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Covid-19 Member Update

Wednesday 23 September

Intro

The Prime Minister and First Ministers have announced further restrictions to combat the rising spread of the coronavirus. The following briefing sets out the changes in restrictions, the specific effect on the physical activity sector, and the reaction to the restrictions from across the political spectrum.

Context

The new announcements come in the wake of a worrying rise in coronavirus cases across the country in recent weeks. The rise, initially seen primarily among young people, mirrors one seen in a number of countries across Europe, where an initial rise in cases among young people has led to an increase in hospitalisations and deaths.

Restrictions have tightened in recent weeks (e.g. a reduction in socialising to groups of six) but following an address from CMO Chris Whitty and CSA Sir Patrick Vallance on Monday, and a four nations Cobra meeting Tuesday morning, the Prime Minister announced restrictions in the House of Commons, followed by a public address on Tuesday evening. First Ministers Nicola Sturgeon and Mark Drakeford did the same for Scotland and Wales respectively.

Restrictions

The following restrictions were announced yesterday

England:

- Curfew on hospitality - all premises to fully close by 10pm. This includes all hospitality such as cafes/bars/restaurants within other premises (including gyms and leisure centres). Hospitality will also be strictly limited to table service in licensed facilities. Face coverings must also be worn by all staff, and by patrons unless seated and eating or drinking.
- Indoor team sports for over 18 will no longer be exempt from the rule of six. Exemptions will continue to exist for under 18's and Disability Sport . This does **NOT** affect group exercise classes, as long as people do not mix in groups of more than six.



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- A pause on trials for fans to make appearances in stadiums, as well as on the return of conferences.
- Guidelines will now be made law, with enforcement stepping up, with fines and potential closures for those businesses which do not comply.

Scotland:

- Curfew on hospitality above, with the added restriction of a ban on visiting other people's households.

Wales:

- Curfew on hospitality as with England, with added restriction of guidance not to travel unnecessarily.

Northern Ireland:

- Executive still considering whether to impose a 10pm curfew on hospitality.

The Prime Minister warned these restrictions could be in place for the next six months, and there could be further restrictions if cases continue to rise.

Sector safety

The low level of additional restrictions for the physical activity sector is testament to the efforts made by all facilities to ensure a safe environment. With over 24 million visits since reopening yielding just 78 visitor positive results, this leads to a prevalence rate across the UK of 0.35 cases per 100,000 visits. In addition, these cases were not explicitly linked to transmission within gyms.

The full set of statistics for UK prevalence, based on ukactive's research, can be found [here](#).

Government enforcement

Part of the announcements made yesterday was the increase in enforcement by the police, with possible support from the armed forces. This will be aided by an additional £60m in funding for police forces and local authorities to enforce Covid-19 restrictions.

As highlighted above, enforcement will begin with fines for those individuals and premises not abiding by social distancing and curfew restrictions, followed by possible closures.



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Reaction

Reaction to the announcements has been mixed. Labour has been broadly supportive of the decision to introduce restrictions, with Leader Sir Keir Starmer pledging to work constructively with the Government to stop the spread of the virus, and not ruling out supporting further restrictions if necessary.

However, the Shadow Health Secretary Jonathan Ashworth has [blamed](#) the need to reintroduce restrictions on the Government's failure to set up a functioning test, trace and isolate programme, saying the last six months of hard work have been wasted. Labour has made several calls for local public health teams to be given responsibility with criticism over the performance of private companies.

There is far more criticism for the Government from the Conservative backbenches, ranging from a lack of consultation with Parliament over the introduction of further restrictions to growing pressure on Chancellor Rishi Sunak to rethink the ending of the furlough scheme at the end of October.

There have been specific concerns around sport following the announcement no fans will be allowed in stadiums for some time, with numerous sports and physical activity bodies writing to the Prime Minister demanding financial support.

Former Sports Minister Tracey Crouch MP asked a [question](#) to the Prime Minister about what was being done for sport, with Mr Johnson pledging the DCMS Secretary and Chancellor were working on a solution currently.

ukactive engagement with Government

ukactive continues to engage with the Government to secure further targeted financial support for the sector.

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](#).