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Covid-19 Member Update

Monday 27 April

Summary

Another weekend in lockdown saw the grim news that the UK official toll of Covid-19 deaths in hospitals has passed 20,000 – the figure mooted as a ‘success’ by the Government’s advisers last month. With that figure certain to rise much further, and the number of excess deaths already significantly higher, it is a reminder of the seriousness and longevity of this crisis.

Boris Johnson though will be plotting the UK’s course out of the crisis, as he returns to Downing Street today, three weeks after being rushed to hospital with Covid-19. Top of his list will be the question of lockdown restrictions, with the current period set for review in 10 days’ time. Pressure is mounting for some easing of the measures in place, although this will continue to be weighed against the potential effect on the death toll.

The work of ukactive and the physical activity sector in preparing for life after lockdown has also been recognised, as *The Times* [reports](#) on the plans being drawn up to ensure social distancing is maintained once the sector reopens.

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

ukactive welcomes rent protection for businesses

ukactive has [welcomed](#) the measures set out by the Government on Friday to protect businesses from aggressive rent recovery from landlords. It follows a call made by ukactive on 13 April for restrictions on tactics being used by landlords to collect rent from gyms and leisure centres.

The measures announced by the Government 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.



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- Landlords and investors are asked to work collaboratively with high street businesses unable to pay their bills during COVID-19 pandemic.
- Government to introduce temporary new measures to safeguard the UK high street against aggressive debt recovery actions during the coronavirus pandemic.

The legislation will be in force until 30 June, and can be extended in line with the moratorium on commercial lease forfeiture. We look forward to finding out further details as the amended Coronavirus Bill receives royal assent.

This vital change comes as a result of the support and evidence provided by ukactive members and consistent engagement from ukactive with the Government, on behalf of the sector.

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

Downing Street press conferences

The Downing Street press conferences over the weekend featured appearances from Transport Secretary Grant Schapps, Home Secretary Priti Patel, and Environment Secretary George Eustice. Key updates included:

- On Friday, Grant Schapps discussed the Government's plans to keep freight running during this period. He announced a deal with France and Ireland to ensure essential supplies, including medicines, continue to move between the three countries. This will help keep routes running between the UK and mainland Europe.
- Saturday saw Home Secretary Priti Patel praise the police for their enforcement of lockdown measures, as well as pointing to a reduction in crime during the period. She did, however, acknowledge the rise in domestic violence and said the Government was committed to supporting victims.
- Environment Secretary George Eustice took Sunday's conference, saying it was too early to consider easing the lockdown a day after deaths had risen by 813 to over 20,000. Alongside him, NHS England Medical Director Stephen Powis said the science would change over time, and inform the Government's advice surrounding immunity.



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Increased pressure on local authorities as predictions say coronavirus may leave councils with £5bn funding shortfall

Media outlets have reported that England's 343 local authorities face a potential £5 billion funding shortfall over the next year, with several understood to be on the brink of insolvency. Councils have spent millions more than expected during the lockdown on providing social care, personal protective equipment for staff, housing rough sleepers, and supplying emergency food packages, while losing even larger amounts in lost revenues from council tax, parking charges and leisure fees.

Although the Government has provided £3.2 billion in bailouts, councils are warning much of this has already been spent. More on the story [here](#).

ukactive will continue to work with the Local Government Association to ensure councils are supported by the Government to cover their costs and services.

Expected announcements

Chancellor Rishi Sunak is expected to make an announcement in the House of Commons at 15:30 on the impact of coronavirus on the economy. Referencing the OBR's projections from earlier this month, Sunak is expected to stress the importance of opening up sections of the economy as soon as possible. That is ahead of the Second Reading of the Finance Bill, which is expected to be nodded through by opposition parties.

Elsewhere, with Parliament back in session a number of Cabinet ministers will be appearing before MPs and Select Committees. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden will be speaking for 30 minutes in the Commons, where he should touch on the impact of the lockdown on sport.

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 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

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](#).