



More people
More active
More often

We are **ukactive** >

Covid-19 Member Update

Tuesday 14 April

Summary

With an Easter Bank Holiday weekend bathed in sunshine, it was positive news for Ministers that the majority of Britons abided by the lockdown and remained at home. However, the continued rise in deaths (with 980 announced on Good Friday) means the UK could well become the worst-affected country in Europe. As these numbers near, and perhaps surpass, those of Spain and Italy, the UK Government's strategy at the beginning of the crisis will come under increasing scrutiny.

The Government continues to stress that comparison with other countries isn't helpful. But as the UK death toll reaches new heights, the Government will continue to face questions about its actions and, in particular, its delayed response to the crisis.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was released from hospital over the weekend, and will now spend time convalescing at Chequers. He is not expected to return to work this week, meaning no decision on lifting the lockdown will be made.

BBC News: Gyms face legal action over rent

ukactive worked with partners across the physical activity sector to drive a news story covered this morning across national broadcasters and press, which highlights the potentially devastating consequences of a loophole in the Government's Coronavirus Act 2020.

Section 82 of the Government's Coronavirus Act 2020 came into force on 25 March to help protect commercial tenants, banning the forfeiture of commercial leases until 30 June (or longer if the government deems necessary) for non-payment of rent.

The act, however, does not prevent landlords from pursuing a Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery process as an alternative to forfeiture. This process is a debt claim and enables the landlord to commence winding-up proceedings.

[The story](#), which is leading on the BBC homepage, calls on the Government to take urgent steps to close the loophole and defend gyms and leisure centres in order to safeguard the jobs and valuable services they offer.



More people
More active
More often

We are **ukactive** >

The story was also covered by BBC Radio 5 Live, Virgin Radio, and across the UK's regional radio stations. You can read the full press release on the [ukactive website, here](#).

Government announcements

Key government announcements over the weekend included:

- Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced that the Government's Coronavirus Emergency Response Fund, set up during last month's budget to provide financial assistance to public services, will be tripled to more than £14 billion. The funds will bolster the NHS and local authorities to continue responding to the coronavirus outbreak.
- Home Secretary Priti Patel announced the launch of a public awareness campaign for domestic abuse victims. The Government is working with charities and the domestic abuse commissioner to ensure that victim support continues to be available throughout the coronavirus crisis. Domestic abuse helplines will receive an additional £2 million to offer crucial support and advice to victims.
- Foreign Secretary (and acting Prime Minister) Dominic Raab yesterday announced that the Government's chief scientific advisers will meet today to review the ongoing UK lockdown. Given current data on new cases, deaths and hospitalisations, it is unlikely that the Government will lift lockdown measures this week. With the measures taken by those on the continent, suggestions are the lockdown will be extended until 7 May. Expect to hear more on this from the Government on Thursday.

Children's Commissioner calls for schools to open this summer

The Children's Commissioner has suggested schools should be open in some form over the summer holidays in order to allow students to catch-up on the curriculum they have missed during lockdown. Anne Longfield said, as long as the science allows it, "whether they are open to all or not, schools do have a really important role, especially for vulnerable children over the coming months".

Longfield suggested schools could bring in play, sports and youth workers to help supervise pupils. However, the suggestion is likely to face major pushback from teachers unions, who would point to little to no break for staff that have remained at school to look after children of key workers even during lockdown.

British Business Bank approves four new lenders



More people
More active
More often

We are **ukactive** >

The body responsible for the administration of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the British Business Bank, has [approved](#) four new lenders to the scheme. The scheme has been under intense criticism in the past week due to the difficulty firms are having in accessing the funds, with just 1.4% of applications having reportedly been approved.

Appearing on the broadcast round on Saturday, Business Secretary Alok Sharma said the Government had told lenders they had to be more effective in ensuring access to finance, with excessive bureaucracy and a preference from lenders to use loans outside the Government's scheme holding up progress. This delay could mean tens of thousands of businesses go bust before they receive the finance intended to keep them afloat.

ukactive continues to speak to Government on the difficulties members are facing with the scheme and urging action to speed access to finance,

Expected announcements

Health Secretary Matt Hancock is expected to lead tonight's press conference from Downing Street, with the emphasis therefore expected to be on the continued difficulty in providing frontline NHS and care home staff with protective equipment, and the admission yesterday from Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance the UK testing programme has not been as effective as hoped.

Questions are also likely to focus on Government plans for the ending of the lockdown, although Hancock is not expected to provide further detail as plans are continuing to be drawn up.

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. Discussions with Treasury over its latest announcements continue.

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



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 [ukactive Covid-19 hub](#).