

Written 16 August 2021

BUSINESS NEWS ENGLAND

Welcome to our round up of the latest business and Covid-19 news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

75% of UK adults receive both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine

Three quarters of adults in the UK have now received both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, as the public continues to do what it can to protect themselves and their community. All young people aged 16 to 17 in England are to be offered a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by Monday 23 August to give them protection before returning to school.



Fully vaccinated people are three times less likely to be infected

The latest REACT-1 study findings from Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI show COVID-19 infection rates are three times lower for double vaccinated people. The findings covering 24 June to 12 July from Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI show fully vaccinated people were three times less likely than unvaccinated people to test positive for COVID-19 and the study also stated that infections have increased four-fold compared to the last report in late May, with 1 in 160 people infected, although growth appeared to be slowing.

See: [REACT study shows fully vaccinated are three times less likely to be infected - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/react-1-study-shows-fully-vaccinated-are-three-times-less-likely-to-be-infected)

Accounting for Import VAT on your VAT return

HMRC have recently updated their guidance on accounting for VAT on goods imported from outside the UK which, since Brexit, includes the European Union.

Businesses registered for VAT in the UK can account for import VAT on their VAT Return for goods imported into:

- Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) from anywhere outside the UK
- Northern Ireland from outside the UK and EU

Businesses can also account for import VAT for goods moved between Great Britain and Northern Ireland that are declared into a customs special procedure, when they are removed from that special procedure.

You do not need HMRC approval to account for import VAT on your VAT Return.

Accounting for import VAT on your VAT Return has significant cash flow benefits as you declare and recover import VAT on the same VAT Return, rather than having to pay it upfront when the goods are imported and recover it later.

For details see: [Check when you can account for import VAT on your VAT Return - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-when-you-can-account-for-import-vat-on-your-vat-return)

Commercial rent debts: policy statement

The government will legislate to ringfence rent debt accrued during the pandemic by businesses affected by enforced closures and set out a process of binding arbitration to be undertaken between landlords and tenants.

This is to be used as a last resort, after bilateral negotiations have been undertaken and only where landlords and tenants cannot otherwise come to a resolution. Ahead of the system being put in place, the government will publish the principles which they will seek to put into legislation in a revised Code of Practice, to allow landlords and tenants time to negotiate on that basis.

Section 82 (England and Wales) and Section 83 (Northern Ireland) of the Coronavirus Act 2020, which prevents landlords of commercial properties from being able to evict tenants for the non-payment of rent, will continue until 25 March 2022, unless legislation is passed ahead of this, to provide sufficient time for this new process to be put in place.

Government is clear that those tenants who have not been affected by closures and who have the means to pay, should pay. Additionally, government expects commercial tenants to begin paying rent as per their lease from the point of restrictions being lifted for their sector.

As soon as legislation is passed, the commercial tenant protection measures will only apply to ringfenced arrears. This includes rent debt accrued from March 2020 by commercial tenants affected by COVID-19 business closures until restrictions for their sector are removed.

This means that landlords will be able to evict tenants for the non-payment of rent prior to March 2020 and after the end of restrictions for their sector and who have not been affected by business closures during this period.

For the full policy statement see: [Supporting businesses with commercial rent debts: policy statement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/supporting-businesses-with-commercial-rent-debts)

Going electric: building talent for the future

UK registered organisations can apply for a share of up to £250,000 for innovative skills, talent, and training projects, that quickly fill immediate gaps in skills, talent and training for the power electronics, machines and drives (PEMD) industry.

This competition is open to single applicants and collaborations.

To lead a project or work alone your organisation must be a UK registered and a business of any size, charity, public sector organisation or research organisation

Competition timeline:

- 9 August 2021 9.30am – opening date
- 10 August 2021 10am – online briefing date
- 15 September 2021 11am – closing date

See: [Competition overview - Driving the electric revolution – building talent for the future - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Customs Declaration Service to become UK's single customs platform

HMRC will be closing its Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system on 31 March 2023. From this date, all businesses will need to declare goods through the Customs Declaration Service (CDS). CDS is currently used for Northern Ireland and Rest of World declarations.

Ahead of the 31 March 2023 complete closure, services on CHIEF will be withdrawn in two stages:

- 30 September 2022: import declarations close on CHIEF
- 31 March 2023: export declarations close on CHIEF / National Exports System (NES)

See: [Customs Declaration Service - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Funding scheme to reduce plastic packaging's environmental impact

UK Research and Innovation's Smart Sustainable Plastic Packaging (SSPP) challenge has announced a new £7 million fund. This competition is open to projects solving the sustainability of plastic packaging. SSPP is looking for ambitious research and development projects that focus on solving the well-known issues with the sustainability of plastic packaging. Aligning with SSPP's remit, the aim is to drive a true shift from a linear to a circular economy solution for plastic packaging.

The competition closes at 11am Wednesday 8 September 2021.

See: [Competition overview - ISCF smart sustainable plastic packaging: business-led R&D - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Visa-free short-term touring for UK musicians and performers

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport has confirmed that visa-free short-term touring is allowed for UK artists in 19 European Union member countries.

These countries are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Talks are ongoing with the remaining nations that do not allow visa and permit free visits for short-term tours.

See: [Visa-free short-term touring allowed in 19 member states - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/visa-free-short-term-touring-allowed-in-19-member-states)

Automotive Transformation Fund Expression of Interest: Round 13

Registered businesses can apply for a share of up to £1 billion for capital centric investment projects that help industrialise the electrified automotive supply chain at scale in the UK.

- Competition opened: Friday 30 July 2021
- Competition closes: Wednesday 18 August 2021 11:00am

The programme focuses on companies involved in batteries, including cells, electric machines and drives, power electronics, fuel cells, upstream supply chain for any of the above, recycling any aspect of the above

Round 13 of this funding is currently open for expressions of interest (EoI).

To be considered, your project should be looking to transform the automotive industry through significant business or production expansion, centred on a product, process or technology that you have already demonstrated and have confirmed as technically and economically feasible.

You can apply for capital investment only or capital and associated R&D activity.

Your proposal must prioritise the scale-up in areas mentioned in the [Automotive Transformation Strategy](#) for an electrified supply chain.

This is an EoI competition, which is the first stage in a two-stage process. Before you submit your EoI, you can first check the project's eligibility for funding through the [ATF funding tool](#).

The ATF team will contact eligible projects to provide guidance on how to submit a formal EOI application. If your application is successful, you will be invited to progress to a full application for the ATF competition.

See: [Competition overview - Automotive Transformation Fund Expression of Interest: Round 13 - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition-overview)

COVID-19 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT NEWS

Below is our weekly roundup of changes to government support information generally and for businesses, employers and the self-employed.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) - Update

The guidance has been updated with the CJRS end date and information on when claims for September must be submitted.

The CJRS has been extended until 30 September 2021. From 1 August 2021, the government will pay 60% of wages up to a maximum cap of £1,875 for the hours the employee is on furlough.

Claims for September must be submitted by 14 October 2021 and any amendments must be made by 28 October 2021. Find out more about [how the scheme is changing](#).

Claims for furlough days in July 2021 must be made by 16 August 2021.

See: [Claim for wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Kickstart Scheme grant

If you are an employer looking to create jobs for young people, you can apply for funding as part of the Kickstart Scheme.

Recent changes have been made to the guidance including advertising vacancies yourself to 'Getting the young people into the jobs', the remittance advice employers receive when they get the funding in the section 'How you will get the funding' and updated instructions for adding more jobs to the grant agreement following launch of online route for employers.

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers:

- 100% of the [National Minimum Wage](#) (or the [National Living Wage](#) depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months
- associated [employer National Insurance contributions](#)
- [minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions](#)

Employers can spread the job start dates up until 31 December 2021. You will get funding until 30 June 2022 if a young person starts their job on 31 December 2021.

Further funding is available to provide support so that young people on the scheme can get a job in the future.

You can apply for a Kickstart Scheme grant by either:

- applying online yourself
- applying through a Kickstart gateway who is already working with the Kickstart Scheme

If you already have a Kickstart Scheme grant agreement and reference number, you can [request to add more jobs to it](#). This is known as a 'grant variation'.

See: [Apply for a Kickstart Scheme grant - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Guidance for Companies House customers

Payment breaks for late filing penalties have now ended.

See: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for Companies House customers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Private providers of coronavirus (COVID-19) testing

The lists of and information about private providers who have self-declared that they meet the government's minimum standards for the type of commercial COVID-19 testing service they offer has been updated.

See: [Private providers of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

How to do a coronavirus (COVID-19) rapid lateral flow test at home

Find out how to do a rapid lateral flow test for COVID-19 and report the results. Rapid tests are only for people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

See: [How to do a coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rapid lateral flow test at home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Welcome back fund

Councils across England are to share £56m of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding to support the return to high streets safely and help build back better from the pandemic. This funding shall be known as the "Welcome Back Fund" (the fund) and it builds on the £50m Reopening High Street Safely Fund (RHSSF) allocated to councils in 2020. The fund will allow local authorities in England to put in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in high streets as their economies reopen. Local authorities can therefore also use the fund to develop plans for responding to these impacts, this could include considering how other funding streams could help address those challenges in the future.

The guidance to help local authorities and partners to deliver activities supported through the Welcome Back Fund has been updated. Change made: Versions 3 of the FAQ and guidance for the Welcome Back Fund have been added.

See: [Welcome Back Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

NHS COVID Pass

How to get the NHS COVID Pass and demonstrate your coronavirus (COVID-19) status when travelling abroad and domestically at events and venues in England. There is an Updated video guide for people who have received an NHS COVID Pass letter.

See: [NHS COVID Pass - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/nhs-covid-pass)

COVID-19 PCR home test kit instructions

This guidance contains a step-by-step guide available in different formats on how to use and return your PCR home test kit to test yourself for COVID-19. This has recently been updated to reflect changes in test kit components.

See: [COVID-19 PCR home test kit instructions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/covid-19-pcr-home-test-kit-instructions)

Quarantine and testing if you have been in an amber list country

What to do before and after you arrive in England if you've been in an amber list country in the 10 days before you arrive. There is updated information for those vaccinated in Europe or the USA, rule changes for France have been added and updated information on booking travel tests is given. There is also more information added for those from the British Overseas Territories and how to prove their vaccination status.

See: [Quarantine and testing if you've been in an amber list country - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/quarantine-testing-amber-list-country)

Red, amber and green list rules for entering England

The fully vaccinated amber rules now apply to France. List movements – Austria, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia move to green list. Bahrain, India, Qatar and United Arab Emirates move to amber list. Georgia, Mayotte, Mexico and Reunion move to red list.

See: [Red, amber and green list rules for entering England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/red-amber-green-list-rules-entering-england)