



Covid-19 - Government Funding

Summary of announced schemes in the UK

Updated: 25 March 2020

Introduction

Events are moving very fast and information is constantly being updated in relation to the UK Government's funding response to Covid-19. Our aim is to summarise the information we are currently aware of and make this available to our clients and contacts.

This publication has been written in general terms and may not include all relevant information. We recommend that you obtain professional advice before acting or refraining from action on any of the content of this publication. In particular there are a number of areas where we are expecting further clarification in relation to the process of defining and agreeing the relevant scheme's details, specifications and eligibility and therefore information is subject to change.

Summary of updates to existing funding initiatives and new measures announced on 25 March 2020

Tuesday 25 March:

The Government and Companies House announced that companies can, from today, apply for a 3-month extension to file accounts during Covid-19.

As some 405,000 people have signed up in 24 hours to volunteer with the NHS after a recruitment drive to help the vulnerable, the Government continues to provide updates and clarifications to a raft of measures to support UK businesses.

General updates:

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Updates to eligibility

- Understood to cover employees on a UK PAYE scheme.
- Criteria for defining a “furloughed” worker have not yet been published but are understood to require those furloughed to undertake no work.
- Payments made to employees, if funded by the this scheme, will likely remain subject to tax and social security in the same way as normal pay.

Grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses

- The Government today has confirmed estate agents, lettings agencies, bingo halls, betting shops and casinos will also be eligible for the retail rates relief.

Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF)

- Where a third party rating is unavailable, the BOE will consider using the internal rating assessments from a borrower’s current lenders as a proxy.

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)

- Lenders have now started to publish their own guidance on loans being made available under the scheme.

Rates Relief

Empty Rates and Prohibition by law from occupation

- On Monday, the Government enforced a ‘lockdown’ and closure of certain non-essential properties.
- There is now an opportunity for business occupiers and owners, under the Non-Domestic Rating (Unoccupied Property) (England) Regulations 2008 to seek and benefit from exemption of empty property rates.
- The affected properties are set out in the MHCLG Guidance issued today.
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>

Deferral of VAT

- The deferral applies to payments on account and also payments of overall VAT liabilities. HMRC have verbally advised businesses to suspend direct debit arrangements in place with them for VAT payments, for the period of the deferral.
- HMRC have verbally confirmed that any business registered for VAT in the UK will be eligible for the deferral, regardless of whether the business is established in the UK or overseas.
- HMRC have informed us that they will issue detailed guidance on how to apply as soon as possible.

Ban on evictions for commercial tenants who miss rent payments

- As of 23 March 2020 commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of coronavirus will be protected from eviction for 3 months.
- This document now includes further details and eligibility.

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Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	<p>Payroll support for all firms and enterprises in the UK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant support to cover up to 80% of salary costs of anyone not working due to Coronavirus but whose job has been retained (up to a maximum of £2,500 per month). Wages backdated to 1 March 2020. Initial period of 3 months, but this will be extended if necessary. No limit on the total level of funding available. Ambition for first grants to be “paid within weeks” with a scheme “in place” by the end of April 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers any employer, business, charity or non for profit organisation in the UK. Understood to cover employees on a UK PAYE scheme. Applies to businesses of all sizes. Cover is for employees who are “furloughed” instead of being made redundant. Criteria for defining a “furloughed” worker have not yet been published but are understood to require those furloughed to undertake no work. 	<p>Grants will be provided by HMRC, though exact details remain to be announced it is anticipated that the scheme will be administered via an HMRC portal (which is not yet up and running).</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be a considerable amount of detail required to implement these measures. It appears that employers will not be required to top up the grant to full salary in order to qualify, however existing contracts and employment law appear unchanged and employers will have to carefully consider existing contractual terms and statutory obligations. A maximum grant of £2,500 per worker at 80% of salary costs equates to annual salary costs of £37,500. It is not clear how this will be calculated for workers with variable or zero hour contracts for whom there may be no obvious reference point for payment without working hours. Employers seeking to utilise grants will need to consider also the impact and cost of associated wage-linked costs (pension contributions, employer National Insurance, Apprenticeship Levy). It may be possible to move employees in and out of furlough as business requirements evolve, however good records will need to be kept to validate any grants claimed. Payments made to employees, if funded by the scheme will likely remain subject to tax and social security in the same way as normal pay. 	<p>Government is yet to announce the exact application process.</p> <p>Employers who have begun redundancy programmes and those who have moved towards mandatory unpaid leave arrangements will have to consider how this alters the fairness of redundancy decisions and adapting existing reduced pay/work strategies.</p> <p>The expectation set by Government is for the first payments to be processed “within weeks” and certainly by the end of April 2020.</p>

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Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF)	<p>Support for liquidity amongst large firms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major new scheme being launched by the Bank of England to help companies which make a material contribution to the UK economy to bridge Coronavirus disruption to their cash flows through loans. Up to 12 months support under a Covid Corporate Financing Facility Issued paper will need a short term rating of A3/P3 / long term rating of BBB- or above (or to prove financial strength equivalent) as at 1 March 2020 	<p>To be eligible the business must have had, prior to being affected by Covid-19, a short or long- term rating of investment grade, or financial health equivalent to an investment grade rating.</p>	<p>Application details and FAQs can be found on the BOE website https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/news/2020/march/the-covid-corporate-financing-facility</p> <p>Where potential issuers are unsure on eligibility, having first consulted with their bank they may also contact the BOE at: CCFFeligibleissuers@bankofengland.co.uk</p>	<p>Initial notice https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/markets/market-notices/2020/ccff-market-notice-march-2020</p> <p>FAQs and application forms https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/news/2020/march/the-covid-corporate-financing-facility</p>	<p>Companies that do not currently issue Commercial Paper (CP) but are capable of doing so will in principle be eligible to utilise the CP Facility, provided they meet the eligible securities criteria, in other words of investment grade standing. This is based on A3/P3 or above rating for short term debt. Where a third party rating is unavailable, the BOE will consider using the internal rating assessments from a borrower’s current lenders as a proxy.</p>	<p>Potential borrowers can now apply, through their bank using the application forms here.</p> <p>To apply you will need to liaise with your bank. It is important to note that not all banks issue commercial paper. If your bank does not issue commercial paper, UK Finance will provide a list of banks that are able to assist (here)</p>
Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)	<p>Small business financial support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently established for businesses with turnover of up to £45m (up from £41m), with the scheme open from 23 March 2020. Lending scheme through the British Business Bank from £1,000 up to £5m (increased from up to £1.2m) per company with government meeting interest costs for the first 12 months. Finance terms are from three months up to 10 years for term loans and asset finance and up to three years for revolving facilities and invoice finance. The scheme provides the lender with a government-backed guarantee against 80% of the outstanding facility balance, potentially enabling a ‘no’ credit decision from a lender to become a ‘yes’. NB – the borrower always remains 100% liable for the debt. The first 12 months of these loans will be interest free, as the Government will cover these payments. If the accredited lender can offer finance on normal commercial terms without the need to make use of the scheme, they will do so. Where the small business has a sound borrowing proposal but insufficient security, the lender will consider the business for support via the scheme. 	<p>The route to accessing this financing is for borrowers to approach 40+ accredited lenders who will then, if necessary, apply to the scheme.</p> <p>To qualify, Small Businesses must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be UK based, with turnover of no more than £45 million per annum Operate within an eligible industrial sector (a small number of industrial sectors are not eligible for support). Click here to see list. (N.B. where potentially ineligible borrowers should carefully review their sector against the full SIC list.) Be able to confirm that they have not received de minimis State aid beyond €200,000 equivalent over the current and previous two fiscal years Have a sound borrowing proposal, but insufficient security to meet the lender’s requirements 	<p>It’s simple to apply and should take no longer than a standard application. Any small business interested in CBILS should, in the first instance, approach one of the 40+ accredited lenders with their borrowing proposal (recommended approach is through the lender’s website).</p>	<p>https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/</p>	<p>In one sense this is the Government guaranteeing the lender, not the borrower. The application process for loans should therefore, as we understand it now, be the same as for a normal high street loan.</p> <p>Lenders have now started to publish their own guidance on loans being made available under the scheme.</p>	<p>The CBILS scheme is now confirmed as open, meaning prospective borrowers should be able to apply through any accredited lender.</p> <p>On 20 March 2020, it was stated that on top of measures already announced, the Government intends to announce further measures to ensure that larger and medium sized companies can also access the credit they need in w/c 23 March 2020. It is not currently confirmed as to whether there will be further announcements.</p>

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Grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses	<p>A £25,000 grant will be provided to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses operating from smaller premises, with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000 per property.</p>	<p>Any enquiries on eligibility for, or provision of, the reliefs should be directed to the relevant local authority. The scheme is not eligible where there is occupation for personal uses. Examples include: private stables and loose boxes, beach huts and moorings and car parks and parking spaces. Also, businesses, which as of the 11 March 2020, were in liquidation or were dissolved will not be eligible. The maximum permitted support under EU State Aid is €800,000. Funding will be provided via local authorities. Guidance on eligibility now shared for local authorities in England only.</p>	<p>Funding will be provided via local authorities. Guidance on eligibility now shared for local authorities in England only.</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses English local authority guidance: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874772/small-business-grant-fund-and-retail-guidance.pdf</p>	<p>The optimum route will be to contact one of the Economic Development Officer at your local town or city council. They should be best placed to advise on local arrangements</p>	<p>Await further details to be announced</p>
Rates Relief	<p>Latest announcements allow for a 100% business rates discount for all retail, leisure and hospitality venues with no limit to Rateable Values.</p> <p>The relevant government department (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – MHLCG) has issued a Guidance Note to Local Authorities clarifying as much as possible which specific types of property are covered by the 100% relief.</p> <p>We understand that the government has applied to the European Commission for an exemption from the state aid rules for the scheme.</p> <p>Importantly, unoccupied properties as under existing reliefs where they become vacant during the next 12 months will be charged 100% full rates after a 3 month void rate holiday following vacation, this will continue to apply unless the rules are changed.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, properties which have closed temporarily due to the government’s advice on COVID19 should be treated as occupied for the purposes of this relief.</p>	<p>All property occupiers in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors including shops, cinemas, restaurants, music venues, museums, art galleries, theatres, caravan parks, gyms, small hotels, B&Bs, guest houses, sports clubs, night clubs and club houses, nurseries and now estate agents, lettings agencies, bingo halls, betting shops and casinos will receive 100% rates relief between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021</p> <p>Additional property types that are not listed but fall within the overall description may be eligible and advice should be sought.</p> <p>The list below sets out the types of uses that the Government does not consider to be an eligible use for the purpose of this relief. It is for local authorities to determine for themselves whether particular properties are broadly similar in nature to those below and, if so, to consider them NOT eligible for the relief under their local scheme.</p>	<p>Local Billing Authorities will run and administer the process. They should have knowledge of the applicable properties and there is a fund to be made available by Central Government to support in the administration of the reliefs.</p> <p>Relevant occupiers don’t need to take any action. It will be applied by the local council in the April Business Rates invoice.</p> <p>However, local authorities may have to reissue your bill automatically to exclude the business rate charge. They will do this as soon as possible.</p>	<p>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875613/Expanded_Retail_Discount_Guidance_25.03.20.doc.pdf</p>	<p>Further detail may be confirmed w/c 23 March 2020</p>	

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Rates Relief cont'd	<p>Following the Government's revised rules to stay at home and the forced closure of all non-essential shops and community spaces under The Non-Domestic Rating (Unoccupied Property) (England) Regulations 2008, properties...</p> <p><i>(c) whose owner is prohibited by law from occupying it or allowing it to be occupied; or</i> <i>(d) which is kept vacant by reason of action taken by or on behalf of the Crown or any local or public authority with a view to prohibiting the occupation of the hereditament or to acquiring it.</i></p> <p>...are exempt from the empty rates property tax.</p>	<p>Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, short term loan providers) Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors) Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, tutors) Post office sorting offices <p>At the timing of writing, the applicability of EU State aid rules to the measures was not yet confirmed, although it is understood that the Government has applied for clearance from the Commission.</p>	<p>This will generally need to be applied and requested for by the entity who has responsibility the empty rates liability to the Local Billing Authority.</p>			
Support for businesses that pay little or no business rates ("small companies")	<p>Scheme funding is expected to be available from 1 April 2020.</p> <p>The government will provide additional funding for local authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no business rates because of small business rate relief (SBRR). This will provide a one-off grant of £10,000 to businesses currently eligible for SBRR or rural rate relief, to help meet their ongoing business costs.</p>	<p>Businesses that already pay little or no business rates because of small business rate relief (SBRR).</p>	<p>The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will provide guidance for Local Authorities on how to administer these grants shortly.</p> <p>If you are an eligible business, your Local Authority will then be in touch in the coming weeks to provide details of how to claim this money.</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses</p>	<p>The optimum route will be to contact one of the Economic Development Officer at your local town or city council. They should be best placed to advise on local arrangements</p>	<p>Funding for the scheme will be provided to local authorities by government in early April 2020.</p>

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Ban on evictions for commercial tenants who miss rent payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of 23 March 2020 commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of coronavirus will be protected from eviction for 3 months. The measure is intended to support ongoing conversations between landlords and tenants to agree voluntary rent arrangements Commercial tenants will remain liable for the rent due (i.e. this is not a rent holiday) and it is intended that landlords' rights to forfeit leases will be reinstated at the end of the 3 month period. This measure is in addition to the 12 month business rates holiday that has been granted to retail and leisure occupiers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers all commercial tenants regardless of size. Applies to commercial leases in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Government is liaising with the devolved administrations for comparable support. Protection runs until 30 June 2020, with an option for the government to extend if needed. 	No application is necessary as a blanket moratorium will apply via the Coronavirus Bill.	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-protection-for-businesses-with-ban-on-evictions-for-commercial-tenants-who-miss-rent-payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is clearly positioned as a deferral of the need to pay contractual rent on the date shown, not a rent holiday or waiver. While the moratorium is stated to apply to rent, the definition is likely to extend to other amounts payable such as service charges and insurance rent. Contractual rents falling due on the March quarter day or thereafter will still be due once the moratorium ends. Tenants, therefore, risk accruing significant arrears. While landlords will be prevented from pursuing forfeiture for unpaid rent, all other usual remedies will still be available to them including petitioning to wind up or bankrupt the defaulting tenant, or instructing bailiffs to recover the debt. Clarity will be required around the definition of being "unable" to pay rent. Some well funded tenants may be capable of paying but highly unwilling in current circumstances The moratorium is likely to create significant short term falls in cash flow for major institutional landlords and pension funds. The government is actively monitoring the impact on commercial landlords' cash flow and continues to be in dialogue with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial tenants should continue to engage with their landlords to agree consensual rent concessions and/or waivers and get these documented as soon as possible.

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Time to Pay arrangements “TTP”	<p>TTP has been available to businesses for over a decade, but HM Treasury has announced a stepping up of resource and a specific COVID-19 helpline that businesses can call.</p> <p>TTP allows a business to defer current (as opposed to prospective) tax debts (principally corporation / income tax, payroll taxes and VAT – but theoretically any other tax or duty) by converting settlement to instalments over a 3-12 months period.</p> <p>As part of the process, directors are expected to provide written confirmation that the instalment will be made on time.</p>	<p>Any business is theoretically eligible to apply. It is, however, critical to ensure supporting facts (and documentation) are available to evidence cashflow concerns.</p> <p>HMRC have made it clear that they see themselves in this instance as lender of last resort (and not of first resort). Therefore the taxpayer must demonstrate that all other sources of finance have been pursued and exhausted.</p>	<p>Businesses with a Customer Compliance Manager should discuss this with them in the first instance. All others are encouraged to contact HMRC’s helpline on 0800 0159 559. The process can take less than an hour in a simple situation where the amount to be deferred is less than £750K. Agreement for deferral of larger sums will take longer.</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/difficulties-paying-hmrc</p>	<p>Businesses are strongly advised to be prepared for the conversation with HMRC and have the key information to hand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the business; • Annual total liability to tax; • Amounts requesting to be deferred; • Proposed period of deferral; • Reasons for requesting deferral (directly linked to COVID-19); • Details of discussions with other stakeholders / lenders; • Details of other actions taken to mitigate cash outflows; • A short-term cashflow forecast; • Authority to confirm directors will ensure all instalment payments will be met 	<p>We are awaiting further detailed guidance from HMRC as to the level of information they require to support a claim and confirmation as to whether TTP will be extended to prospective (as opposed to just current) tax liabilities.</p>
Statutory Sick Pay “SSP” for Small or medium sized businesses	<p>SSP is payable to qualifying employees and is now payable from day 1 for those who self isolate or are unwell because of COVID-19 (the first 3 days are normally unpaid). The current rate of SSP is £94.25 per week.</p> <p>HM Treasury has announced that small and medium sized employers (those with fewer than 250 employees) may recover this cost where SSP has been paid as a result of COVID-19 from 13 March for a maximum of two weeks’ sickness per employee.</p>	<p>Small and medium sized businesses with fewer than 250 employees.</p> <p>SSP paid from 13 March as a consequence of COVID-19 for up to two weeks.</p>	<p>There is no existing mechanism for the recovery of SSP by employers (unlike other statutory payments such as Statutory Maternity Pay) . The government has committed to working with employers to work out a mechanism for this recovery</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-who-are-paying-sick-pay-to-employees</p>	<p>Qualifying businesses will need to keep records of sickness and sick pay as a consequence of COVID-19 and days of sickness for future recovery.</p>	<p>Await further information on recovery mechanism.</p>

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Deferral of VAT	<p>VAT payments due from businesses between 20 March 2020 and the end of June 2020 will be deferred. No VAT registered business will have to make a VAT payment in this period.</p> <p>The deferral applies to payments on account and also payments of overall VAT liabilities. HMRC have verbally advised businesses to suspend direct debit arrangements in place with them for VAT payments, for the period of the deferral.</p> <p>Payment of VAT will be deferred to the end of the tax year. HMRC has not yet issued detailed guidance on how the tax year will be defined - the tax year for VAT typically runs to the end of 31 March, 30 April or 31 May (depending on the VAT return periods of an individual business). Therefore, our working assumption is that VAT payments for the period from 20 March 2020 to 30 June 2020 will be deferred until the VAT return periods ending 31 March 2021, 30 April 2021 or 31 May 2021 depending on the VAT return periods of each business deferring payments.</p>	<p>HMRC have verbally confirmed that any business registered for VAT in the UK will be eligible for the deferral, regardless of whether the business is established in the UK or overseas.</p>	<p>Details available are on HM Treasury's website. HMRC have informed us that they will issue detailed guidance as soon as possible.</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-announces-workers-support-package</p>	<p>This development was announced by the Government at 17.00 on 20 March 2020.</p>	<p>We anticipate more detailed guidance being issued by HMRC and we will update with further details as soon available</p>
Income Tax payment deferral	<p>Income tax payments on account due under Self-Assessment on 31 July 2020 will be deferred until 31 January 2021.</p>	<p>The measure applies to all taxpayers who are due to make a payment on account of income tax on 31 July.</p> <p>The Government have noted that the deferral is optional and that taxpayers who are able to pay their liability on 31 July should do so.</p>	<p>This applies automatically with no application required.</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-deferring-vat-and-income-tax-payments</p>	<p>This development was first announced at 17:00 on 20 March 2020 and originally only applied to self-employed taxpayers. The Government updated their guidance on this measure on 25 March 2020, extending the deferral to all taxpayers due to make a payment on account on 31 July 2020.</p>	

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Grant to encourage testing of solutions to support the elderly, vulnerable and self-isolating	<p>Examples of projects which may be supported:</p> <p>Remote Social Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding healthy and qualified carers who can provide support for those in need Managing and delivering care in care homes Delivering domiciliary care and technology in the home <p>Optimising Staffing in Care and Volunteering Sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiting, training and certifying of doctors and nurses and professional carers Volunteering – recruiting and triaging volunteers into clinical and non-clinical workers Projecting demand for health and care workers across the country to improve deployment and management of resources Tackling data gaps in the care sector to understand the financial sustainability and needs of care businesses <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discovering and delivering mental health services Accessing relevant and inclusive peer 2 peer communities Supporting self-management of mental health and well-being Facilitating employee well-being <p>The scheme offers a grant of up to £25,000, within an overall competition where £500,000 of grants will be available</p>	<p>A set of disqualification criteria have been set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suppliers with neither funding, nor revenue; Suppliers with no traction in any of (i) public health and care services (ii) broader public sector or (iii) outside the public sector; Suppliers with no-one in the business that has written code on the technology for the Potential Solution relevant to the testing phase; Suppliers that do not have a working product for their Potential Solution; Suppliers with no-one working full time in the business; Suppliers that can't immediately allocate the resources outlined in their testing plan in the UK; Suppliers whose Potential Solution is out of scope of the challenge; Suppliers whose Potential Solution is exclusively NHS-facing, trying to solve clinical problems or require integration with NHS or social care systems. 	<p>Live online application form via this link to register an expression of interest.</p> <p>After completing the application, select innovators will be invited to interview.</p> <p>Government funding of up to £25,000 will be given to the chosen innovators to test their solution, with the goal for these evidence-based solutions to be deployed quickly based on the potential benefit.</p> <p>Innovators will be selected based on (i) solution feasibility; (ii) company credibility; (iii) impact; and (iv) digital maturity.</p> <p>Following the completion of the trial and testing period NHSX and Partners will consider the best route for further development of the solutions in order for them to best benefit people during the COVID-19 emergency.</p>	<p>https://techforce19.uk/#Challenges</p>	<p>This competition is aimed at helping in the community, and not looking for solutions that are trying to solve clinical problems or require integration with NHS systems</p>	<p>Online application process which is open until 31 March 2020</p>

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