

### CJRS Bonus scheme – officially abandoned

The Treasury Department officially revokes this - because the extended furlough scheme supersedes it.

### Test and Trace Support Payment scheme: claiming financial support

If you've been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020, you're under a legal obligation to do so, and could be eligible for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment. Here's a link to share with any team members that may have been affected by this.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support>

### Recent Furlough Changes

The Government recently updated its guidance for the furlough scheme. Here are a few of the updates. Some of these clarify areas where the guidance wasn't previously clear :

As an employer you can (not must) furlough employees whose health has been affected by coronavirus or any other conditions, including if they are unable to work from home, or working reduced hours, because they:

- are clinically extremely vulnerable, or at the highest risk of severe illness from coronavirus and following public health guidance

- have caring responsibilities resulting from coronavirus, such as caring for children who are at home as a result of school and childcare facilities closing, or caring for a vulnerable individual in their household

This resolves and clarifies an area of uncertainty, which is whether parents who stay at home to look after school-age children are eligible for furlough.

The Treasury Department also confirmed that employers cannot claim for any day when an employee is serving statutory or contractual notice between 1 December 2020 and 31 January 2021 (this includes employees serving notice of retirement, resignation and contractual redundancy notice). This is a change from the previous position and employers considering dismissals should be aware that the costs of notice pay after 1 December will no longer be covered by the scheme. Also, note that the grant cannot be used for redundancy payments.

### Sickness and furlough

Can an employee be moved from sick leave to furlough?

The short answer to this is yes, an employee can be moved from sick leave onto furlough. The CJRS is not intended to be used for short-term sickness absence, but if an employee is currently off sick they can still be furloughed.

What if an employee becomes sick or is told to self-isolate while furloughed?

If an employee becomes sick while on furlough, it is up to the employer to decide whether to move them onto SSP or to keep them on furlough.

If the employee remains on furlough, you can continue to claim their salary through the furlough scheme.

If the employee is moved onto sick pay, you will have to pay the SSP or company sick pay due and can no longer claim for the employee's salary through the furlough scheme.

However, employers with fewer than 250 employees can use the new Coronavirus Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme which will repay up to two weeks' SSP starting on or after 13 March 2020 for employees who are unable to work because they have coronavirus or cannot work because they are self-isolating at home.

### Don't forget that

Holiday still accrues for your team while they are on furlough. You can ask them to take holiday while they are on furlough but you must :

Give the team member notice that is double the length of holiday you are asking them to take .

Top up the addition 20% of their salary so they receive 100% of their contractual pay during the holiday.



## **What is Psychological Safety?**

Psychological safety is when individuals feel empowered to share information and be vulnerable without fear of judgement, punishment or embarrassment.

## **Why is it important?**

When people feel psychological safety at work they are more willing and able to show up as their whole selves. This creates a feeling that just would not be present if people felt unsafe to be themselves, to show up at work and to be able to speak up, voice their opinions, share their ideas, ask questions and challenge the status quo where they see fit. It empowers people to fully participate, knowing that they are safe to share and make mistakes. By being able to fully participate, this cultivates a feeling of belonging and being accepted and valued. This makes people feel cared for which in turn increases happiness and productivity. It has been found that psychological safety is something the most successful teams in the world have in common.

## **Top Tips for Promoting Psychological Safety**

### *Check-in round at the start of team meetings*

A check-in round is an intentional practice to open a session and increase self and team awareness. A facilitator invites each member to share what mindset they're currently in, how their day has been, what they have going on, before the work conversation starts — one at a time. This practice allows people to be fully present and feel listened to. It reinforces collective trust, gives everyone a voice, and reminds us that we're human.

Facilitating a check-in round is an easy way to start building psychological safety. However, doing it right requires time and practise. At first, people might find it childish or a waste of time; most people may share something just to get out of the spotlight. In time, people will start opening up and realise the power of sharing. That said, it is important to remember that people may not wish to share truly personal things that are happening to them within a group setting. If a personal subject is touched upon but they choose to keep it brief, respect those boundaries and perhaps pick it up later during a one to one check in – this is not about making people feeling pressured to share things they are not comfortable doing so.

### *Build strong personal relationships*

When leaders take the time to get to know the people in their team, it fosters a sense of belonging within the team. When people feel cared about and valued, they are more likely to feel safe. This can be achieved through the check-ins previously mentioned but more so through one to one check ins that promote honesty and vulnerability from both parties. It is about creating and maintaining that shared human connection.

## *Make it okay to let it all out*

How do you get your team to talk about, "What's everybody thinking and no-one is saying"? Simple: make it okay for people to spill it all out. Promote candor and transparency from all team members. A psychologically safe culture isn't one that's free of frictions; it's about providing the right space to have the conversations that most teams avoid.

Promoting candor and transparency is your key responsibility as a leader. You must create an environment that encourages people to support each other and to trust each other, even when they screw up.

Building a psychologically safe space takes time and consistency. Modelling behaviour is the best way to encourage people to participate. Start by asking for feedback and, when people talk, just sit down and listen.

## **National Minimum Wage Increase**

The government has announced the annual increases in national minimum wage rates to apply from April 2021.

The different terms used can be confusing. The National Minimum Wage is the minimum hourly pay that almost all workers are entitled to. The National Living Wage is higher and is currently paid to workers who are over 25. From April 2021, the Government is extending the NLW to 23 and 24 year olds.

The new hourly rates from next April will be:

- NLW (age 23 and over) - £8.91
- Age 21 and 22 - £8.36
- Age 18-20 £6.56
- Age 16 and 17 - £4.62
- Apprentice rate - £4.30

You can find more details at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-living-wage-increase-to-protect-workers-living-standards>

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