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Covid-19 Member Update

Wednesday 22 April

Summary

Things are looking up for the Government this week, as evidence of the UK's medical preparedness to tackle coronavirus suggests improvement. Health Secretary Matt Hancock yesterday announced that personal protective equipment was on the way, and that testing capacity was now 'ahead of trajectory'. The Government also announced a £50 million funding package for the medical teams at Imperial College London and Oxford University currently working overtime to create a vaccine. According to Mr Hancock, a vaccine remains the best way to defeat coronavirus in the long run.

In other news, Leader of the Opposition Sir Keir Starmer will take part in his first ever Prime Minister's Questions today. Expect a calm yet assertive scrutinisation of government measures to respond to the coronavirus crisis.

Below, please find a summary of yesterday's announcements, and the actions undertaken by the team at ukactive to support the physical activity sector throughout the pandemic.

Government announcements

The Government press conference was delivered by Health Secretary Matt Hancock, alongside National Testing Coordinator Professor John Newton, and Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Jonathan Van Tam. Key points included:

- Matt Hancock spoke on two main points: PPE and vaccines. On the first, Hancock acknowledged the difficulty of procuring the required amounts of PPE for hospital and care staff. He confirmed the Government had appointed Lord Deighton, former Chief Executive of LOCOG, to oversee PPE delivery.
- On vaccines, Hancock confirmed £50 million in investment to two vaccine development programmes at the University of Oxford and Imperial College London. The former programme, he announced, will begin human trials on Thursday. Despite this progress, Hancock and Newton reiterated what Chief Scientific Adviser Patrick Vallance said: all vaccine programmes had a low chance of success and would take some time.



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- Hancock was forced to contradict the evidence given by Foreign Office Permanent Secretary Sir Simon McDonald to the Foreign Affairs Committee (later retracted) that the UK's non-participation in an EU-wide ventilator and PPE procurement scheme was a "political decision".
- Regarding the UK's testing capacity, both Hancock and Newton said it was now up to 39,000 a day ahead of schedule. However, with 39,000 tests not being conducted, there was some way to go in meeting Hancock's target of 100,000 per day by the end of the month.

HM Treasury expands Coronavirus Loan Scheme for large businesses

Earlier this week, the Chancellor announced that his Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme would be extended to larger businesses. Firms with a turnover of more than £45 million will now be able to apply for up to £25 million of finance, and up to £50 million for firms with a turnover of more than £250 million.

More information about the scheme is available on the HM Treasury website [here](#).

Government launches business support finder tool

The Government has launched a new online tool to help businesses find what financial support is available to them quickly and easily. After filling out a form detailing their business, business owners will be directed to the Government support available to them. These include all grants and loans announced by the Government for businesses of any size, as well as income support and job retention schemes.

The tool can be accessed [here](#).

Expected Announcements

There are no expected announcements on changes to Government policy at the Downing Street press conference this evening. However, Sir Keir's Prime Minister's Questions today is likely to raise questions on the Government's response to the crisis so far and what plans Cabinet is drawing up for the future. There may also be questions on the Financial Times' analysis of the number of excess deaths as a result of Covid-19 being over 41,000.

ukactive engagement with Government



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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

ukactive is also on hand to answer questions arising from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

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](#).