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## Covid-19 Member Update

Wednesday 8 April

### Summary

Boris Johnson has spent a second night in intensive care as questions arise about when and how Britain should try to move beyond the current state of lockdown. Speaking at yesterday's daily government update, Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance suggested that we may be seeing the beginning of a stabilisation in the number of new Covid-19 cases. Despite this positive news, one of the most immediate concerns among authorities at all levels remains the looming four-day Easter weekend and its potential effect on the spread of the virus.

Below is a summary of yesterday's events, as well as the steps ukactive is taking to support more than 4,000 members across the physical activity sector.

### **ukactive press release: 2,800 fitness facilities and 100,000 jobs at risk of being lost from high streets and communities within next 11 weeks**

ukactive's piece on the need for extra government support to the sector was picked up by various news outlets this morning, including the [Independent](#) and the [BBC](#), which interviewed two of ukactive's members about the financial challenges their organisations face.

The piece highlights that approximately 2,800 gyms and other fitness sites could close by the middle of June unless the Government steps in with extra help. Despite government support around furloughed staff and business loans, the piece emphasises that the Government must ensure this support reaches companies faster. Additional relief from utilities and landlord support is also crucial.

The full story is available on the ukactive website [here](#).

ukactive has also written to MPs today asking for their support to urge the Government to provide the necessary support to protect these facilities and jobs.

### **Downing Street press conference**

Yesterday's daily press conference was hosted by Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, accompanied by Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance and Chief Medical Officer Dr Chris Whitty. The update focused on the UK's national monitoring and testing programme, as well as government logistics in light of the Prime Minister's hospitalisation. Key highlights included:



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- Mr Raab reiterated the Government's commitment to reach 100,000 tests per day. The Foreign Secretary stated that while testing capacity is ramping up, it is vital to follow government guidance on social distancing to slow the spread of the virus.
- Mr Raab confirmed that Cabinet was aware of the Prime Minister's expectations at this difficult time, and will keep all resolve to deliver the Government's plan to defeat Coronavirus.
- Sir Patrick Vallance stated that transport usage figures indicate substantial reductions in use of public transport and motor vehicles. He reiterated that this is expected to lead to a substantial reduction in the transmission of the virus in the community.
- The Chief Scientific Adviser cautiously suggested that we may be seeing the beginning of a change in terms of the curve of new cases flattening, but this will not be known for sure until next week.

### **Government support for businesses facing insolvency**

Yesterday, the Government published a new resource for businesses facing difficulties during the coronavirus outbreak on its website. The resource hosts links to the package of measures announced by the government to support businesses, and gives businesses access to restructuring and insolvency advice. The resource also gives access to financial assistance for employers unable to pay statutory redundancy payments.

The resource can be accessed [here](#). Please get in touch with [publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@ukactive.org.uk) if you have any specific questions. ukactive will be updating its FAQs in accordance with the latest support and questions from the sector. The FAQs can be found [here](#).

### **Importance of outdoor exercise**

Following the scenes of people sunbathing in parks over the weekend, and the rumours there would shortly be a ban on outdoor exercise – later played down by Matt Hancock – there have been a number of articles extolling the virtues of exercising outdoors. Guardian sports columnist Barney Ronay is the latest to [urge](#) the Government to keep parks open as far as possible, while ukactive Board representative Professor Greg Whyte did the [same](#) on Twitter yesterday.

With exercise one of the four permitted reasons for people to leave their homes and encouraged by the Government throughout lockdown, it continues to be crucial to maintain levels of physical activity.



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## **Expected announcements**

Major news media outlets are predicting that the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, will be leading this afternoon's daily government update. If this is indeed the case, we can expect to hear more about the Chancellor's wage subsidy scheme and the economic impact of coronavirus on the UK. The Chancellor is likely to face questions about his business lending scheme, with new figures published yesterday showing hardly any firms have been supported by the Government-backed loans. Only 2,022 loans have been made to the UK's small and medium-sized firms through the scheme – translating into a 0.65 percent approval rate.

## **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.

ukactive has written to MPs today to stress the critical importance of the physical activity sector and outline the support we still require from the Government.

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](#).