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## Covid-19 Member Update

25 March 2020

### Summary

Tuesday 24 March 2020 marked the first day of the Government's enforced lockdown, with the public allowed out of their homes only for very specific reasons. It also saw announcements on steps being taken by the Department for Health and Social Care, The Chancellor answering Treasury Questions, and the continuing of the Coronavirus Bill through the House of Commons.

Below is a summary of the day's events, as well as the steps ukactive is taking to represent more than 4,000 members across the physical activity sector.

### Downing Street press conference

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock led yesterday's daily Downing Street press conference on Coronavirus. He announced the following measures:

- People should only be leaving their homes for four reasons including buying food, exercising once a day either alone or with members of the same household, medical need or providing care for a vulnerable person, or going to work when work cannot be done from home. These are formal rules, not requests, and will be enforceable by police. Fines will start at £30.
- A temporary hospital, the NHS Nightingale Hospital, will open at London's ExCeL centre with the help of military and NHS clinicians. The hospital will have the capacity to treat up to 4,000 patients if needed.
- A total of 18,700 nursing students and 6,147 retired nurses will join efforts to treat Covid-19 patients.
- The Government unveiled a new initiative calling on 250,000 health volunteers to help vulnerable people with underlying health conditions at home while in isolation.
- 3.5 million antibody tests will soon be available to test NHS workers to see if they already had Covid-19, and 7.5 million of personal protective equipment has been shipped to the UK over the last 24 hours to protect healthcare workers.



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- Small children count as vulnerable individuals and should stay at home as much as possible. If individuals with small children cannot look after them, they will be able to work with local authority hubs to provide care.
- There was also a question raised over Transport for London's decision to scale back Tube services, which had led to crowded trains in the morning commute. Hancock said he "saw no reason for Tube services to be reduced to current levels".

Yesterday also saw Treasury Questions in the House of Commons, with Chancellor Rishi Sunak and his ministerial team answering queries from MPs. Much of this focused on the lack of support available for the self-employed. The Chancellor confirmed something would be announced "in the coming days".

## **Coronavirus Bill**

The Coronavirus Bill, containing emergency legislation granting Government additional powers during the current crisis, is due to receive Royal Assent today (Wednesday 25 March). The key area of debate has not been the content of the Bill, which has received cross-party approval, but the length of time the Government retains the powers it sets out. The Bill will affect all parts of the United Kingdom, including England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Key measures:

### *Containing and slowing the virus*

The UK Government has already taken substantial measures to contain and slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus. These include the closure of all schools and nurseries for all children except those of key workers, the closure of all non-essential businesses, and the implementation of a full 3-week lockdown as of 23 March 2020.

The Coronavirus Bill legalises these measures and allows the Government to put the country in a 'public health response period', prohibiting any event or gathering and the closure of any premises deemed necessary to contain and slow the spread of the virus.

### *Supporting people: Business relief*

On top of previous Government announcements around business relief, the Coronavirus Bill extends Government powers to introduce new measures as and when needed.



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- **Statutory sick pay:** On 11 March 2020, the Chancellor announced that the Government would provide a two-week refunded sick pay for all businesses with fewer than 250 employees. The Coronavirus Bill gives this measure retrospective effect from 13 March 2020, and provides the Government with the power to provide additional repayments to businesses if needed (though the exact amount is not specified). The language in the Bill suggests that companies exceeding the 250-employee limit currently needed to reclaim cost of payment may soon be included in Government provisions to pay for statutory sick pay.
- **National insurance contributions:** The Coronavirus Bill gives the Government the power to modify procedures around introducing national insurance contribution changes if needed to support businesses during the pandemic.

#### *Relevant links for technical guidance*

The full summary of impacts of the bill can be found [here](#).

Parliament is expected to rise for a month-long Easter recess after passing the Bill, with a tentative return date of 21 April.

#### **ukactive engagement with Government**

ukactive is in constant dialogue with multiple government departments on additional support available for our members. In recent days there has been particular engagement with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on the issue of rental payments and overheads for facilities, and with the Treasury on offering support for the self-employed.

In addition, ukactive is working with partners to call for more support for self-employed activity professionals facing difficulties during the coronavirus crisis.

All insights gained from this engagement will be fed back to members through the daily briefing. Please contact a member of the ukactive team if you have any specific questions on the above: [publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk)