



wellway INSIGHTS

FEBRUARY 2026



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February's message from the Wellway team...

Hello and welcome to your February edition of 'Wellway Insights' - your go-to for the latest tax and business news.

Between the tax return deadline and the constant rain, January has felt like a month of umbrellas, spreadsheets, and hitting that 'file' button for HMRC!

A huge thank you to our tax team - and to all our clients - for ensuring everything was filed accurately and on time, making this tax season such a success. It's always a demanding start to the year but we're incredibly proud of the hard work and commitment shown across the firm. We're now looking forward to our well-earned team meal out to celebrate everyone's efforts! Until then, we're tucking into a giant cookie from one of our lovely team members!

Moving into February, our focus shifts to forward thinking. We're working with many clients on year-end tax planning, helping to optimise their position and ensure they make the most of available reliefs and allowances before April. Taking action now can make a real difference, and we're here to guide you through your options.

As February is also the month of *love*, why not show your business or finances some extra care? Reviewing your budgets, checking cash flow, celebrating wins, or updating your business plan are small acts that can make a long-term difference.

Here's to a productive (and hopefully drier!) month ahead!

Thank you for reading!



TAX NEWS

There's Still Time For Year End Tax Planning...



With the tax/financial year end approaching, now is a good time to check that you're making the most of the available reliefs and allowances available to you. Please talk to us if you think any of the issues affect you.

Savings

If you have some spare cash, an obvious tax planning point would be to maximise your ISA allowances for the 2025/26 tax year (currently £20,000 per person). If you are 18 or over but under 40, you can open a Lifetime ISA to save for your first home or retirement. You can put in up to £4,000 each year, until you're 50, but you must make your first payment into your ISA before you're 40. The government will add a 25% bonus to your savings, up to a maximum of £1,000 per year. The £4,000 Lifetime ISA limit counts towards the £20,000 ISA allowance.



Pension Planning

You might also want to consider increasing your pension savings before 5 April 2026.

Under the current rules, the government adds to your pension contributions at the 20% basic rate. For instance, if you save £4,000 in a personal pension, the government tops this up to £5,000. If you are a higher rate taxpayer there is a further £1,000 tax relief when your tax liability is calculated, reducing the net cost of making the contribution to £3,000.



Additional pension contributions can be even more effective if your income is between £100,000 and £125,140 as the gross pension contribution reduces net income for the purposes of the reduction in the personal allowance. Note that for every £2 of income in excess of £100,000, the £12,570 personal allowance is reduced by £1, with reduction to nil where net income is £125,140 or more. This is effectively a 60% tax saving.

The timing of making contributions can be critical. There are also limits on the amount which can be contributed to a pension each year tax efficiently. Contact us for details of how these apply to your circumstances.

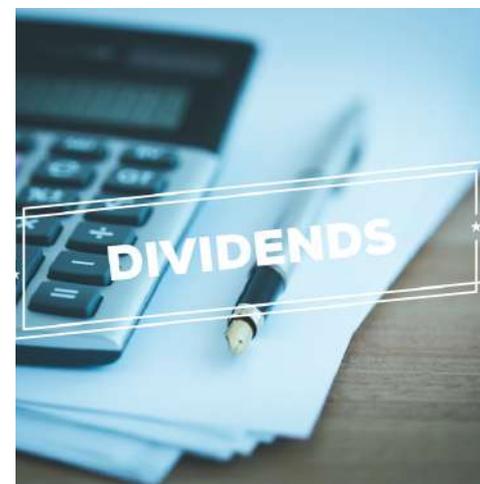
Dividends and company loans

The basic and higher rates of income tax applying to dividends will increase by two percentage points on 6 April 2026. The basic rate will increase from 8.75% to 10.75% and higher rate will increase from 33.75% to 35.75%. The additional rate will remain unchanged at 39.35%.

The increase to the higher rate will also apply for the purposes of the 'penalty tax' which is charged on some company loans to their shareholders, made on or after 6 April 2026.

Consider the timing of dividend payments and company loans as we approach the end of the tax year and, where possible, take advantage of the lower rates applying in 2025/26.

Before taking any action, we would recommend talking to us to fully consider your position and advise on any possible savings which can be made.



TAX NEWS

Capital Allowances

Where a business has a 31 March or 5 April year end, the end of the tax year is a significant date as far as capital allowances are concerned. In order for new equipment to attract capital allowances, the expenditure must be incurred on or before the end of the accounting period. It is therefore important to consider the timing of expenditure and the possibility of accelerating planned investment.



Limited companies and unincorporated businesses are entitled to 100% write off for the first £1 million spent on new and used equipment in a 12 month period. This is called the “annual investment allowance” (AIA). The AIA does not apply to motor cars but there is a special 100% tax relief if you buy a new zero-emissions motor car.



In addition to the AIA, limited companies buying new (not second hand) equipment are entitled to fully expense the cost of most acquisitions against business profits. There is no financial limit on expenditure qualifying for this “full expensing” relief.

For expenditure incurred on or after 1 January 2026, a new 40% first year allowance is available to limited companies and unincorporated businesses. The allowance can be used against qualifying assets (not cars or second-hand assets) and will be particularly useful to unincorporated businesses that have used all of their £1million AIA.

Where equipment is bought under a hire purchase contract, the capital allowances outlined above are available on the full cost of the asset provided it has been brought into use by the end of the accounting period. This is despite the fact that the payments may be spread over a number of months. It is important to take note of when assets are brought into use.

Capital Gains Tax Planning

You might wish to consider bringing forward capital gains to before 6 April 2026 if you haven’t used your £3,000 CGT annual exemption for 2025/26.

Another important point to note is the upcoming increase to the CGT rates applicable to gains qualifying for both Business Asset Disposal Relief (BADR) and Investors’ Relief (IR). These rates increased from 10% to 14% on 6 April 2025 and are set to increase again to 18% on 6 April 2026: another reason to accelerate qualifying disposals, where possible.



Paying Voluntary National Insurance Contributions

A retiring person needs to have 35 ‘qualifying years’ in order to claim the full state pension. For those with gaps in their record, usually due to not paying sufficient National Insurance Contributions (NICs), it is possible to ‘plug’ those gaps by paying Class 3 (Voluntary) NICs at £17.75 per week (£18.40 in 2026/27).

Voluntary NICs can usually only be paid for the past six years: this means that gaps for the 2019/20 tax year must usually be made up by 5 April 2026.



 wellway

We can help!

With the tax and financial year end approaching, now is the perfect time to ensure you’re making full use of the reliefs and allowances available. As your accountants, we can help you review your position, identify opportunities, and plan effectively. Please get in touch if any of these issues may affect you as we’re always happy to help!

Chancellor Increases Agricultural and Business Property Relief Allowance to £2.5 Million

Surprise amendment to IHT proposals

The government has announced a major change to the agricultural property relief (APR) and business property relief (BPR) reforms that will take effect from 6 April 2026.

The full 100% relief from inheritance tax will now apply to the first £2.5 million of qualifying assets, up from the previously announced £1 million. This means that a couple can now pass on up to £5 million of agricultural or business assets between them tax-free, in addition to the standard inheritance tax allowances that apply.

The proposed reforms to inheritance tax on agricultural and business assets were first announced as part of the 2024 Autumn Budget, and this is now the second amendment to the original proposals. The first amendment was included in the 2025 Autumn Budget and the new allowance can now be transferred between spouses or civil partners.

HM Treasury has said that the increase in allowance will halve the number of estates that will be affected by the reforms, and that around 85% of estates will pay no more inheritance tax than they would have done without the reforms.

If you would like personalised advice on how these inheritance tax reforms and the new increase in allowances will affect your estate, please get in touch. We would be happy to help you!



Key Tax Dates for Your Diary

01/03	Corporation tax for year to 30/04/2025, unless quarterly instalments apply.
19/02	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 5/2/26 (due 22/2 if you pay electronically).
01/03	Corporation tax for year to 31/05/2025, unless quarterly instalments apply.
19/03	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 5/3/26 (due 22/3 if you pay electronically).



TAX NEWS

Getting Ready for Making Tax Digital

What You Need to Know Before MTD Begins



With just a few weeks to go until the new tax year, many businesses are preparing for the changes that Making Tax Digital (MTD) will bring. From April, sole traders and landlords with an income of over £50,000 will need to submit quarterly updates to HMRC. It is estimated that around 900,000 individuals will be joining in April. If you are affected, this will be a major change and the earlier you can prepare, the better.

Using approved software

MTD requires the use of software. Whether you are already a 'digital native' with your bookkeeping or have not yet made the jump, it will be vital to make sure that any accounting software you use is HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) approved for MTD use.

Using software for keeping your accounting records can have benefits beyond helping you comply with MTD. For instance, software can help streamline some of your work, make it easier to forecast your cash flow, help inform you in making financial decisions and reduce mistakes.

That means that when you are selecting accounting software, it is worth considering some of the other advantages it could give you and your business.



Registering for MTD

Based on your tax return information, HMRC will get in touch with you if you need to get ready for Making Tax Digital. However, HMRC will not sign you up automatically. This is something you will need to do, and importantly, on time.



Are there any exemptions?

There are some automatic exemptions from MTD. For instance, if you are submitting a tax return as a trustee or as a personal representative of a taxpayer who has died, there is no need to sign up for MTD. Generally, HMRC will tell you if you are automatically exempt.

In addition to automatic exemptions, there are situations where an exemption can be applied for. So, it pays to check whether your situation might mean you can apply.

What if your income is less than £50,000?

MTD is being given a phased introduction. MTD will become mandatory for sole traders and landlords as follows:

- 6 April 2026 - those with income above £50,000.
- 6 April 2027 - those with income above £30,000.
- 6 April 2028 - those with income above £20,000.

It is possible to voluntarily sign up sooner if you wish.

Does MTD apply to partnerships?

Not yet, however, HMRC have advised that business partnerships will also need to use MTD in the future. The timeline for when this will happen will be set out at a later date.



Would you like help with MTD?

Choosing software can be a bit of a minefield, so if you would like support, we can offer you a tailored recommendation and any training you need. We can also handle your registration with HMRC.

If you would like ongoing help with bookkeeping, filling in the quarterly returns, or you just want us to handle the end-of-year return, please get in touch. We would be happy to help you!



Spring Forecast Scheduled for 3 March 2026

Will There Be Any Changes to Tax Policy?

The Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, has requested the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to publish an economic and fiscal forecast on 3 March 2026. This will be accompanied by a statement to Parliament.

As set out in the Budget, the Spring forecast will provide an interim update on the economy and public finances, rather than assessing the government's performance against the fiscal mandate. This means the forecast is unlikely to result in changes to tax policy, however, the full details will only be completely clear once the forecast is published and the Chancellor has responded.

We will, of course, keep you updated once the forecast is published.



VAT Flat Rate Scheme

Could It Work for You?

If you are a small VAT-registered business, how you calculate your VAT could make a real difference to your cash flow and the time you spend keeping records. For some businesses, the standard method for calculating VAT is the best choice, but for others, their circumstances mean the VAT Flat Rate Scheme may be worth considering. Here we review some of the factors involved in determining whether the VAT Flat Rate Scheme could work for you.

Comparing methods

Under the standard method you charge VAT on your sales and reclaim VAT on your purchases. You then pay the difference to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). The Flat Rate Scheme uses a different calculation. You still charge your customers the usual VAT rate. However, instead of reclaiming VAT on most purchases, you pay a fixed percentage of your VAT-inclusive turnover to HMRC. The percentage amount depends on the industry your business belongs to. Eligibility rules apply. Businesses may be able to join the VAT Flat Rate Scheme if their VAT turnover is £150,000 or less (excluding VAT).

When the Flat Rate Scheme might help

The Scheme can work well for businesses when VAT-able expenses are low. For example, a consultant or designer who mainly sells their time may find the flat rate percentage more favourable than reclaiming VAT under the standard method. Some business owners also prefer the simplicity. Because you don't claim VAT on purchases, other than certain capital assets over £2,000, the calculations can be quicker.

When the standard method may be better

If your business regularly buys goods or services with VAT on them, reclaiming VAT through the standard method is often more cost-effective. The same can be true if you regularly make larger purchases.

Choosing a method

The best way to be sure which method is right for you is to run the numbers and compare.

If you would like advice on whether the Flat Rate Scheme is right for you, give us a call. We are happy to help!





TAX NEWS

Salary Sacrifice: Tax Efficient Options for Employers and Employees

With costs rising, many employers and employees are looking for practical ways to reduce outgoings without cutting benefits. Salary sacrifice can be an excellent tool to do this, but many businesses overlook it.

In short, salary sacrifice lets an employee give up part of their gross salary in exchange for a benefit such as a pension contribution, an electric car or a bike. Because the exchange happens before tax and National Insurance (NI), both sides can save money while staff gain a more attractive package.

A proposed cap on National Insurance relief for pension contributions received heavy publicity after the Autumn Budget 2025 announcement. However, the cap will not come into force until 6 April 2029. Until then, the advantages existing under the current rules remain available.

For employers, salary sacrifice can be an effective way to enhance benefits, improve recruitment and retention, and reduce tax costs. For employees, it can make benefits they value more affordable at a time when cash flow really matters.

If you want to understand how the numbers stack up for your business, we would be happy to help you calculate and compare the tax and NI position and show you exactly how salary sacrifice could work in practice for you and your team.

One Million Miss the Tax Return Filing Deadline

HMRC has estimated that around a million people missed the 31 January 2026 Self Assessment tax return filing deadline. It confirmed that 11.48 million people filed their tax return on time, with most people filing online. As usual, there was a significant rush on deadline day itself with nearly half a million people filing on 31 January, including more than 27,000 in the final hour before midnight. The busiest hour was between 5 pm and 6 pm, when almost 33,000 returns were submitted. Despite this, it seems that a million people missed the deadline altogether.

If you missed the deadline:

Anyone who still needs to file should do so as soon as possible. HMRC applies a fixed £100 late filing penalty immediately, even if no tax is owed. Further penalties apply the longer the return is outstanding:

- After three months: £10 per day (up to £900).
- After six months: 5% of the tax due or £300, whichever is higher.
- After 12 months: another 5% or £300.

There are also penalties for paying tax late - 5% of anything unpaid at 30 days, six months and 12 months - plus interest.



If you need help filing your tax return, please get in touch. We would be happy to help you.

TAX NEWS



NEED HELP WITH TAX ?



Businesses & Individuals:
We've got you covered

The latest Business Confidence Monitor, an Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales survey, shows confidence continuing to fall. Confidence has now fallen for six consecutive quarters and is now at its lowest since the final three months of 2022. The survey, which gathered views from 1,000 business leaders, shows growing concern over tax complexity and the wider outlook for business activity.

Tax pressures rising

A record 64% of businesses said the tax burden was becoming a greater challenge, up from 60% in the previous quarter. According to the report, this reflected uncertainty over what tax changes might be included in the Autumn Budget 2025, combined with the effects of previous tax rises feeding through.

Regulation was the second biggest reported challenge, with 51% of businesses saying it was holding back performance. Many cited the Employment Rights Bill as a contributing factor.

Differences between sectors

Some sectors remain noticeably more pessimistic. Property, retail and wholesale continue to show the weakest sentiment, with construction close behind. Exporters, however, were more upbeat than non-exporters. IT and communications was the only sector to report a positive score, at +0.3.

Employment and pay trends

Employment growth slowed to 0.8% in the quarter, the lowest figure since mid-2021. Manufacturing and engineering, retail and wholesale and transport reduced their headcount as 2025 ended. However, it seems that transport and storage are the only sectors expecting to cut jobs further during 2026.

Salary growth also eased to 2.9%. This is still above pre-pandemic levels but lower than the rises seen in recent years. The expectation is for pay to increase at a similar pace over the next 12 months.

Sales expectations improving

Despite the fall in overall confidence, there are some bright spots. Expectations for domestic sales improved for the first time since 2024, even though actual growth slowed slightly to 2.9%. Export sales growth rose to 2.5% and is also expected to continue improving in 2026. Capital investment grew modestly to 2%, although businesses expect to slow their spending plans over the coming year.

What this means for your business

The report paints a picture of businesses managing rising costs while holding back on hiring and major investments. At the same time, the slight improvement in sales expectations suggests many firms are cautiously optimistic about trading conditions in 2026.

Let us guide you through the complex world of tax. We'll keep you compliant, boost your tax efficiency, and take the stress off your plate - so you can focus on what matters most.

- SELF-ASSESSMENT
- VAT
- CORPORATION TAX
- PERSONAL TAX PLANNING
- CAPITAL GAINS TAX
- INHERITANCE TAX
- HMRC ENQUIRIES & INVESTIGATIONS

And more!

To review how these economic trends might affect your business plans, particularly around staffing, investment or cash flow, please get in touch.

Get in touch today

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You Know You've 'Found The One' For Your Business If Your Accountant....

February has a way of making us reflect on love. But while romance gets most of the attention this time of year, there's another relationship that deserves appreciation too: the one you have with your accountant. In business and in life, the right financial partner makes all the difference. So in the spirit of Valentine's Day, ask yourself: have you found "the one" when it comes to your accountant? If your accountant does these things, you just might have:



Brings Clarity, Not Confusion



No more guessing games! A great accountant turns messy numbers into clear financial insights you can actually use. With clear communication, you'll always know where your business stands, what decisions to make, and why - without the jargon.

Helps You to Grow and Won't Hold You Back



Your financial partner shouldn't just keep your business running, they should provide the support, insights, tools, opportunities and strategies to help you reach your full potential!

Shares Your Values



Find someone who gets your goals, vision, and priorities. Your accountant needs to understand what matters most to business owners, and help you to make decisions that guide your business in a direction you care about.

Can be Counted on



Your business deserves an accountant who is reliable, dependable, and has your back. From managing payroll and meeting deadlines, to answering questions and navigating financial decisions, know your accountant will deliver on time, every time.

Brings You Peace



A great accountant handles the administrative burdens of bookkeeping and payroll, giving you the time and peace of mind to focus on what truly matters - whether it's growing your business, spending time with loved ones, or simply enjoying life.

Trustworthy & Reputable



Choose an accountant with the right accreditations and certifications to ensure your business stays compliant, accurate and well-prepared. Check out reviews to ensure a solid history.

Let's Build a Strong Partnership, Together.

At the heart of every successful business is a trusted relationship built on clarity, communication, and shared goals. We're committed to being more than just your accountants - we're your partners in growth, here to support you, and help you make confident financial decisions every step of the way.

Nearly 500 Employers Fined Over National Minimum Wage Breaches

Almost 500 UK employers have been fined a total of £10.2 million for failing to pay the National Minimum Wage (NMW), with £6 million returned to 42,000 workers. The list of named employers includes well-known high-street brands, indicating that businesses of all sizes can have difficulties in applying the rules correctly.

Implications for employers

For businesses, this latest naming round highlights the ongoing scrutiny there is on minimum wage compliance. The NMW and National Living Wage rates increased earlier this year, with a further rise planned from April 2026. As a reminder, the rates are:

Failing to pay workers correctly can lead not only to fines but also risks harm to the business’s reputation. With employees being encouraged to obtain advice from Acas or complain to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), it is an important area to get right.

Strengthening enforcement

The government plans to expand oversight of labour standards in 2026 with the creation of a Fair Work Agency as part of the new Employment Rights Bill. The agency will have powers to address employers who underpay workers and fail to pay holiday and sick pay. **If you need help with your payroll and ensuring that your staff are paid correctly, please get in touch. We would be happy to help you!**



	2025 rate	2026 rate
National Living Wage (21+)	£12.21	£12.71
18-20	£10.00	£10.85
Under 18	£7.55	£8.00
Apprentice	£7.55	£8.00

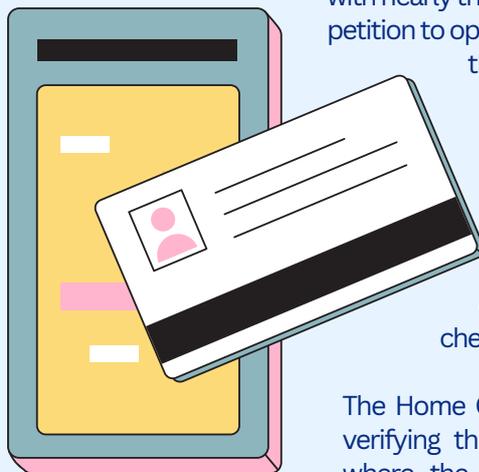
Backtrack on Digital ID Requirements

Digital Right to Work Checks Will Be Mandatory, ID Optional

Appears that the government has backtracked on plans to require workers to register with its new digital ID programme to prove their right to work in the UK.

While right-to-work checks will still be carried out digitally by 2029, such as by using biometric passports, registering for a digital ID will be optional.

Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, confirmed that mandatory digital right-to-work checks will be brought in to help crack down on illegal working, but that the digital ID will be one way that a worker could use to prove their eligibility to work. The idea of compulsory digital IDs has proved unpopular



with nearly three million people signing a parliamentary petition to oppose their introduction. Details on how the digital ID will work are not yet available.

Many expect it to be based on the Gov.uk One Login and the yet to be launched, Gov.uk Wallet.

In the meantime, it is already possible to use government-certified digital verification services to do passport checks on British and Irish citizens.

The Home Office also provide an online service for verifying the status of non-British or Irish citizens where the individual’s immigration status is held electronically.

BUSINESS

Business Rates Relief for Pubs and Live Music Venues

OUR BUSINESS SERVICES

It has been announced that eligible pubs and live music venues in England will receive a 15% discount on their business rates bills in 2026/27. Rates bills will then be frozen in real terms for a further two years.

The British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) has said that pub landlords will breathe a sigh of relief and that the relief will “stave off the immediate financial threat posed by accelerating business costs.”

Wider concerns remain over the challenge of rising costs and squeezed profit margins.



Which pubs are eligible?

To be eligible, a pub must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be open to the general public.
- Allow free entry other than when occasional entertainment is provided.
- Allow drinking without requiring food to be consumed.
- Permit drinks to be purchased at a bar.

Businesses specifically excluded are:

- Restaurants, cafes, nightclubs, snack bars.
- Hotels, guesthouses, boarding houses.
- Sporting venues.
- Festival sites, theatres, cinemas.
- Museums, exhibition halls.
- Casinos.

The government has advised local authorities that the above list is not intended to be exhaustive, and the local authority will have discretion to make the determination where eligibility is unclear.

The intent of the policy is to benefit pubs that would be classified as such by the natural meaning of the word. Being owned and operated by a brewery would be one example of this.

Which live music venues are eligible?

Properties that are wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music to entertain an audience will qualify for the relief. The property is still likely to qualify if it is used for other ancillary activities, such as the sale of food and drink to audience members or is infrequently used in a way that does not affect its primary use, such as use as a polling station or fortnightly community event. A property that is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or theatre under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) will not be considered to be a live music venue for the purposes of the relief.



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Why Management Skills Matter More Than Ever for Business Owners

Many people start a business because they're good at what they do – a designer goes solo, an electrician becomes self-employed, a consultant turns expertise into income. Later comes the realisation that doing the work and running a business are two very different things. As a business grows, management skills become just as important as technical ability.

What management really means in a small business

In a smaller business, management is not about hierarchy or job titles. It is about how work gets organised and how people, including you, are supported. Good management often shows up in quite simple, everyday ways. For instance:

- Setting clear expectations with staff, contractors or clients.
- Deciding between what needs to be done now and what can wait.
- Spotting problems early, before they become expensive.
- Having time to step back and think.

Firefighting, missed deadlines, confused roles, work being redone, or feeling constantly stretched can all be signs of a need to improve how the business is being managed. These kinds of issues do not usually come from a lack of effort; they come from a lack of structure.



Why management skills often get overlooked

Management skills often fall down the priority list because time is tight and client or customer work comes first. Or it may be that managing people feels uncomfortable or unfamiliar. However, not addressing how the business is managed means you can end up stuck in the day-to-day, with little capacity to focus on growing the business or carrying out long-term planning.

How improving management skills helps your business

Businesses with clearer management:

- Run more predictably, with fewer surprises.
- Retain staff for longer and reduce recruitment costs.
- Have happier customers because they deliver a more consistent service.
- Free up time for the business owner to be able to focus on strategy.

Even small changes, such as regularly checking in with staff or having clearer task planning, can have a noticeable impact. Practical ways to build management skills Improving management does not require formal qualifications or years of experience. For many business owners, they make progress by:

- Talking with other business owners about what works.
- Finding a mentor who can challenge their thinking and share experience.

- Undertaking some short, practical training.
- Thinking about what's not working and making one change at a time to gradually improve it.

Just like with any other part of the business, management can be learned and improved over time.

A final thought

Good management and proper controls are vital for business success. Having the best idea in the world is only half the story. It is management skills that will make the idea work and keep you and your staff happy along the way.



We're here to support your goals

We can help you to identify your key systems and standardise how the business operates, so your efforts can be focused on where they add most value.

WorkWell to Roll Out Across England

BUSINESS

A national expansion of WorkWell, a health-and-employment support service, is set to take place across England, following a successful pilot helping 25,000+ people stay in or return to work. The programme aims to support up to 250,000 more people with health conditions, forming part of the government's wider efforts to tackle long-term sickness absence and economic inactivity.

For employers, the key point is that WorkWell is designed as an early intervention service - stepping in before health issues lead to prolonged absence or an employee leaving work altogether. Long-term sickness remains a significant issue for businesses. Around 2.8 million people are currently out of work due to long-term health conditions, and fit notes are issued more than 11 million times a year.

How employees can access support:

Participants in the programme can be referred through their employer, a GP, Jobcentre Plus, local services, or self-referral. Each participant receives personalised support from a coach. Services offered vary depending on location, but can include physiotherapy, mental health support, workplace adjustment advice for employers and ongoing health condition management. Businesses may want to be aware of WorkWell as a referral option for staff struggling with health issues.



'Small and Mighty Enterprise Programme' to Support Small Businesses

Small Business Britain is set to roll out its Small and Mighty Enterprise Programme, a six-week online course designed to help sole traders and micro businesses unlock growth opportunities. The programme combines expert guidance, mentoring, and practical resources to equip participants with a twelve-month action plan to grow and flourish over the next year. Delivered entirely online, it offers flexible learning accessible from anywhere in the UK, making it suitable for business owners with busy schedules.

Key features of the programme include:

- Live weekly sessions recorded and available on a private Small Business Britain website available exclusively to participants.
- Weekly worksheets developed by each week's expert trainers to reinforce key learning outcomes.
- 1-2-1 and group mentoring, providing one hour of personalised guidance
- Access to an exclusive community of peers and mentors for networking, advice, and sharing experiences.
- A personalised twelve-month Action Plan to guide business growth.

The course runs from 2 February to 9 March 2026, with sessions held every Monday at 10am. Small business owners looking to develop their skills, expand their networks, and plan for growth can find more information and register via the [Small & Mighty Enterprise Programme Registration](#) page.



Potential For Businesses To Gain More Control Over Google Search

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has announced a set of proposed measures aimed at increasing fairness, transparency and choice for businesses and consumers using Google's search services in the UK.

Given that Google accounts for more than 90% of general search queries in the UK and took over £10 billion in UK search advertising spend last year, these changes could have a meaningful impact on how businesses promote themselves online.

Google was designated with Strategic Market Status (SMS) in October 2025, which doesn't imply wrongdoing, but it does allow the CMA to impose conduct requirements. Below is a summary of what is being proposed and what it may mean in practice for businesses relying on Google to reach customers.

Improving user choice in search

Google is normally set as the default search service in its Android operating system and Chrome browser. The CMA is proposing that it be made easier for users to choose which search service they want to use and be able to switch services more easily. If implemented, Google would be required to display more choice screens and give users the ability to change which search service they want to use at any time.



This change intends to help users select alternative search providers rather than defaulting to Google. That might mean a need to review advertising spend with Google but could also lead to lower advertising costs if competition between the various search providers increases.

Publisher choice and transparency Content publishers, such as news outlets, blogs and others producing specialist content, are seeing a decline in the number of 'clicks through' to their websites because of generative AI features that Google is using.

The measures proposed would allow publishers more control over whether their material can be used within AI features, such as AI Overview, including being able to opt out.

There would also be clearer information for publishers on how their content is being used and Google would be required to take steps to ensure that any content used is properly attributed to the publisher.

Fair ranking

Search services are a key way of finding online customers, but many businesses lack confidence in how Google ranks websites. Google can make changes to its algorithms at any time. This can result in additional costs to businesses as they try to understand what has changed and adjust their websites to ensure they stays visible in search rankings.

The CMA is looking to impose some 'fair ranking' conduct requirements. These include:

- Google not being allowed to discriminate based on whether the website has chosen to advertise on or has some other commercial arrangement with Google. A business opting out of its content being used in Google's AI features could also not be discriminated against.
- Greater transparency on search rankings and a requirement to provide sufficient notice and information on upcoming changes.
- A clear and accessible process for complaints, with accountability to the CMA.

For businesses that rely heavily on search visibility, this could offer more confidence that search performance isn't being undermined by opaque algorithms or unfair advantages.

Data portability

Google currently offer users the ability to transfer their search data to another provider. However, this is provided voluntarily, and the CMA is looking to make it a legal requirement.

What happens next?

The CMA is consulting on the proposals, and feedback is open until 25 February 2026. A final decision will follow once the responses have been assessed.

Thank you for reading!

As always, if you have any questions about how these updates affect you or your business, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our team of experienced accountants and financial advisers.

See you next month!

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