

Subject: COVID - Update 8th April

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Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CVJRS)

HMRC have today started testing their new online portal and confirmed a launch date of **Monday 20 April**.

Jim Harra, HMRC's chief executive, today told MPs at a Treasury Select Committee that in-house IT developers and outsourced IT provider CapGemini are working night and day to complete all the preliminary code changes to create the new 80% furlough reporting portal. He also said that phase one testing began today with a 'small number of invited employers'.

The portal is set to open on 20 April for submissions from employers, giving a 10 day window to month end for PAYE payroll reporting.

Mr Harra said 'We are confident that the IT will cope with the very large volume of claims we expect to receive'. 'On the IT side we have tested up to 450,000 claims an hour'. He admitted that if a very large number of employers phoned HMRC for help, its call centres 'would struggle to provide the service we want'. 'The portal will be ready by 20 April' he told MPs. 'There should be time to make payments before 30 April'.

Mr Harra confirmed that there would be a four-to-six day processing period to make background checks and flag fraudulent claims.

HMRC is relying on the professional institutes like the ICAEW, accountants & tax advisors like ourselves, and businesses themselves to learn the new system before it launches and understand the tax compliance requirements for PAYE furlough reporting.

'First of all many employers will be familiar with filing online PAYE returns or they will use an agent. Between now and the release of scheme, we will be releasing more detailed guidance'.

Guidance is being updated every few days but it is still quite vague in parts. In particular there is still only limited information on tax compliance issues nor absolute clarity on eligibility, with a sweeping caveat that it is open to all businesses but they must be '**severely affected by coronavirus**'.

More detailed technical guidance is due to be released shortly. Mr Harra said 'We are working hard to get that guidance in place'.

Stockport Small Business Grant Funding

Stockport Council has announced that since 2 April it has actioned 1,359 grant applications totalling £17,475,000. The grant funds, designed to assist qualifying Stockport businesses affected by the Coronavirus, will be available for businesses to access as soon as the monies have cleared their bank accounts – this will vary according to the bank provider.

Further information can be found at <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/support-for-businesses-and-employers/small-business-grant-funding-coronavirus>

The Allens Team



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