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Covid-19 Member Update

Monday 18 May

Summary

The first weekend under the new, slightly relaxed, lockdown restrictions has seen the UK continue to debate the correct path out of lockdown. The proposed partial reopening of schools on 1 June continues to cause significant disagreement, as does the ongoing row over the Government's actions with regards to care homes.

Also attracting attention is the Government's test and trace programme, which had been expected to be up and running by now. Health Secretary Matt Hancock will face these questions in the House of Commons today.

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.

Leisure sector reopening strategy covered

There has been weekend coverage of the fitness and leisure sector's plans to reopen, with *The Guardian* running an [article](#) featuring comment from leading figures from the sector on what the future will look like when gyms are able to reopen. Alongside first-hand accounts of how different gym chains are beginning to prepare for reopening following coronavirus, the article also features ukactive's guidance for all gyms on measures to take.

There is also coverage of the difficult position for local authorities and leisure operators, which have seen funding cut as other areas of the coronavirus response are prioritised.

Prime Minister preparing to tackle UK obesity

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is reportedly planning a new interventionist drive to tackle UK obesity, following his stint in hospital with Covid-19. *The Times* [reported](#) last week Mr Johnson is convinced his weight was a significant factor in the severity of his illness and is preparing to reduce the UK's problem with obesity. Previously opposed to intervention and the "nanny-state", Mr Johnson's recent experience has apparently made him determined to get Britain healthy, with increasing cycling to work set to be a major focus.



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This comes on the back of numerous early studies suggesting obesity is a major risk factor for admission to ICU and death from coronavirus. The relationship between obesity and Covid-19 is one of the areas being investigated by Public Health England, alongside gender, age and ethnicity.

Mr Johnson also wrote an [article](#) in the *Mail on Sunday* discussing the recent lockdown changes and urging the public to abide by the measures as stridently as possible.

Education Secretary urges return to school

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has been pushing for the return of some schoolchildren at the start of next month, as per the Government's plan, despite the concerns of unions over the safety. Writing in the *Daily Mail* last Thursday, Mr Williamson [said](#) it was of crucial importance children got some schooling before the summer break in order to reduce the widening gap between the most and least deprived pupils.

He also urged unions to "do their duty" to get children back to school. There has been opposition from teaching unions who say schools may not be safe for teachers, with research on how effective young people are at transmitting the disease still not confirmed.

Downing Street press conference

Press conferences over the weekend were conducted by Health Secretary Matt Hancock, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson, and Business Secretary Alok Sharma. Key announcements included:

- Mr Hancock said the Government had "put a ring around social care" settings from the beginning of the crisis, deepening the row over whether the Government prioritised hospital critical care at the expense of care homes.
- Mr Williamson repeated his call for students to be able to return to school when safe, stressing the importance of this for the poorest children especially.
- Amidst problems in technology, Mr Sharma announced the lowest daily death rate since 24 March alongside an update on plans to distribute a vaccine once developed.

Expected announcements



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Health Secretary Matt Hancock will address the House of Commons today, updating on the Government's response to coronavirus. We can expect to see MPs raise a number of concerns regarding his department's performance, focusing on the crisis in care homes and delays in the Government's 'test and track' strategy.

He is also expected to lead the Downing Street 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 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 Chief Executive Huw Edwards will be appearing alongside Sport England and the Sport and Recreation Alliance on the APPG for Sport's virtual event on Wednesday, speaking to Parliamentarians on the sector's position in these uncertain times.

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](#).