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CORONAVIRUS SPECIAL - 15 May 2020

Roundup of recent DWP announcements

Benefits information available via WhatsApp

People can now access the most up-to-date benefits and support information via their smart phones, using WhatsApp.

The service, which can be accessed by sending 'Hi' in a WhatsApp message to 07860 064 422, has been launched to help combat the spread of incorrect information and to make the correct information easily accessible.

The GOV.UK service currently has more than 312,000 unique users, and has sent more than 2.6 million messages since its launch on 25 March 2020.

DWP is one of the first government departments to provide information via the service which includes information on benefits support available, how to check if you are eligible and how to apply.

Information on furlough

We've updated our [Employment and Benefits Support site](#) with information about [furlough](#).

The page offers straightforward information about what furlough is, eligibility, how furlough interacts with benefits and guidance and signposting on taking alternative work while furloughed.

Job Retention Scheme update

The Coronavirus Job Retention scheme will be extended for four months until the end of October.

After July, greater flexibility will be introduced to the scheme, allowing employers to move out of it in a measured way that protects people's incomes and helps support furloughed employees as they return to work. This will run for three months from August through to the end of October. During this period, employers currently using the scheme will have more flexibility to bring their furloughed employees back to work part time.

Further information can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

The government, in consultation with industry, has produced [guidance](#) to help ensure workplaces are as safe as possible.

There are 8 guides that cover a range of different types of work. Many businesses operate more than one type of workplace, such as an office, factory and fleet of vehicles. You may need to use more than one of these guides as you think through what you need to do to keep people safe.

Safeguarding customers

As part of the DWP's commitment to safeguarding customers during COVID-19, 10 regional Senior Safeguarding Leader roles have been introduced.

The roles will be in place for three months initially and will act as an escalation point when a solution cannot be found locally. They do not replace existing routes into DWP where there is concern about a customer.

As active members of multi-agency boards in their regions, they will work with partners to find resolutions for customers at risk and take forward any service design or policy issues.

For details of your local Safeguarding Leader please email [DWP Customer Safeguarding Team](#).

Find out what you can do if you are struggling because of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Use this GOV.UK [service](#) to find out what help you can get if you are affected by coronavirus. You can use it for yourself or someone else.

You can find information about:

- feeling unsafe
- going in to work
- paying bills or being unemployed
- getting food
- having somewhere to live
- mental health and wellbeing



Department for Work & Pensions

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