

Message

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Subject: RE: OBR publication - policy table and Publishing SSP rebate statistics[off-sen]

Hi all

Sorry for the delay in reading out.

On the SSP stats specifically – CX does not want to publish the stats proactively, or to publish on a routine basis. We can deal with FOIs in the normal way.

Thanks,

[NR]



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[NR]

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From: [Name Redacted]@hmtreasury.gov.uk>

Sent: 17 June 2020 17:28

To: [See recipients listed above]

[See recipients listed above]

Subject: OBR publication - policy table and Publishing SSP rebate statistics[off-sen]

Hi **NR**

See below an update for CX on OBR publication for Friday 19th and a related issue on publishing SSP rebate statistics where it would be good to get a steer from the CX as to whether he agrees the approach (thanks to **NR** for putting this all together).

Thanks,
NR

OBR Coronavirus Policy Monitoring database

- The OBR are updating their policy monitoring database on Friday 19th June. This is a smaller update and they have indicated it will be their final update before publication of their FSR.
- Overall there is an increase of £300 million from their last update on 4th June meaning overall spending £132.6bn in response to Coronavirus.
- The main changes within the table are:
 - **Statutory Sick Pay –cost has decreased by £600 million** and is now £400 million. The OBR is basing this new revision on public health data, and revised lower take-up estimates following the introduction of the CJRS and other support for business. They are now estimating that 2.3 million people will take-up the scheme, previously the costing assumed this was around 5.7 million (this take-up figure was not referenced publicly anywhere).
 - **Trade credit insurance – first estimate of cost of this policy at £2bn.** This is within the range of cost estimates from BEIS's internal analysis, which has a central cost of £1.6bn.
 - **Business Rates package – cost has decreased by £1.2bn** to £11.8bn from £13bn, based on updated admin data published by MHCLG. This is more closely aligned to our internal estimates.
 - **Domestic VAT reverse charge for construction services – first estimate of cost of this policy at £100 million.** Having announced a 5 month delay to this policy the cost is estimated to be £65 million, for simplicity the OBR have rounded this figure to £100 million.

Publishing SSP rebate

- As detailed above OBR’s latest report will revise down their costing for the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate measure from £1bn to £400m. At Budget, you announced that the scheme could be worth up to £2bn, based on all eligible employees needing to claim SSP, and all eligible employers claiming through the SSPRS. Since then, both HMT/DWP/HMRC and the OBR previously had revised our central estimate to £1bn, based on a 50% take up.
- The total value of claims to date since the scheme launched 3 weeks ago is £21.8m based on 40,000 claims for 150,000 total employees. If this trend from the first few weeks continues, the outturn will be significantly below £1bn, though costs may climb when the CJRS winds down and track and trace is embedded.
- In line with your previous steers, to date HMRC has not published data on the SSPR, however we recommend that you reconsider for the following reasons:
 - HMRC have received an FOI on the number of applications, the number of employees claimed for, and the total amount on money paid to businesses under the scheme, which they will need to respond to by 7th July. HMRC are legally obliged to disclose this information, which will then be in the public domain, and it is likely to be requested again. HMRC would prefer to proactively publish data ahead of the deadline in order to have more control of the release of information.
 - Failing to publish may bring in questions of transparency, especially when HMRC is publishing similar data on the government’s other flagship schemes like the CJRS.
- However as the outturn data is currently significantly below what was announced at Budget, the Government could face criticism that it is less generous than what was pledged. However on balance we feel that the benefits of publishing outweigh the risks, and we can respond to any criticism by highlighting that the £2bn figure was always a maximum figure and since the SSPR was announced, we have announced a number of other large schemes to help businesses, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. These schemes are likely to have reduced the need for employers to rely on the SSPR scheme. **Therefore we recommend you publish data on the SSPR scheme – do you agree?**
- If you agree, HMRC’s recommended approach aligns with the approach to the CJRS and SEISS, so:
 - The data will be published weekly alongside the CJRS/SEISS data on gov.uk, with the first release coinciding with the next CJRS/SEISS update on the 23rd June;
 - The data includes the total number of claims, total numbers of employments these claims are for, and the total amounts claimed;
 - As the outturn data is smaller than anticipated, we recommend that HMRC should not do any proactive comms alongside the release;
- **Do you agree with this approach?**