



Department
for Transport

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR
Tel: 0300 330 3000

Email: CBSSG@dft.gov.uk

7 Aug 2020

To bus operators who receive commercial BSOG
via email

COVID-19 – Supporting the Bus Sector

I am pleased to confirm that funding of up to £27.3m per week on a rolling basis has been allocated to bus operators to fund local transport services in England.

The funding for buses is subject to the following conditions set by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (CST):

- a. Funding is reviewed by DfT each month to ensure it is within the cap and it is being spent on essential costs and services.
- b. Payments to operators will be adjusted downwards if revenues are higher than expected, so that no operators make profits while receiving government funding.
- c. HMT has the right to review the above funding envelope and revise it downwards, e.g. if lower service levels are sufficient to meet passenger demand – including at the forthcoming Spending Review. Additional bids for funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- d. HMT has the right to review and end the funding. Following the announcement that funding will cease, an 8-week notice period will begin.

We will write to you shortly with the revised terms and conditions, for the most part these will stay the same. However, the Department will need assurance from operators that service levels will increase to 100% of pre-covid levels for September.

The scheme will require that operators work closely with the relevant local transport authorities (LTAs) to agree which services are required, having regard to the need to enable the economy to reopen and ensuring that buses are not heavily loaded because of reduced service patterns.

The further funding is designed to provide additional funding on top of continued payments from the public sector to bus operators (such as BSOG, concessionary travel reimbursement, home to school transport and tendered service contract payments) at pre-pandemic levels, as requested by Ministers.

Communications with Local Transport Authorities

The terms and conditions for the funding place an obligation on operators to work closely with the relevant LTAs to agree which services are required. Operators should not alter services funded by CBSSG Restart without making LTAs aware.

The Department will also ask operators to demonstrate how you have worked with LTAs and what steps you have taken in cases where the LTA asserts that you have not responded positively or quickly to any reasonable requests that they may have made. Where the Department has a reasonable belief that a bus operator has not engaged in good faith with an LTA, DfT may deny, suspend or recover any CBSSG Restart funding previously paid.

Operators will need to provide evidence to DfT of consultation undertaken with LTAs to date, or agreements where possible, ahead of schools and colleges reopening in September by 1 September 2020, including statements from the relevant LTAs outlining the basis on which they will agree service levels.

CBSSG Restart funding has been calculated on the basis that LTAs will continue to make financial payments to operators (including for tendered services, concessionary travel and home to school transport) at pre-COVID-19 levels. In considering whether an operator has engaged in good faith, DfT will therefore take into account whether the LTAs have adopted this approach as requested to do so and – if not – whether that has made a material impact on the financial and other resources available to the operator concerned to fulfil any requests made by the relevant LTAs.

On the basis of this letter please take steps to maintain and expand your bus operations – working closely with the relevant local transport authority or authorities – as quickly as possible, for example by withdrawing affected staff from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme with immediate effect.

Communications with passengers

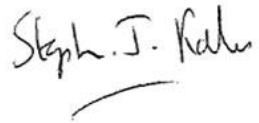
The sector should continue to ensure that changes to bus timetables are communicated to passengers clearly, taking account of the Transport Focus guidance at <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/guidance-communicating-changes-to-local-bus-services/>. Operators should also follow the Government's transport guidance at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>.

In addition to this funding, we will continue to pay BSOG payments to bus operators at pre-COVID-19 levels, as we have done since the start of the COVID-19 period.

We are happy to answer your questions about the CBSSG Restart scheme. Please email the team at CBSSG@dft.gov.uk. For any wider enquiries, I suggest you contact your trade group as appropriate. The CPT can be contacted on 020 7240

3131; Community Transport Association (CTA) on 0161 351 1475, and ALBUM on 0115 976 6701.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steph. J. Fidler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Stephen Fidler
Director, Local Transport Directorate, Department for Transport