

## Update for churches as employers

### New furlough scheme rules and removal of retention bonus

4 December 2020

#### Summary

In the last few weeks we have seen three different versions of the job retention (furlough) scheme or its proposed replacement, the job support scheme. The government has settled on an extension of the furlough scheme, but the new arrangements are slightly different from the scheme used earlier in the year.

- If you meet the criteria, you can use either full furlough or flexible furlough for staff between the start of November and the end of March 2021, including staff who have not been on furlough earlier in the year.
- This includes an option to re-engage and furlough staff made redundant on or after 23 September 2020
- Claim dates have changed – you must make your grant claim within 14 days of the end of the month you are claiming for – for November 2020 the last date to claim is 14 December 2020
- The proposed job retention bonus of £1,000 per furloughed employee in January 2021 has been removed
- The job support scheme has been postponed for the time being.

#### 1. Who can be placed on furlough under the new scheme?

Anyone who was on your payroll on or before 30 October 2020. If you made staff redundant on or after 23 September 2020 you can offer to re-employ and to put them on the furlough scheme.

Full details of how to deal with staff on fixed term contracts, on or returning from maternity leave, those who have recently been made redundant and those on sick leave or self isolating can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-which-employees-you-can-put-on-furlough-to-use-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

#### 2. Is flexible furlough still available?

Yes, you can choose to furlough employees for all of their working hours or you can furlough them for some of their normal working hours. In both cases you will need to write to each employee laying out the details of the arrangements you are putting in place. If you intend to reduce an individual's salary to 80% to reflect the furlough grant you will need to agree this with them.

Please keep copies of all correspondence with staff – you are required to keep it for 5 years.

### **3. How much can we claim?**

You can claim 80% of an employee's usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. Please note that the new scheme does not allow employers to claim for national insurance or pension contribution costs. You must keep all claim records for at least 6 years.

Full details of how to make a claim can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wages-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

### **4. How do we calculate our claim?**

If you would like help to calculate your claim, you can find a useful calculator tool here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/calculate-how-much-you-can-claim-using-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

### **5. How long do we have to make a claim each month?**

The timescales for claiming furlough grant have changed. Under the new arrangements you must make a claim for furlough grant within 14 days of the end of the month. For example, the last date to make furlough claims for November 2020 is 14 December 2020.

### **6. What is the situation if furloughed staff wish to volunteer?**

The new scheme guidelines provide clarity on this point. A furloughed employee can take part in volunteer work during hours which you record your employee as being on furlough as long as it is for another employer or organisation.

### **7. Can we still claim the job retention bonus payment in January 2021?**

No, this has been scrapped. The Chancellor has referred to an alternative 'retention incentive' but no details have been given so far.

### **8. What is happening about the Job Support Scheme?**

The job support scheme was due to come into effect from 1 November 2020 to replace the job retention (furlough) scheme. The decision to extend the furlough scheme means that the job support scheme has been postponed. We wait for news about whether it will be offered at the end of the current furlough scheme.

### **9. When will the furlough scheme be reviewed?**

The government have committed to reviewing the current furlough scheme at the end of January 2021 so we should expect to hear more in early February.

Please note that these notes have been written using the government and professional body guidance available as at 9.00am on 4 December 2020. If you have specific questions, you are welcome to email us at [HR@baptist.org.uk](mailto:HR@baptist.org.uk).