process allows your employer to claim a grant of up to 80% of your wage for all employment costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month. If your employer is participating in the scheme, they are able to backdate your wages to 1st March.

During furlough you remain employed. Your employer can choose to fund the remaining 20% of your salary but they are not required to under the scheme.

If your salary is reduced as a result of this, it may mean you are eligible for additional support through the welfare system such as Universal Credit (you can apply by visiting [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)).

There is no qualifying employment period so even if you have only started working for your employer in the last few months, they can still access the scheme, and you will receive 80% of your wages from the Government.

## **What do I need to do?**

Nothing – it is your employers responsibility to contact HMRC through a new online portal the Government are setting up.

Your employer will also need to notify you of the change in your employment status to furloughed.

If you have already been laid off, your employer may be able to rehire you and ensure you receive 80% of your wages backdated to 1st March. If you have been laid off, please contact your employer immediately to see if they are looking to access the scheme and whether this will enable you to receive 80% of your wages.

## **What if I'm on a zero hours contract?**

Even if you are on a zero or low hours contract but you currently earn more than £118 per week on average, you will be paying tax on your earnings and are on the PAYE system. This means you are eligible for the scheme.

## What if I'm self-employed?

If you are self-employed you do not currently qualify for the scheme. Community is working to extend the coverage so you have access to the scheme or further government support.

It's important that you notify the Department for Work and Pensions of the change in your circumstances, and tell them that it is due to the impact of the Coronavirus. As long as you meet the relevant eligibility criteria you will be able to access Universal Credit (you can apply by visiting [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)).

## Get in touch

If you're having difficulty or problems at work during the Covid-19 pandemic, get in touch with our Member Service Centre by calling **0800 389 6332** or emailing **[servicecentre@community-tu.org](mailto:servicecentre@community-tu.org)**.



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