

COVID-19 – Weekly Round-up

Friday 9 October 2020

Heart of London Business Alliance is committed to ensuring our members receive the support they need while the situation in relation to COVID-19 is fast-changing. Our Daily Bulletin provides you with an update on the important announcements and guidance from the Government. In addition, it is recommended that our members monitor the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website for guidance regarding COVID-19.

Together with our local Member of Parliament, Nickie Aiken, Heart of London will continue to lobby Government for support for our members and your employees during this difficult time.

Headlines

- New local lockdown restrictions in Scotland as cases rise
- Thousands of tests not counted due to technical fault
- New support launched for jobseekers

New local lockdown restrictions in Scotland as cases rise

7th October: In a speech to the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon [announced](#) that all pubs and restaurants across the central belt of Scotland, including the city of Glasgow, are to be closed for 16 days from Friday, under new measures aimed at tackling a surge in the cases. Pubs and restaurants will be able to open in other parts of Scotland, but can only serve alcohol outdoors. The new rules come into force from 18:00 tonight until at least 25 October. 3.4 million residents will be impacted.

The First Minister said the restrictions were "intended to be short, sharp action to arrest a worrying increase in infection", however the measures fell short of the mooted "circuit breaker" full lockdown. School, universities and other businesses will be allowed to remain open as usual in line with existing measures.

Cases have also continued to rise across England, with the transmission rates in the North causing particular concern. In Liverpool, Knowsley, and Manchester (the three worst affected places in England) infection rates now stands at over 500 cases per 100,000 people. Varying degrees of local lockdown restrictions are already in force across much of the North West, North-East and Yorkshire and further restrictions are [expected](#) to come into force on Monday.

Faced with this [rise](#) in cases and worrying reports predicting a shortage of hospital beds in the North of England, next week the Prime Minister is expected to reveal another COVID-19 plan. There is [speculation](#) that this could include a simplified three tier "traffic light system" for local lockdowns. Chancellor Rishi Sunak is also expected to make a statement later today on further job support, particularly for regions under lockdown.

Thousands of tests not counted due to technical fault

5th October: Following a technical glitch in the UK's testing system that saw nearly 16,000 COVID-19 cases go unreported in England, the Health Secretary Matt Hancock [conceded](#) that the mistake "should never have happened". The error meant that although those who tested positive were told about their results, they did not appear in the national figures until over the weekend. More alarmingly in terms of efforts to stem transmission, the error also results in contacts not being traced for these same tests.

The technical error was caused by oversized Microsoft Excel data files that were unable to be sent from NHS Test and Trace to Public Health England. The error itself was discovered on Friday night and has since been fixed. Attempting to minimise the political fallout, the Health Secretary said that the error has not substantially changed the Government's assessment of the epidemic, and had not impacted the decisions on local action taken.

New support launched for jobseekers

5th October: Work and Pensions Secretary Theresé Coffey this week [announced](#) that jobseekers will be offered coaching and advice on moving into "growing sectors" as part of a £238 million employment programme. The Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) Scheme is aimed at helping those out of work due to Covid-19 for three months.

The Department for Work and Pensions states that it is recruiting an additional 13,500 "work coaches" to deliver on the plans. The scheme is designed to ensure claimants have access to tailored, flexible support, enabling them to quickly return employment. It will see a number of providers offer a range of support, including CV and interview coaching. However, Labour have criticised the scheme, arguing that it is too little, too late.

Devolved Nations

- **8th October:** The Scottish Government has [announced](#) a new package of financial flexibilities and extra funding for councils, to address financial pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **7th October:** The Welsh Government [announced](#) a new £8 million Tenancy Saver Loan scheme, to help tenants struggling with rent arrears due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **6th October:** The Northern Irish executive [announced](#) a new Covid-19 Surge Planning Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland, ahead of what is expected to be a tough winter for the health service.
- **6th October:** Finance Ministers from across the UK's various devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland [issued](#) coordinated statements asking the UK Government for greater fiscal flexibility to "manage the implications of COVID-19, be permitted meaningful involvement in the Spending Review to enable planning of budgets and receive an assurance that lost EU funding will be replaced in full and brought under the control of Devolved Administrations."

Other news

- **8th October:** Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick [admitted](#) that local lockdowns are having a limited effect, following analysis showing that 19 out of 20 areas with local restrictions have seen cases increase.
- **8th October:** The Greek islands of Lesbos, Santorini, Serifos, Tinos and Zakynthos have been added to the list of travel corridors for England. No countries have been removed from the list this week.
- **7th October:** With Covid-19 cases rising nationally again, the number of people [admitted](#) to hospital in one day with COVID-19 jumped by nearly a quarter in England (478 people) on Sunday.
- **2nd October:** New [statistics](#) from the NHS Test and Trace programme have shown that 1 in 8 people in England have now received a COVID-19 test at least once since the launch of the Test and Trace system on 28 May.

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