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## Covid-19 Member Update

Friday 24 April

### Summary

Yesterday's Downing Street press conference revealed that the number of Covid-19 fatalities seems to be decreasing, and testing capacity has reached 51,000 per day. The Government is said to be working hard to administer tests to essential workers based in England as quickly as possible. Media outlets this morning also report that the Prime Minister may be able to return to work as early as next Monday, a full two weeks ahead of schedule. Boris Johnson has been increasing his workload over the past week to get himself back up to speed, holding meetings with his team and reviewing government documents.

In Scotland, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon hosted a press conference outlining the Scottish Government's vision for the post-lockdown future. The difference between the Scottish Government and Westminster couldn't be more stark. Though Mrs Sturgeon acknowledged the damage that lockdown measures are currently inflicting on the economy, living standards, education and wellbeing, she highlighted that social distancing is likely to be a fact of life for the rest of this year. No announcements were made on timelines or what this would look like for businesses.

Below please find a summary of yesterday's major announcements and events, as well as the steps ukactive is taking to support the physical activity sector.

### **New measures to protect UK high street from aggressive rent collection and closure**

The Government yesterday announced new measures designed to protect businesses from aggressive rent collection during the coronavirus pandemic – a key area that ukactive has been lobbying for on behalf of its members, [as reported by the BBC](#).

These include:

- Statutory demands and winding up petitions issued to commercial tenants to be temporarily voided and changes to be made to the use of Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery, building on measures already introduced in the Coronavirus Act
- Landlords and investors are asked to work collaboratively with high street businesses unable to pay their bills during Covid-19 pandemic



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The new legislation will be in force until 30 June, and can be extended in line with the moratorium on commercial lease forfeiture.

To find out more about these measures, please read the Government's press release [here](#).

### **Downing Street Press Conference**

Yesterday's daily government update was chaired by Health Secretary Matt Hancock, accompanied by Chief Scientific Advisor Sir Patrick Vallance and Professor John Newton. Key announcements included:

- As of tomorrow, all essential workers who need a test will be able to book an appointment on the Government's website. Those who are unable to access the website can book an appointment through their employer. The policy will also apply to those who live with essential workers.
- The Health Secretary revealed the Government was testing a new NHS app to track the coronavirus to support the new army of 'contract tracers' currently being employed in order to trace infections of the virus.
- Sir Patrick Vallance stressed it was imperative for people to continue abiding by the Government's social distancing rules. He noted that the UK was "coming through" the peak of the virus, but that the daily death rate would remain high before levelling off in a few weeks' time.
- In response to a question on whether the Government was concerned obesity seemed to be an indicator of increased risk of acute Covid-19 symptoms, Professor Newton said this did indeed appear to be the case, and Public Health England was looking into this as part of its review, alongside other categories such as ethnicity, age and gender.

### **Nicola Sturgeon delivers press conference on easing lockdown measures**

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon yesterday delivered a press conference to mark the publication of the Scottish Government's 'framework for decision-making', which will guide its future re-assessments of the lockdown. Mrs Sturgeon stated that a return to normality was 'not in the cards' for the near future and that the country must instead recover to a 'new normal'. This will likely see a phased response and could resort to fresh lockdowns if need be.



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## Active Lives Survey

Sport England yesterday released its *Active Lives Survey*. The report shows that there was an increase of 404,600 adults being classed as physically active in the 12 months to November 2019 – when compared with 2018.

This means that, prior to the outbreak of coronavirus, 28.6 million British adults – or 63.3 per cent – were doing at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. It is the highest number ever recorded by the study.

While the effect of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and resulting social distancing guidelines are not yet clear, Sport England said there is a possibility that the lockdown measures could halt the increase in activity seen in recent years – as well as worsening existing inequalities.

Find out more [here](#).

## Expected announcements

Government is not expected to make any significant announcements during the daily press conference this afternoon. The public affairs team at ukactive will keep a close eye on the science and technology committee hearing taking place in Westminster this afternoon, which will see Chief Medical Officer for England Chris Whitty facing MPs to discuss the UK's response to coronavirus. Questions are likely to focus on personal protective equipment and testing, but we can also expect to hear MPs press Mr Whitty on the process of easing lockdown restrictions. More on this in Monday's daily briefing.

## 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.



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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)

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](#).