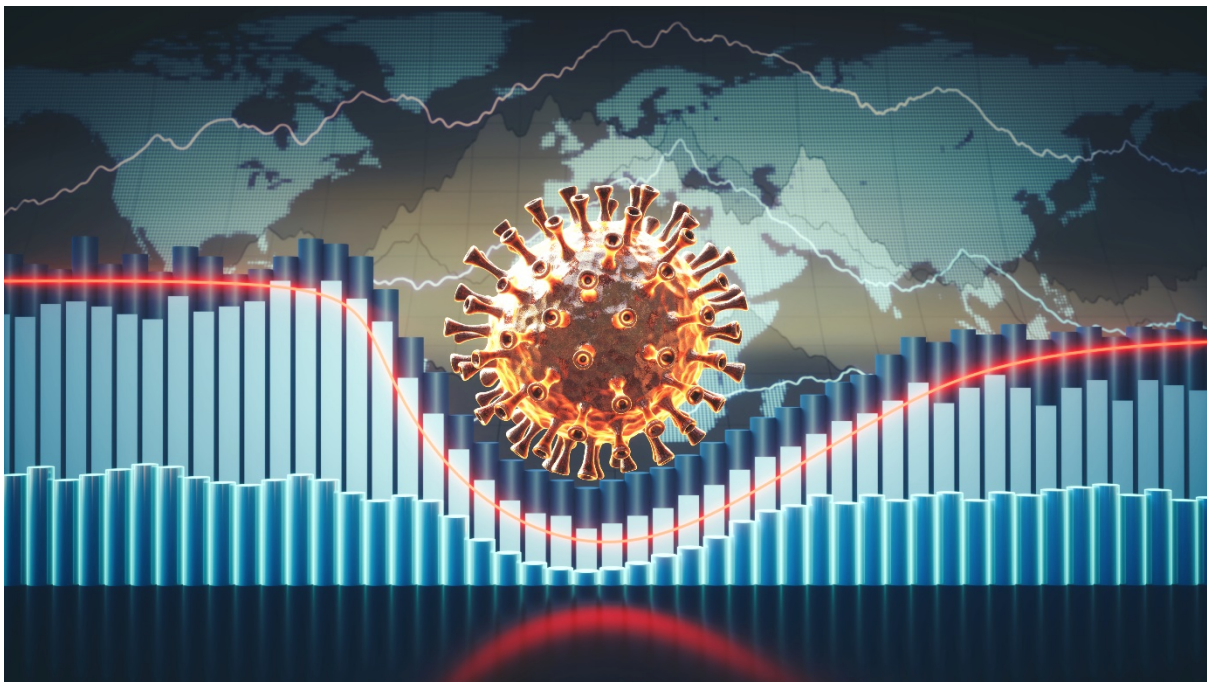


Written 13 January 2020

Business Newsletter

A round up of the latest business and Covid-19 news for our clients. Please talk to us if there is anything you need. Stay safe and keep your strength, we will get through this!

The latest economic news and indicators for the UK make gloomy reading and as we are in lock down they will probably remain so for the foreseeable future. Remember though, they should be taken for what they are – a snapshot at a particular point in time, and once the vaccination programme fully kicks in and lock down restrictions ease, we should see an improvement in our lives and businesses.



Retailers had their worst annual sales performance on record in 2020, driven by loss of demand for fashion and homeware products, figures from the British Retail Consortium (BRC) show.

Food sales growth rose 5.4% on 2019, non-food fell about 5%, this is an overall fall of 0.3% in a year dominated by the Covid-19 impact. This is the worst annual change since the BRC began collating the figures in 1995.

The latest Government surveys show for all businesses, excluding those who have permanently ceased trading, 11% of their workforce are on furlough leave, a decrease from 16% previously.

UK footfall overall is down by 38% compared to January 2020 and we can expect this to fall further as we stay in lock down.

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The Chancellor has stated that the UK economy “to get worse before it gets better” and that the new national restrictions were necessary to control the spread of coronavirus.

We expect to see further Government supports announced shortly and we will keep our clients fully informed of when and how these will be applied.

See:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronavirustheukeconomyandsocietyfasterindicators/2021>

What is interesting is that according to the most recent results from of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (30 November to 13 December 2020), 84% of UK businesses were trading, an increase from 80% in the last survey (16 to 29 November). Clearly this will fall in January, February and March as the lock down continues.

What these figures do show to us is that businesses are resilient and adapting to the changes caused by the Pandemic.

We are seeing some remarkable clients who have adopted new technologies to change the way they conduct business and distribute their goods or services. Talk to us about helping you pivot or repurpose your business and adapting for the future.

Government publishes plan for the largest vaccination programme in British history

Tens of millions of people will be immunised by the spring at over 2,700 vaccination sites across the UK, the government has announced as part of plans to rapidly scale up the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The UK COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan sets out how the government will work with the NHS, devolved administrations, local councils and the armed forces to deliver the largest vaccination programme in British history.



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By the end of January, everyone in England will be within 10 miles of a vaccination site or, for a small number of highly rural areas, the vaccine will be brought to them via mobile teams. There will also be capacity to deliver at least 2 million vaccinations in England per week by the end of January and all residents and staff in over 10,000 care homes across the country will be offered a vaccine by the end of the month.

This will be made possible by the expansion of the programme, including:

- 206 active hospital sites
- 50 vaccination centres
- around 1,200 local vaccination sites – including primary care networks, community pharmacy sites and mobile teams

This will mean every at-risk person has access to a vaccination centre, regardless of where they live.

The expansion of the programme will also mean all adults will be offered a vaccine by the autumn.

The government and the NHS have also mobilised a workforce of over 80,000 health professionals to help in the delivery of the programme across the different vaccination sites, with over 200,000 additional members of the public expressing their interest in helping with the non-clinical elements of the rollout such as administrative support, logistics, stewards and first aiders.

See: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-plan-for-the-largest-vaccination-programme-in-british-history?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=70dafb02-5282-4476-88cf-6e84af2a3727&utm_content=daily

Government to deploy first British-manufactured rapid lateral flow antigen tests for COVID-19

The government has ordered 2 million of the first British-manufactured rapid lateral flow antigen tests for COVID-19 to be validated by Public Health England, for use in asymptomatic testing, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock has announced.

Derby-based company SureScreen Diagnostics is to provide 2 million of the lateral flow tests, which provide results in under 30 minutes, by this Friday (15 January), with the potential to provide millions more in the coming months.

Under the government's Winter Plan, NHS Test and Trace is already deploying hundreds of thousands of rapid tests to identify asymptomatic cases in care homes, across the NHS, in critical infrastructure workplaces and food manufacturers, and in partnership with local directors of public health.

In addition to this, the government's community testing programme is providing asymptomatic testing through local authorities across the UK. The SureScreen tests will form part of the asymptomatic testing activity.



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See: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-deploy-first-british-manufactured-rapid-lateral-flow-antigen-tests-for-covid-19?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=fd14c8aa-ff87-4e19-8ff3-5926ef31613d&utm_content=daily

List of private providers of coronavirus testing

The Department of Health and Social Care maintains a listing of the private sector (non-NHS) providers who may be able to conduct tests for the presence of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2).

These are listed in alphabetical order. They have declared that they meet the government's minimum standards for providers of Test to Release for international travel or minimum standards for private sector providers of general COVID-19 testing (the Declaration). Both lists are continually updated by the Department of Health and Social Care as providers declare that they meet the required standards and are reviewed by UKAS.

See lists of providers that meet minimum standards for Test to Release for international travel and general coronavirus testing here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-private-providers-of-coronavirus-testing/list-of-private-providers-of-coronavirus-testing>

How to treat certain expenses and benefits provided to employees during coronavirus

HMRC has updated its guidance about taxable expenses and benefits when they are paid to employees because of coronavirus and how to report them to HMRC.

Information about 'coronavirus (COVID-19) tests' has been added.

Coronavirus tests provided by the government, as part of its national testing scheme, are not treated as a benefit in kind for tax purposes. This means for employed healthcare workers and other eligible front-line staff who get a test through this programme, there is no tax due and employers do not need to report a benefit to HMRC.

If employers are providing antigen testing kits to employees, outside of the government's national testing scheme, either directly or by purchasing tests that are carried out by a third party, no Income Tax or Class 1A National Insurance contributions will be due. Similarly, employers and their employees will not be liable to any Income Tax or National Insurance contributions, where an employee receives money from their employer for obtaining a test.

The Government is legislating for this through regulations, and guidance will be updated shortly.

See: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-treat-certain-expenses-and-benefits-provided-to-employees-during-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=5753c94e-3d3a-4b8b-8d28-ffc8ff7a132c&utm_content=daily

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Advice for pregnant employees

This advice is for pregnant employees, but the link below should also be referred to by employers. The guidance will help employees discuss their roles with managers and / or occupational health teams, how best to ensure health and safety in the workplace.

If an employee is pregnant and they have let their employer know in writing of the pregnancy, their employer should carry out a risk assessment to follow the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW) or the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. This may involve obtaining advice from the occupational health department.

Information contained in the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) in pregnancy should be used as the basis for a risk assessment.

See: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/>

Pregnant women of any gestation should not be required to continue working if this is not supported by the risk assessment. Pregnant women are considered ‘clinically vulnerable’ or in some cases ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ to coronavirus (COVID-19), and therefore require special consideration as contained in government guides for different industries.

For the full guidance see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees>

Letters from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to those in the manufacturing industry and its supply chain and to those in the construction sector.

The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, the new Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, has written to everyone working in these sectors to confirm working should continue, and for employers to follow the “Working safely during coronavirus” guides.

The working safely guides can be seen here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

MOT centre and tester guidance

There is updated guidance for MOT managers and testers on providing MOT tests during coronavirus (COVID-19), including staying open and working safely.

See: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-mot-centre-and-tester-guidance?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=0b60eea2-b051-40e7-88cb-260be5762d4d&utm_content=daily



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Travel corridors - England

The list of countries, territories and regions from where you can travel to England and may not have to self-isolate is regularly updated with the UAE being removed from the list this week.

See: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=517f74dd-3d9d-4984-a740-5724bb8eee57&utm_content=daily

New Covid-19 test rule for UK arrivals from Friday 15 January - England

Pre-departure Covid-19 testing will be required for everyone travelling to the UK from 04:00 GMT on Friday. People arriving by plane, train or boat, including UK nationals, will have to take a test up to 72 hours before leaving the country they are in.

See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-55626818>