

COVID-19 – Weekly Round-up

Friday 11 December 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

- UK begins vaccine roll out
- Tier 3 fears as case numbers rise in London

UK begins vaccine roll out

8th December: On Tuesday, the UK became the first country in the world to [administer](#) the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to patients outside of a trial setting. Margaret Keenan, a 90-year-old grandmother from Coventry briefly became famous around the world when she became the first patient to receive the jab following last week's clinical approval of the vaccine.

The NHS vaccination rollout began with patients aged 80 and over who are already attending hospital as an outpatient or being discharged after a hospital stay. Vaccinations are currently taking place from 73 hospitals, and will be extended to a number of GP surgeries from next week. Vaccination centres will be opened in sports centres and conference halls in the New Year as the programme ramps up. The [Scottish](#) and [Welsh Governments](#) also issued statements celebrating what is hoped will be a definitive moment in the fight against the disease, and detailing the rollout programme for both Scotland and Wales.

Tier 3 fears as case numbers rise in London

While hopes of a return to normal have been raised by the vaccine, the Prime Minister has been keen to caution that the UK has not yet beaten the virus. This became most apparent when members of the Greater London Authority met on Tuesday night to discuss rising case numbers in the capital, which have surged to the highest average infection rate in the country. London Mayor Sadiq Khan has [warned](#) the city could see a “devastating” rise in COVID-19

infections over the winter months, as the latest data has shown a rise in cases in three-quarters of London's boroughs. While a decision on whether London will be upgraded to Tier 3 won't be formally announced until 17th December following the Government's official review of all tiers on the 16th, MPs have **communicated** that the decision to impose tougher restrictions on the capital has effectively already been made.

Any tightening of restrictions following the Government's review is likely to face backlash from Conservative backbenchers. Many lockdown-sceptic MPs had already voiced concern about the areas with different infection rates being 'lumped together'. However, it is understood that pleas by Conservative MPs on Tuesday evening to differentiate London boroughs were **rejected**, despite Boris Johnson's commitment to consider a more local system.

Mass testing for secondary school pupils in and around London

The Government **announced** on Friday that mass testing will to be rolled out across secondary schools and colleges in parts of London, Kent and Essex to combat the spread of COVID-19. Data has shown that London's rise in cases can be largely attributed to a rapid rise in infection rates among 11 to 18 year olds. Health Secretary Matt Hancock said that the age group in the target areas will be tested regardless of symptoms, with more details of the programme to be released on Friday.

Devolved Nations

Scottish Government eases restrictions

8th December: Following the Scottish Government's weekly review of level restrictions, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon **announced** on Tuesday that a total of 16 local authorities would have their levels downgraded. This included eleven areas in the highest level 4 restrictions, which are to be moved down to level 3 from Friday. Sturgeon was keen to caveat that the Government has taken a cautious approach to lifting restrictions, suggesting that Scotland may consider further downgrading level 3 restrictions to level 2 over the coming weeks, should the data continue to paint a positive outlook.

This comes as Scotland has **allocated** a further £1.8 billion of funding to tackling the impact of COVID-19. Areas including health, transport and business support will receive all but £330 million of the money, with the remainder to be used to meet urgent demands relating to COVID-19 and Brexit until the end of March 2021.

Scotland cancels Higher and Advanced Higher exams

8th December: Deputy First Minister John Swinney **revealed** that 2021 Higher and Advanced Higher exams in Scotland will be cancelled in light of COVID-related disruption to learning. The Government was particularly concerned with the disparate levels of disruption faced by pupils from the most deprived areas of the country. The

exams are to be replaced with awards based on teacher judgement of pupils' attainment. In November, the Welsh Government announced that they would cancel GCSEs and A-Levels in 2021.

Welsh schools transition to online learning

10th December: All secondary schools and colleges in Wales will **move** to online learning from Monday as infection rates in Wales have increased. Several counties have also said primary schools will close earlier, including Cardiff and Swansea. COVID-19 rates have exceeded 370 out of every 100,000 people in the nation, with a test positivity rate of 17%, according to the latest Test Trace Protect data.

Contact matt.arnold@heartoflondonbid.co.uk should you have any queries.