



17.04.2020

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Business Secretary Alok Sharma led the government briefing this evening, announcing the government's creation of a Vaccine Taskforce to [drive forward, expedite and co-ordinate efforts to research and then produce a coronavirus vaccine](#).

Mr Sharma appeared with Professor Yvonne Doyle, medical director and director of health protection for Public Health England, and the Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance.

The main announcements this evening were:

- The new Vaccine Taskforce is now up and running and aims to ensure a vaccine for COVID-19 is made available to the public as soon as possible, though the government recognises vaccine development is a colossal undertaking which will take many months and has no guarantees.
- The government is doing all it can to make sure it reaches its target of 100,000 COVID-19 tests by the end of the month and stresses it is very important for health and social care workers to make use of the existing testing facilities as there is presently more capacity than is being used.
- Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, has [extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) for furloughed employees by one month to the end of June to provide businesses with the certainty they need.
- Those businesses that are allowed to remain open during the continued lockdown, and that still have employees going to work because they cannot work from home, are reminded that they must follow the Public Health England guidance for safe working.

- The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is continuing to assess the need for protective face masks to be worn in public following a recent push for this by the Mayor of London, though for now SAGE's advice remains that masks are for use in hospitals and other care settings where there is a high risk of transmission.
- UK businesses continue to step forward to help efforts to produce more personal protective equipment (PPE) to maintain supplies.
- COVID-19 will have a major impact on the UK's and the global economy, which is why the government is providing support to businesses so they can 'bounce back' after the crisis and why it is doing what it can to keep the economy going, including by proceeding with HS2.

Elsewhere in COVID-19 news....

Companies House has announced temporary changes to its company strike-off procedures as part of the government's efforts to help businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

BUSINESS

1. Companies House pauses the striking off process for companies.

Companies House announced yesterday that they would temporarily pause the striking off process to stop companies from being dissolved. This will mean that companies, for the time being, cannot be struck off by Companies House for compliance issues.

The [government's guidance](#) states that this action "will give businesses affected by the coronavirus outbreak the time they need to update their records and help them avoid being struck off the register". The guidance further states "companies issued with a late filing penalty due to COVID-19 will have appeals treated sympathetically".

This is all in addition to the government's announcements last month aimed at helping companies ride out this difficult period, including:

- offering a 3-month extension to the deadline for filing accounts;
- introducing legislation for companies to hold AGMs remotely; and
- suspending wrongful trading laws for directors.

Although company directors will welcome such measures they must bear in mind that none change the winding up process that creditors might initiate against companies owing debts.

DISCLAIMER

The above is not intended to be legal advice. Specialist advice should be sought for individual cases where necessary.

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