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## Covid-19 Member Update

Thursday 16 April

### Summary

Today marks the Government's highly anticipated review of the UK lockdown, with acting Prime Minister Dominic Raab set to announce his decision to extend the lockdown at tonight's Downing Street press conference. Government officials expect a further three-week extension to May 7, though the Telegraph does float the possibility of a "flection" that could be eased sooner if backed by scientific advice.

The decision to extend the nationwide lockdown seems wise given yesterday's announcement that we may be reaching the peak of the crisis. Though we will continue to see high numbers of deaths for a short while, medical experts say new cases are beginning to stabilise.

A highlight of yesterday's press conference was when Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Chris Whitty said, "**There is no situation, there is no age, there is no condition, where exercise is not a good thing.**" ukactive Board member Professor Greg Whyte OBE shared the full clip on Twitter [here](#).

Please find a summary of yesterday's events, as well as the actions ukactive is taking to support the physical activity sector at this difficult time.

### Government press conference

As anticipated, Matt Hancock led yesterday's Downing Street press conference, flanked by Chris Whitty and Angela McLean, with the focus on how care homes are being protected during this crisis. The major announcement was all care home staff will now be able to be tested – alongside members of their household. Alongside this, all care home residents will now be tested when showing symptoms, and all residents returning from a spell in hospital will be tested whether they have symptoms or not.

Other key announcements included:

- A new CARE badge for social care staff to wear. Originally launched in March 2019, Hancock said he hoped it would provide those working in care with some of the benefits NHS staff receive, specifically early access to supermarkets and food/retail discounts.



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- Having said he wept over the story of a 13-year-old boy dying of the virus alone, Hancock said he was introducing a new right to say goodbye for families to visit loved ones before they died of the disease.
- With the upcoming COBRA meeting to decide on an extension to the lockdown, there were a number of questions from journalists on timings and process. Hancock wouldn't be drawn on this, suggesting it was best to wait until the official decision was made.
- Professor Chris Whitty did say it was possible we were approaching the peak of the virus, it was still too early to consider lifting lockdown. He also suggested there was likely to be a further spike in deaths today – and this would continue for several days at least.
- Angela Mclean said it was unlikely the lockdown would be lifted incrementally across the country, given the country had gone into lockdown together and the plateauing of new cases was consistent.
- When questioned on care home residents being kept indoors, Whitty said, **“There is no age, there is no condition, there is no situation where exercise is not a good thing.”** From a medical perspective, he continued, “Exercise is one of the best things you can possibly do.”

### **Labour calls for more information from government**

Leader of the opposition Sir Keir Starmer confirmed that the Labour party would support the extension of a nationwide lockdown, but demanded the publication of an exit strategy for review. His requests for an exit strategy were set out in a letter to Dominic Raab, who is deputising for Boris Johnson while the Prime Minister recovers from coronavirus.

Mr Starmer is pushing for a government strategy on the return of schools and getting businesses back to work after the lockdown, after raising concerns that the nationwide lockdown was causing severe inequalities.

ukactive will also be working with the opposition to highlight the support our sector needs in the face of this crisis. Please contact a member of the ukactive team if you have any specific questions at [publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk)

### **Update on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**



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The Government yesterday announced that the eligibility date for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was extended to 19 March 2020. Under the scheme announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak last month, employers can claim a grant covering 80% of the wages for a furloughed employee, subject to a cap of £2,500 a month.

To qualify and to protect against fraudulent claims, individuals originally had to be employed on February 28 2020. But following a review of the delivery system and to ensure the scheme helps as many people as possible, new guidance published yesterday has confirmed the eligibility date has been extended to March 19 2020 – the day before the scheme was announced, giving thousands access to the scheme. Find out more [here](#).

### **Expected announcements**

Acting Prime Minister Dominic Raab will lead tonight's press conference from Downing Street, where he will provide an update on the nationwide lockdown, and whether the Government will be extending strict social distancing measures for the coming weeks.

Mr Raab is expected to announce a three-week extension of the lockdown to 7 May, which also happens to be when most ministers expect Boris Johnson to be back at work. The Government is not expected to announce a lockdown exit strategy at this stage.

### **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. 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](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 ukactive [Covid-19 hub](#).