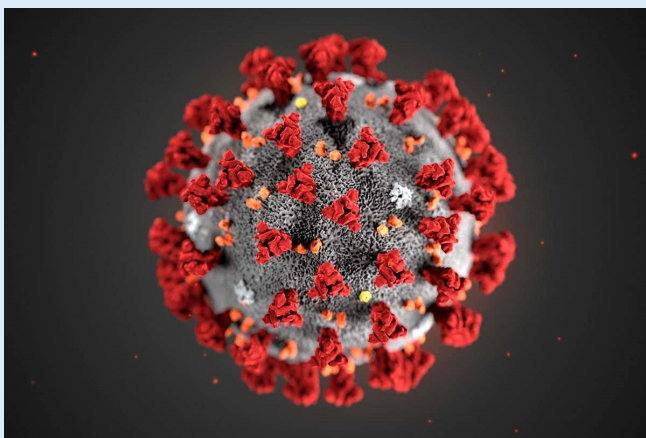


# RET Newsletter Special: COVID-19 Pandemic

Welcome to this special edition of the SE Wales RET newsletter, which we have brought to you to highlight the support and information available at this difficult time.



## CCR

The Cardiff Capital Region are regularly updating their website with news and blogs regarding the impact of the pandemic on the region. You can find all the recent pieces [here](#).

## WEFO guidance

WEFO continue to focus their efforts on supporting structural fund operations through the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have updated their FAQ [guidance](#) with further information on eligible activities and costs for ERDF and ESF programmes.

New guidance is available on the co-investment requirement for ESF Priority 2, Skills for Growth projects, as the national requirement for businesses to part fund skills interventions has been relaxed. Under this flexibility, operations may opt either to suspend their co-investment requirements or to reduce the levels of co-investment they seek from employers. This flexibility will last for 18 months, backdated for training delivered from 1 March 2020 and continuing until 31 August 2021. Operational leads will need to consider the funding and State Aid implications and discuss these with their PDO.

A further package of measures with additional flexibility has now been approved by the European Union, however, projects receiving EU support will still need clear objectives, measurable outputs and clear audit trails showing how the expenditure supports achievement of those outputs. Work is underway on a project to help meet the costs to the Welsh National Health Service of employing additional medical staff, such as recently retired medical staff and final year medical students, to assist with the fight against Covid-19. There will be a programme modification made retrospectively to cover this.

## Future regional investment in Wales

The consultation on a Framework for Regional Investment in Wales has been extended and will now close on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020. WEFO will be holding four regional consultation webinars via Zoom, with the SE event to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> May. The webinars will give all stakeholders an opportunity for questions and engagement prior to their response to the consultation. It will also allow space for discussion of future regional investment in a wider Covid-19 response/ economic recovery context.

The web link to access to the document and annexes is <https://gov.wales/framework-for-regional-investment-in-wales>.

## Third sector support

[The Welsh Council for Voluntary Associations \(WCVA\)](#) have two new funds to support the voluntary sector through this crisis, the [Third sector resilience fund for Wales](#) and the [Voluntary Services Emergency Fund](#).

WCVA have also launched their latest [Active Inclusion](#) grant scheme call with greater flexibility for 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations to respond to the Covid-19 response. The application process has been simplified and shortened for those organisations on the Approved Beneficiaries List.

[Third Sector Support Wales](#) also has useful links to sources of support.

## Training

Remember all the ESF Projects delivering employability support can be seen on our website at <http://www.sewales-ret.co.uk/projects/>. Despite being unable to offer face to face support, most of the projects are continuing to deliver by offering distant learning and support.

There has been some confusion amongst companies on whether their furloughed employees are eligible to participate in training. Confirmation that employees who are furloughed are eligible to participate in training can be found [here](#).

Some useful links are:

- Careers Wales – useful course search [tool](#).
- Open University Open Learn – [short free courses](#).
- Working Wales are still working digitally through the pandemic, for information on their available services visit <https://workingwales.gov.wales/>
- UK government skills toolkit: <https://theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk/>

## Business Advice and Support

### The Development Bank of Wales

The Development Bank of Wales launched the £100m [Covid-19 Wales Business Loan Scheme](#) in March as part of the Welsh Government's £500 million Economic Resilience Fund. The aim was to support businesses experiencing cash flow difficulties as a result of the pandemic. The Scheme offered businesses trading for longer than two years loans up to £250,000, fixed at 2% interest, with a repayment holiday for the first 12 months and no arrangement or monitoring fees. The first loans were approved within three days of the fund launch and the Scheme was fully subscribed after just one week. Additionally, the Development Bank of Wales are offering a 3-month capital and monitoring fee repayment holiday for pre-existing customers that did not access the scheme which will continue until July.

### Business Wales

The [Business Wales Covid-19 digital](#) platform provides all the latest information for businesses in Wales; with daily updates on the financial and non-financial support, guidance for employers.

The Business Wales Helpline (03000 6 03000) is available to answer business enquiries by telephone, email and live chat.

We recommend businesses in Wales subscribe to the [Business Wales newsletter](#) to receive information on the support available and the latest announcements from Welsh Government.

### Business support

Business Wales provides impartial, independent support and advice to people starting, running and growing a business in Wales.

During these challenging times, Business Wales' expert advisers are on hand to deliver support and advice to any entrepreneur or SME in Wales. Our main Business Wales services and Enterprise Hubs are all operating virtually to provide 1-2-1 support and online workshops.

Business owners can talk through challenges with advisers, or join one of our new online webinars. Topics include:

- business uncertainty, income and managing cash flow
- business hibernation impact on income, staff and you, the entrepreneur
- adapting your business model
- dealing with suppliers and contractors
- HR and staffing
- digital diversification
- doing business in the virtual world. Online payments, cybersecurity to digital marketing
- looking after yourself including well-being support for you and your team
- leading your team through crisis.

To date Business Wales have delivered 139 webinars on a range of topics that range from 30 minute short introductory sessions to 2 hour interventions for more in-depth learning and conversation.

Click [here](#) to view Covid-19 webinar programme in May.

## Business Support: Training Opportunities

**Welsh Government** have launched access to a number of specialist partnership grants and funding for online training for staff (including furloughed staff) to aid Covid-19 recovery. For further details please visit [Business Wales Skills Gateway](#).

**Advanced Media Production** are providing training and up-skilling opportunities for Welsh businesses and organisations in digital and media production. They are taking applications for June 2020 in the following modules:

- Introduction to Media Production (Welsh and English)
- Programming for Digital Media (Welsh and English)
- Digital Culture (English)
- Web Development (English)
- Advanced Skills in Media Production (Welsh and English)



**Cynhyrchu  
Cyfryngau Uwch  
Advanced Media  
Production**

The training is delivered in a flexible format enabling students to work via supported distance learning through a largely online programme.

As the scheme has been supported by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government, Masters level training is offered at the heavily subsidised rate of £165.00 per module per employee (modules of this academic level and expertise normally cost up to £1000).

A short presentation and a video giving further details of this programme can be viewed here: [Advanced Media Production Short Video](#) and [Advanced Media Production Presentation](#).

