

## COVID-19 Member Update

**2 April 2020**

### Summary

Wednesday 1 April saw another dramatic increase in deaths from coronavirus, with 563 in the 24 hours prior to the Downing Street press conference. As well as the usual questions around testing and PPE for NHS workers, with the concerning statistic only 2,000 of the half a million frontline NHS workers having been tested, the press conference also featured an update from Business Secretary Alok Sharma.

Following yesterday's announcement of £195 million of funding from Sport England, Sport Scotland has been urged to take similar action [here](#).

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

### Downing Street press conference

With Prime Minister Boris Johnson still in self-isolation following his diagnosis of coronavirus, Business Secretary Alok Sharma stood in to deliver an update on the implementation of the Government's business support package. Also appearing for the now customary slidedeck presentation was Public Health England Medical Director Dr Yvonne Doyle. Key points from the conference include:

- The announcement that 563 people had died in the UK with COVID-19, bringing the total up to 2,532. Nearly a quarter of that number were accounted for in the latest 24 hours period, pushing the UK's graph into a worryingly steep curve. Officials will be concerned at the exponential increase at a point in the outbreak where Italy and Spain, the two worst hit European countries, were at least seeing a slower increase in the number of deaths.
- Mr Sharma spoke on the progress made on allowing businesses to access the funds Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced at the Budget three weeks ago, and the subsequent packages revealed. Crucially he said the £22 billion in business rates relief already announced would be of benefit to businesses from today (01/04/2020) at the start of the new financial year.

- Mr Sharma said he had spoken to local authorities that day (01/04/2020) to ensure the £12 billion given to local authorities so far was being distributed to those businesses that were struggling.
- With reference to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) Mr Sharma delivered a stark warning to lenders who were reluctant to support business. Referencing the 2008 bailout received by the financial sector, Mr Sharma said “it would be unacceptable if banks were to deny finance to good businesses.” He said further action would be taken against those lenders who persistently withheld funds.
- Dr Yvonne Doyle delivered an update on the Government’s data, including the grim figures on the rise in the death rate. An updated graph showing transport data also showed an uptick in the number of motor vehicle journeys, contrary to the Government’s advice.
- The main thrust of the questions were once again on testing, especially with the admission that only 2,000 of the half a million frontline NHS staff had so far been tested. Comparisons were made with Germany, a European country with an outbreak on a similar trajectory to the UK which following widespread testing (as many as 70,000 a day) had significantly reduced the number of deaths.

Although assurances were given that testing would be increased, the Government will wake up this morning to find its strategy being heavily criticised in the press. The lack of testing as part of the Government strategy, exacerbated by the rising death toll, will be the key focus for media coverage in the next few weeks.

### **Expected announcements**

With Health Secretary Matt Hancock returning from his COVID-19 self-isolation today, he will next unveil a five-point plan for the NHS to ramp up the testing regime. This is likely to feature in the announcements at the press conference tonight, and the Government will hope it will deflect the rising pressure over its continued handling of the outbreak.

There is also pressure on the Government following the announcement that only 30 ventilators from the private sector will be available from this weekend—some way short of the tens of thousands promised by the Government. The lack of ventilators in the UK was also the subject of part of US President Donald Trump’s press conference.

In business developments, Chancellor Rishi Sunak is expected to deliver tomorrow's press conference with a further announcement to support small businesses and prevent mass insolvencies. This is expected to include measures to make it easier to access the CBILS. It follows news 75% of small businesses are planning to furlough at least half of their staff.

## **Apprenticeships**

Private apprenticeship training providers in England are warning of an industry-wide crisis because the Department for Education refuses to comply with Cabinet Office guidance to continue paying them during the coronavirus lockdown.

Training for 70% of apprenticeships in England is provided by private companies. But unlike further education colleges, which have been told they will continue to receive support, training companies have been urged to seek Treasury support.

The Financial Times has the full [story](#).

## **ukactive engagement with Government**

ukactive is in constant dialogue with multiple government departments on additional support available for our members. This includes continued engagement with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, on issues such as rental payments, and discussions with the Department for Education on continued support for children's activity providers. ukactive is also speaking to HMRC for further clarification on the specifics of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

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:  
[publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk)

You can find all the latest information on what COVID-19 means for the sector, as well as guidance and support for your organisation in our newly created COVID-19 [hub](#).