We know that the coronavirus (COVID-19) is affecting us all in many ways. The government has been making a variety of changes to the way it supports us all during the outbreak.

This is a very strange and unsettling time we are currently going through, and your Personal Advisor (PA) or Key Worker should be your first point of contact for support.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced a series of factsheets specifically for care leavers to provide further information (links to the other guidance are provided below).

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) and the social distancing measures that have been put in place, lots of businesses have stopped trading or scaled-back their work. As a result, many people are no longer able to go to work, or are working reduced hours.

This factsheet provides information for those whose employer has stopped trading and outlines what support is available to you.

## Main things you need to know:

* To support employees who have been severely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19), the government has introduced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. If you and your employer both agree, your employer might be able to keep you on the payroll if they’re unable to operate or have no work for you to do because of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is known as being ‘on furlough’ and also referred to as temporary leave of absence. This means that you could get 80% of your wages, up to a monthly cap of £2,500.
* ‘Furloughed’ employees must have been on their employer’s payroll from 28 February 2020 and can be on any type of contract, including:
	+ Full-time employees
	+ Part-time employees
	+ Employees on agency contracts
	+ Employees on flexible or zero hours contracts
* Speak to your employer about if they can claim. You cannot apply for the scheme yourself.

## About the coronavirus (COVID-19) Job Retention Scheme:

This is a temporary scheme open to all UK employers starting from 1 March 2020, which has recently been extended for four months, until the end of October. It is designed to support employers whose operations have been severely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

Your employer can claim for 80% of furloughed employees’ (employees on a leave of absence) usual monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, plus the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions on that wage. Employers can use this scheme anytime during this period. The scheme is open to all UK employers that had created and started a PAYE payroll scheme on 19 March 2020.

It is important to note that if you are furloughed, you currently cannot undertake work for or on behalf of your employer. This includes making money for your employer and/or providing services for your employer. Whilst furloughed your employer cannot ask you to do work for another linked or associated company.

After July the furlough scheme will become more flexible to protect people’s incomes and help 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, if your employer is currently using the scheme, they will have more flexibility to bring you back to work part time and employers will also be asked to start sharing with the Government the cost of paying people’s salaries. More details of how this will work will be available by the end of May.

## Your questions answered:

**Q: What do I need to do to get on the Job Retention Scheme?**

**A:** Both you and your employer must agree to put you on furlough – speak to your employer about if they can claim. You cannot apply for the scheme yourself. Once agreed your employer must write to you confirming that you are furloughed to be eligible to claim.

**Q: What types of contract can an employer claim for?**

**A:** Furloughed employees must have been on their employers PAYE payroll from 28 February 2020 and can be on any type of contract, including:

* Full-time employees
* Part-time employees
* Employees on agency contracts
* Employees on flexible or zero hours contracts

The scheme also covers employees who were employed as of 28 February and on payroll and were made redundant or stopped working for their employer prior to 19 March 2020, if they are rehired by their employer. Employees hired after 19 March 2020 cannot be furloughed or claimed for in accordance with this scheme.

**Q: What will happen to my pay and employment contract if I am furloughed?**

**A:** You should discuss this with your employer in the first instance. Any changes made to your employment contract must be done in agreement between you and your employer. This scheme can also apply to you if you are on an agency contract and not working, in which case furlough should be agreed between you and the agency.

If you are working on reduced hours or working for reduced pay, then you will not be eligible for this scheme. In these circumstances, your employer should continue paying you through their payroll, subject to the terms of the employment contract you agreed.

**Q: Will I still be paying taxes on my wages if I am furloughed?**

**A:** While you are on furlough your wage will be subject to usual income tax and other deductions.

**Q: Am I allowed to work for someone else if my current employer has placed me on furlough?**

**A:** Ifyour contract allows, you may undertake other employment while your current employer has placed you on furlough. This will not affect the grant that they can claim under the scheme. Under the current rules, a furloughed employee can take part in volunteer work or training, as long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for, or on behalf of, their employer. Employees on furlough are allowed to volunteer without risking their pay - and will be able to join over 500,000 members of the public who have signed up to help the NHS during the coronavirus outbreak.

However, if you are required to undertake any type of work such as for example, complete online training courses whilst they are furloughed, then you must be paid at least the National Living Wage or National Minimum Wage for the time spent training, even if this is more than the 80% of your wage that will be subsidised.

You will also need to be able to return to work for the employer that has placed you on furlough if they decide to stop furloughing you.

**Q: Would I still be eligible if I was on unpaid leave at the time my employer placed me on furlough?**

**A:** Employees on unpaid leave cannot be furloughed, unless they were placed on unpaid leave after 28 February.

**Q: What if I am already getting statutory sick pay?**

**A:** If you are on sick leave or self-isolating because of coronavirus, your employer may be entitled to furlough you. You should receive Statutory Sick Pay as a minimum, if eligible.  Your employer can furlough you at any time – if they do, you will no longer receive sick pay.

**Q: What happens if I have more than one employer?**

**A:** Employees with more than one employer can still be furloughed for each job. Each job is separate, and the cap applies to each employer individually.

**Q: What will happen if I do not want to go on furlough?**

**A:** If your employer asks you to go on furlough and you refuse, you may be at risk of redundancy or termination of employment, depending on the circumstances of your employer. However, this must be in line with normal redundancy rules and protections. Your employer can still make you redundant while you’re on furlough or afterwards.

**Q: How does this affect me if I am on maternity/paternity/adoption or shared parental leave?**

**A:** Employees who are on or plan to take maternity/paternity/adoption or shared parental leave must take at least 2 weeks off work (4 weeks if you work in a factory or workshop) immediately following the birth of their baby. In practice, most women start their leave before they give birth.

If you are eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) or Maternity Allowance, then the normal rules apply and you are entitled to claim up to 39 weeks of statutory pay or allowance.

If you qualify for SMP, you will also still be eligible for 90% of your average weekly earnings in the first 6 weeks, followed by 33 weeks of pay paid at 90% of your average weekly earnings or the statutory flat rate (whichever is lower). The statutory flat rate is currently £148.68 a week, rising to £151.20 a week from April 2020.

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| Other sources of information available to you* [Information on what you need to do during coronavirus (COVID-19).](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)
* [Information and FAQs on the wide range of employment and benefits support available](https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/).
* [Guidance for tenants and landlords about renting and coronavirus (COVID-19).](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities)
* [Guidance for local government on a range of issues during coronavirus (COVID-19).](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government#housing)
* The charity Shelter has [information on housing advice during coronavirus (COVID-19).](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus#Rent_payment_problems)
* Citizens Advice [information and advice on coronavirus (COVID-19).](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/).
* Money Advice Service [information and advice on paying your bills during coronavirus (COVID-19).](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/coronavirus-and-your-bills)

We have published a number of other factsheets that outline further support available:* Factsheet for care leavers on Universal Credit during coronavirus (COVID-19)
* Factsheet for care leavers who are self-employed, a contractor, freelancer or a gig-economy worker during coronavirus (COVID-19)
* Factsheet for care leavers who are university students during coronavirus (COVID-19) – to follow
* Factsheet for former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) care leavers during coronavirus (COVID-19) – to follow
* Factsheet for care leavers on housing during coronavirus (COVID-19)
* Factsheet for care leavers who are young, single or expectant parents during coronavirus (COVID-19)
* Factsheet for care leavers on how to stay safe and maintain good emotional health and wellbeing during coronavirus (COVID-19)
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