

WEEKLY BRIEFING

16 July 2021



COVID-19 UPDATE

The UK has seen a rise in the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 with official figures up 32.6% from last week according to the Office of National Statistics. The UK vaccination scheme has continued its roll out with now 87.5% of the adult population and 67.1% having had their first dose and both doses respectively. Health secretary, Sajid Javid, says the government is "on track" to beat its target to offer every adult a first dose by 19 July. As a nation, the UK "continues to be among those with the highest vaccination rates globally". The take-up for those above 40 is well over 90%, according to data from the Office for National Statistics. Millions of the most vulnerable may also be offered a third, booster vaccination from September, if the data suggests they are needed. A decision to vaccinate all 12 to 17-year-old children is unlikely to be recommended by UK vaccine experts imminently.

From 19 July, England is going ahead with the removal of almost all legal restrictions on social contact, but some guidance will remain. Professor Chris Whitty said it is crucial that from 19 July in England, people "take things incredibly slowly" - adding that he anticipated most people would still take precautions. Nightclubs will be allowed to reopen for the first time since March 2020 and capacity limits will be removed for all venues and events. There will no longer be any limits on how many people can meet and the one metre plus distancing rule will also end. The legal requirement to wear face coverings in some enclosed public places will expire, but health secretary, Sajid Javid, has previously said masks would still be "expected and recommended" in crowded indoor areas. THE UK's two largest supermarkets, Tesco and Sainsbury's, have also said they will continue to ask shoppers to wear masks from Monday to protect staff and shoppers. Professor Whitty further cautioned "we are not by any means out of the woods yet", but added that "we are in much better shape due to the vaccine programme".

From 17 July, Wales is set to move fully into coronavirus alert level one. It means a raft of lockdown restrictions will be eased including a significant increase in the number of people who can meet in private homes and attend indoor events. Wales

will also take the first step into alert level zero as the limits on the numbers of people who can meet in public places or at events will be removed allowing outdoor festivals to go ahead. Outdoor premises and events will also have greater flexibility around physical distancing. First Minister Mark Drakeford said it is intended the country will move fully into alert level zero where most, but not all, restrictions will be eased from August 7.

Lockdown restrictions in Scotland will also be eased from 19 July, Nicola Sturgeon has said but with certain conditions still in place. The first minister told the Scottish Parliament that the country would move to Level 0 but face masks will remain "mandatory". Level 0 allows up to eight people to meet indoors from four households and 10 people from four households can meet in an indoor public place. It also means pubs and restaurants can stay open until midnight, scrapping 11pm curfew. Ms Sturgeon said physical distancing in Level 0 will reduce to one metre in all indoor public settings and outdoors. She went on to say that it is a time for "continued caution" and that lifting all restrictions would put people at greater threat and would "risk the imposition of shielding by default".

In Ireland, the government has passed indoor hospitality legislation. The Irish government has narrowly won a vote on its plan to allow people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to eat and drink in indoor venues. New legislation to set up a vaccine verification system passed in the Dáil (Irish parliament) by 74 votes to 68. The aim is to allow restaurants, pubs and cafes to serve customers indoors if they can prove they have received both jabs or have recovered from COVID-19. Opponents expressed concern that it discriminates against the unvaccinated. However, the Health Bill has now passed all its stages in the Dáil and will be put before the Seanad for consideration. Proof of vaccination will soon be required for customers to enter indoor venues, either paper documentation or via an EU digital COVID-19 certificate.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, says UK is bouncing back as payrolls soar in June

Rishi Sunak said Britain's economy was bouncing back after the latest official figures showed the number of workers on payrolls surged in June by 356,000. While the number of employees remained more than 200,000 below the level before the start of the pandemic, data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed the easing of restrictions on businesses had an impact on hiring in recent months. Evidence of an improving labour market was also provided by an increase in job vacancies to 862,000 after a rise of 241,000 between April and June. With firms struggling to find workers in some sectors, vacancies are 10% higher than they were

in early 2020. Annual pay growth in the three months ending in May stood at 7.3% up from 5.7% in April. line with the position in England and Scotland" from 19 July.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM UPDATE

Traffic light system updated by UK government

Bulgaria and Hong Kong will be added to England's green travel list next week, while Croatia and Taiwan will move to the "green watchlist". Transport secretary Grant Shapps confirmed the update to the government's traffic light system on Wednesday evening (14 July). Changes will take effect from 04.00 BST on Monday (19 July). Meanwhile, Spain's Balearic Islands have been relegated to the UK government's amber list, just three weeks after they were placed on the green watchlist. However, from Monday, fully vaccinated arrivals from amber list destinations will no longer have to self-isolate for 10 days at home upon their return. Unvaccinated arrivals from the Balearics will continue to have to self-isolate for 10 days, and submit tests on days two and eight of their return.

Scotland and Wales confirms amber list quarantine move from 19 July

Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon has confirmed fully vaccinated travellers returning from amber list countries will no longer have to quarantine from 19 July. The move brings Scotland into line with England, where the UK government announced last week that fully vaccinated people would be exempt from quarantine when arriving from amber countries from 19 July. Sturgeon made the announcement during a special online session of the Scottish parliament to give an update on lifting restrictions from next week. "From Monday 19 July, self-isolation will no longer be required for people arriving from countries on the amber list, providing they are fully vaccinated through a UK vaccination programme and take a PCR test on the second day after arrival," said Sturgeon. "We will continue to take a precautionary approach to the inclusion of countries on the amber list, and notwithstanding this change, we do continue to advise against non-essential overseas travel at this time."

Meanwhile, Wales is to also follow suit in no longer requiring fully vaccinated people to quarantine when returning from amber list countries. First minister Mark Drakeford made the announcement on Wednesday (14 July) when he revealed Wales' latest plans to remove Covid-19 restrictions. He said the removal of the amber list quarantine requirement for fully vaccinated people would bring Wales "in line with the position in England and Scotland" from 19 July.

France reveals proof of vaccination policy for UK arrivals

France has announced its requirements for British visitors to prove their COVID-19

vaccination status. Currently the NHS QR code is not recognised by France's TousAntiCovid app, so UK arrivals will have to present an NHS certificate as proof. Fully vaccinated visitors do not need an essential reason to visit France and will not have to quarantine, but they do have to provide the correct documents to prove their vaccination status.

Travel vacancies jump by 42% in June as job market recovers

The number of travel jobs has risen to its highest level since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, according to the latest data from C&M Travel Recruitment. Figures from June, compiled by C&M, revealed travel vacancies during June increased to their highest point since February 2020, when job placements also went up by 50% from the previous high recorded in March and May 2021. Vacancies rose by 42% in June compared with May, which had been the previous high point during the pandemic.

Brand USA Travel Week to return to London in October 2021

Brand USA will host its third annual Travel Week in London in October to bring together the travel trade from the U.S. and Europe during a four-day "in person" event. The U.S. destination marketing organisation will host Brand USA Travel Week Europe 2021 at County Hall in central London from 25-28 October. The event launched in 2019 and held a virtual version last year. Tom Garzilli, chief marketing officer at Brand USA, said: "The groundbreaking initiative and annual event has improved the way the U.S. travel community engages with the European market. As we begin to re-enter key markets, Brand USA Travel Week Europe will play an integral role in strengthening industry relationships and facilitating business opportunities."

Heathrow urges action to reopen more destinations

Heathrow has again urged the government to open up more destinations as it publishes latest passenger figures. Heathrow estimates the continued closure of transatlantic links is costing the UK economy "at least £23 million a day". The airport said: "Passenger traffic from Heathrow to the U.S. is down by around 80%, whereas the EU, which has reopened unilaterally with the U.S., has seen traffic recover to only around 40% down." Heathrow chief executive John Holland-Kaye said: "While it's fantastic news that some double-vaccinated passengers will no longer need to quarantine from amber countries, ministers need to extend this policy to U.S and EU nationals if they want to kick-start the economic country."

Calls to extend furlough for travel industry

A cross-party group of more than 70 parliamentarians have come together to call for an extension to the furlough scheme for workers in the travel, tourism and aviation sectors. The call has been led by MP for Crawley, where Gatwick airport is,

Henry Smith, who is chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the future of aviation. Smith said extending furlough beyond September to March 2022 would prevent “significant job losses”. Starting this month, the furlough scheme has been tapered, with employers having to cover an additional 10% of furloughed employees wages, rising to 20% in August and September before the scheme ends.

ABTA partners with “spit test” specialist Halo

ABTA has agreed a new deal with Covid-19 test provider Halo, which offers saliva-based testing. UK-based biotechnology firm Halo becomes just one of five testing companies to achieve partner status with Abta and is the first to offer a “spit not swab” PCR test. The firm already works with travel brands such as British Airways, Sofitel, Cathay Pacific and Hilton Hotels and Resorts. ABTA said the partnership with Halo would give members “clearer access to trusted COVID-19 tests and information on the need for different testing procedures ahead of foreign travel”.

British Airways - British Airways (BA) is introducing a new service allowing passengers to order snacks and drinks directly to their seats using a digital platform while in the air. The inflight digital ordering platform is being launched on some short-haul flights from Monday (19 July), and will run alongside the existing Buy Before You Fly menu which allows passengers to order from the full Speedbird Cafe menu ahead of their flight. Tom Stevens, BA’s director of brand and customer experience, said: “We know that customers like being able to purchase their food in advance of travel and guarantee their first choice, however we also understand the importance of an extra cup of tea or a gin and tonic, in the moment. We think that this new digital ordering proposition, coupled with our pre-purchase option is a winning combination, catering for everyone’s needs.” The new service will initially operate on “selected” flights for passengers travelling in economy. It will then be rolled out to BA’s entire short-haul network from Heathrow.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Jet2 - Jet2.com and Jet2holidays will up capacity and restore routes to Dubrovnik, Split and Bourgas with immediate effect after Croatia and Bulgaria were added to the UK government’s green list on Wednesday. The airline has also confirmed that it will restart its flight and holiday programmes from Edinburgh and Glasgow airports next week. The airline and operator will offer travel to amber list destinations after Scotland’s first minister Nicola Sturgeon on Tuesday (13 July) confirmed the government would ease its quarantine rules for fully vaccinated amber list arrivals from Monday (19 July). Steve Heapy, Jet2.com and Jet2holidays chief executive, branded the move “very welcome news” and “another positive step forward” for holidaymakers and the travel industry.

JetBlue - New York airline JetBlue has touched down at Heathrow for the first time ahead of the planned start of services next month. The airline undertook a “proving” flight for UK and U.S. authorities across the Atlantic using its new single-aisle Airbus. A JetBlue spokesperson said the 11 August start date for JFK services from Heathrow was “still valid”. This launch will be followed by a service to Gatwick from 29 September, both daily. A service to Boston from an unspecified London airport is due to begin next summer.

United Airlines - United Airlines has placed a conditional order for 100 electric aircraft, which it hopes will be ready to enter service in just five years time. United Airlines Ventures (UAV), United’s venture capital fund, has partnered with Breakthrough Energy Ventures (BEV) and Mesa Airlines to invest in Heart Aerospace, which is developing the 19-seat aircraft. The ES-19 will have a range of around 250 miles by the end of the decade, and United hopes to deploy the aircraft on its U.S. domestic network, “enabling low-cost, quiet and clean regional travel on a broad scale”.

TOUR OPERATOR UPDATE

easyJet Holidays - easyJet Holidays has added more capacity in Spain, Greece and Cyprus following the easing of restrictions on travel from 19 July. The fully vaccinated and under 18s will no longer have to self-isolate when they return to England or Scotland from amber list countries from 19 July, while FCDO advice has also changed for all three countries, prompting the operator to ramp up. A spokesperson confirmed increases to Spain included the Canary and Balearic islands. Garry Wilson, easyJet Holidays chief executive, said: “With summer back on, we’ve put even more holidays on sale to meet the demand.”

Trailfinders - Trailfinders has called for the government to take a series of measures to remove hurdles to travel and end “confusion” for passengers. The tour operator welcomed the government’s move to end quarantine for fully vaccinated travellers returning to England from amber list countries from next Monday. “However, hurdles and confusion remain, which must be addressed in the 15 July update to be fair to travellers,” said Trailfinders in a blog. The company calls for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) advice to “match” the traffic light status of destinations as travelling against all non-essential travel advice “means most travelling without insurance”. Trailfinders also wants all testing to be scrapped for fully vaccinated travellers when they return from a green list country.

TUI - The UK’s largest tour operator TUI UK has announced it is moving to permanent “flexible” working for the company’s staff. Tui said it would offer “total

flexibility for colleagues as it shifts to a permanent flexible working approach” and has created a new role of workspace director to implement this policy.

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL UPDATE

Ministers to discuss whether ID should be mandatory for new social media accounts

In a bid to halt online abuse, the UK government will debate a law that would force people opening new social media accounts to prove their identity. A petition stating: "Make it a legal requirement when opening a new social media account, to provide a verified form of ID" has received almost 700,000 signatures. While algorithms have been developed to do everything from identify misinformation, to highlighting when someone is talking about COVID-19, more needs to be invested in reducing online abuse.

TikTok becomes the first non-Facebook owned app to reach 3 billion installs

Despite the launches of various competing apps and functions, and a rising push to steal away its top stars, TikTok continues to grow, proving its enduring popularity and resilience, as it takes on bigger players like Facebook. TikTok was the most downloaded and highest-grossing non-gaming app globally in the first half of 2021, reaching nearly 383 million first-time installs with an estimated \$919.2 million in consumer spending. The app has now surpassed 3 billion installs when you also take into consideration the Chinese version.

Twitter's new business profiles get a step closer

Twitter's new business profiles look to be getting closer to a full launch, with a new 'convert to professional' option spotted in testing. The new process will ask users to select a business category for their presence, and assign themselves as either a 'Business' or 'Creator' profile. This will allow businesses, non-profits, publishers, and creators to display specific information such as additional contact details directly on their profile. In future, Twitter's professional profiles could also incorporate other options, like a product display panel or an image gallery.

MICE UPDATE

Association of Black Event Professionals launches in UK

After commissioning a report that found there were no black board members at 15 event trade bodies, a group of black events professionals have launched The Association of Black Event Professionals. The 15 organisations highlighted in the report are: Business Visits and Events Partnership (BVEP), Event Marketing Association (EMA), Event & Visual Communication Association (EVCOM), Meetings Industry Association (MIA), The Hotel Booking Agents Association (HBAA), The

Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO), Association of Event Organisers (AEO), Association of Event Venue (AEV), Association for Events Management Education (AEME), Event Supplier and Services Association (ESSA), The Association of Festival Organisers (AFO), Production Services Association (PSA), The Association of Independent Festivals (AIF), the Association of Independent Promotions (AIP) and The Concert Promoters Association (CPA).

LIGHTER NOTE

It's Marcus Gnashford! First baby beaver to be born on Exmoor in 400 years is named Rashford after the England footballer. See it [here](#).