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Covid-19 Member Update

Wednesday 6 May

Summary

On Tuesday 5 May, the UK death toll for COVID-19 surpassed the 30,000 mark, making Britain the hardest hit country in Europe. This morning, news outlets across the globe are reporting on the UK Government's tragically slow response to the crisis. This issue will likely feature as a key topic of discussion during today's Prime Minister Questions, which will see Boris Johnson and opposition leader Keir Starmer go head-to-head for the first time.

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.

Councils told to support leisure operators which are falling between the cracks

ukactive has been working with the Local Government Association and Community Leisure UK to develop a comprehensive guide for local councils to support leisure contractors and operators during the crisis. Measures outlined in the guidance include waiving the money that leisure providers are due to pay the council on a monthly basis and offering interest-free loans or grants to cover the closure period – as well as concessions on future measures, when allowed to reopen. The aim is to encourage local authorities to consider the long-term impact of cuts to the leisure sector, and to support operators to ensure the future of the leisure facilities that our communities rely on.

Read more on this [here](#).

Sport England CEO speaks to MPs about the impact of COVID-19 on the sports sector

Sport England CEO Tim Hollingsworth appeared in front of the DCMS Select Committee yesterday morning to outline the impact of Coronavirus on the sports sector. During the intervention, Mr Hollingsworth highlighted the importance of physical activity in preserving the nation's physical and mental health during lockdown. However, he also raised concerns that lockdown has worsened pre-existing inequalities around physical activity levels and stated that children were particularly affected. He urged members of the Select Committee to consider how



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children can be engaged in activities over the summer to prevent a rise in physical inactivity levels.

Watch the full intervention [here](#).

Downing Street press conference announcements

Yesterday's press conference was hosted by First Secretary of State Dominic Raab, accompanied by Chief Scientific Adviser Professor Angela McLean. Key announcements included:

- Mr Raab stated that we are continuing to see evidence of a flattening in the curve of the virus. SAGE is expected to update ministers on their latest scientific advice to inform the Government's plan for the future.
- The key focus of Mr Raab's opening statement was on cyber criminals, saying the Government had seen an increase in this since the lockdown. The incidents range from fraud and scams, to acts of espionage, and from criminal gangs to state actors.
- Making the most headlines were the daily graphs, with Angela Maclean offering frank assessment of where the UK was. On the rising proportion of deaths in care homes, Professor Maclean said there was a "real problem". When comparing daily deaths with other countries, Professor Maclean admitted we were "not where we want to be".
- Following a question on obesity, Professor Maclean said for those admitted to hospital, there did appear to be a link between obesity and admittance to ICU and death. She said, "in all situations, it is better to not be obese".

Scottish Government outlines options for lifting lockdown

In Scotland, strict social distancing measures are due to be reviewed on Thursday. Ahead of this expected announcement, the Government released a paper outlining the options which are currently being considered to ease lockdown restrictions. These options include relaxing rules on daily exercise and meeting people, and a staggered approach to reopening schools.

But the paper stresses that wider coronavirus restrictions will not change until it is absolutely safe to do so, and that any changes to lockdown will depend on how the spread of COVID-19



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can be suppressed. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is not expected to make any drastic changes to the current measures in place when she addresses the nation on Thursday.

Find out more about the Scottish Government's plans for easing lockdown restrictions [here](#).

Expected announcements

The Prime Minister will face opposition leader Keir Starmer for the first time today during Prime Minister Questions. The session is likely to focus on the UK's comparatively poor response to the COVID-19 crisis after yesterday's report that Britain has surpassed Italy as the hardest hit country in Europe. Mr Starmer is expected to stay measured during today's session, but the Government can expect significant scrutiny from Labour over the coming weeks and months.

Elsewhere in Parliament, Business Secretary Alok Sharma will appear before the Commons to answer questions from MPs. The focus will likely be on the Government's leaked draft proposal for post-lockdown workplaces.

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.

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](#).