

### **Revised Kickstart Scheme accessible to small firms**

The Government has removed the threshold requiring firms to provide a minimum of 30 placements to access the [Kickstart Scheme](#).

From 3 February 2021 employers of all sizes can offer any number of placements.

The scheme, which previously received criticism for not being accessible to small businesses, provides funds to firms employing 16 to 24-year olds who are on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term unemployment. Funding 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
- employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions

### **Resources for job seekers**

HM Treasury has published [guidance for jobs seekers](#) as part of the UK Government's Plan for Jobs, providing information, resources and advice to help people develop skills, get advice and search for opportunities.

### **Testing for those who can't work from home**

The Government is working to provide asymptomatic Lateral Flow Testing to organisations with over 50 employees or more, who have staff unable to work from home. The employees do not need to be based at the same location.

Employers who are interested in the scheme are being invited to attend one of a series of webinars hosted by the Department for Health & Social Care.

The sessions are running daily 2-3pm next week Monday 1 February to Friday 5 February.

[Click on this link to join the meeting](#), where you can hear a 45-minute overview of the testing and get answers to initial questions you may have.

### **Airports in England to receive support**

The Government has introduced an [Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme](#), enabling eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England to apply for up to £8m each.

The financial support is being provided to cover losses on fixed costs such as airfield and runway maintenance, and business rate bills whilst travel restrictions remain in place.

### **ONS reports downturn in confidence**

According to the latest [Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey](#) published by the Office for National Statistics, 17% of the workforce of UK businesses were furloughed in the period 28 December 2020 to 10 January 2021, up from 14% in the previous period.

15% of UK businesses, including those currently trading and those who are temporarily closed, say they have 'no or low confidence of surviving the next three months'.

Their [latest Social Impact Survey](#) shows that during the past week, people are feeling less optimistic that life will return to normal any time soon with 1-in-3 adults (28%) thinking it will take more than a year for life to return to normal, up from 25% last week.

1-in-5 adults (20%) think it will be back to normal in 6-months or less, down from 22%.

### **UK reports reducing R-rate**

The latest UK R-rate is between 0.7 and 1.1 meaning that on average, every 10 people infected will infect between 7 and 11 other people. The growth rate is currently between -5% and 0% meaning that the number of new infections is broadly flat or shrinking by up to 5% every day.

England's R-rate is 0.7-1.0 and weekly [data from each local authority](#) is also published.

Figures for [Northern Ireland R estimate](#), [Scotland R estimate](#) and [Wales R estimate \(Cymraeg\)](#) are published on their respective websites.

### **Testing update**

[NHS Test and Trace has reported](#) that 93.8% of in-person test results were returned the next day after the test was taken, compared with 84.8% the week before.

The NHS Test and Trace test network continues to expand, with more than 800 test sites in operation, including 448 local sites. A fleet of 500 mobile testing units was also deployed earlier this month.

### **Vaccine update**

[Novavax published positive data](#) on 28 January from the UK phase 3 study of its Covid-19 vaccine, showing it to be 89.3% effective in preventing coronavirus in participants. The UK has secured 60 million doses, with manufacturing set to take place on Teesside.

[Janssen followed suit on 29 January, publishing positive data](#) from the Phase 3 studies of its single-dose Covid-19 vaccine, showing it to be 66% effective overall in preventing coronavirus in participants. The UK has secured 30 million doses with deliveries expected to arrive this year if approved by regulators