

# WEEKLY BRIEFING

27 August 2021



## COVID-19 UPDATE

This week, the UK has seen a rise in the number of people diagnosed with COVID-19, with numbers up by 12.1% and daily numbers averaging 25,888 people. Hospital admissions have increased slightly, with deaths rising by 14.2% this week compared to last week. Despite witnessing a rise, these figures are not unexpected or causing concern.

Nearly 48 million people in the UK have now had their first dose of a vaccine and just over 42 million have been fully vaccinated. This means that just shy of 88% of the adult population has now had at least one dose of the vaccine, with 77% receiving two doses.

The Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation (JCVI) is considering whether to recommend vaccination for children over the age of 12. No decision has been made yet, but is expected imminently.

There has been disruption to the Republic of Ireland's Health IT data system this week, but as of 25 August a total of 6,705,120 vaccinations had been administered and 3,277,177 adults are fully vaccinated.

## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### Evacuation of UK citizens from Afghanistan

The fall-out from the Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan and the subsequent evacuation of British citizens and Afghan refugees has dominated the political scene in the UK this week. Prime minister Boris Johnson has claimed that over 15,000 people have been airlifted out of Kabul so far, with 1,000 people expected to leave today (27 August), with the overwhelming majority of Afghans eligible.

### **Staff shortages slow UK economic recovery**

In business, there is growing concern over the impact a shortage of workers and supply of raw materials is having on the economic recovery. The staff shortages are being blamed on both identified COVID -19 close contacts being required to self-isolate and the impact of Brexit on the normal levels of seasonal staff in sectors such as hospitality and agriculture. The shortage of HGV lorry drivers is having a particularly negative impact on retail and hospitality supply chains and stocks, with the government being urged to act by introducing a temporary visa scheme.

## **TRAVEL AND TOURISM UPDATE**

### **UK traffic light system updates**

On 26 August, the UK government updated the UK travel traffic light system. Seven countries moved from amber to the green list: the Azores (Portugal), Canada, Denmark, Finland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania and Switzerland. "Travellers from these destinations will not have to quarantine regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated but will still need to take pre-departure and day two tests and complete a passenger locator form," said the Department for Transport (DfT) in a statement. Montenegro and Thailand are the only countries moving from amber to red in the latest update. The changes come into effect at 04:00 BST on 30 August.

### **WTTC urges U.S. to fully approve AstraZeneca vaccine**

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) says it is "crucial" the U.S. government formally approves the AstraZeneca vaccine to help restore transatlantic travel. The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) this week gave full approval to the Pfizer vaccine, but does not currently recognise AstraZeneca in the same way. It means that even if the U.S. reopens its borders to UK travellers, the many who have had the AstraZeneca vaccine may face quarantine restrictions.

### **London Gatwick Airport reveals plans to boost capacity**

London Gatwick has revealed plans to bring its second runway into "routine use" as a way to increase capacity. The airport said the plan would allow it to handle up to 75 million passengers per year by 2038, in comparison, Gatwick catered for 46.6 million passengers in 2019 before the COVID-19 crisis caused traffic to slump to just 10.2 million in 2020. Gatwick chief executive Stewart Wingate said: "While we are currently experiencing low passenger and air traffic volumes due to the global pandemic, we are confident that Gatwick will not only fully recover to previous passenger levels, but has the potential to continue to grow back into one of Europe's premier airports."

### **Minimal vaccinated travellers are testing positive for COVID-19**

Only four out of 100,000 fully vaccinated holidaymakers tested positive for COVID-19 on their return to the UK in July. The Telegraph reports that the data, being studied by health secretary Sajid Javid, shows that at the end of last month only 0.4% of vaccinated travellers arriving back from holiday at UK airports had contracted the virus. Single vaccinated arrivals were twice as likely to test positive, representing 0.8% of arrivals.

### **New poll raises prospect of extended summer peak**

New research from Holiday Extras shows that more people are planning to holiday in September than in August. Holiday Extras surveyed more than 330,000 consumers about when they next planned to go away. While 39,000 planned an August holiday, the most popular month this year was September – with more than 45,000 respondents planning a break. A majority 58% of those who have already been abroad this year are planning to do so again before the end of 2021. Of those who travelled in 2020, half intend to venture abroad in the last remaining months of this year. The extended summer holiday trend looks set to continue for the rest of 2021, with 16% of those questioned planning to escape the UK in November and December.

## **SOCIAL AND DIGITAL UPDATE**

### **Instagram to replace swipe-up links on Stories**

As part of its ongoing effort to improve the Stories experience, Instagram will switch the current 'swipe up' link option with a new 'link sticker', later this month. The move will create a streamlined Stories experience and give users more creative control with the placement and sizing to garner maximum impact. Instagram users can also expect to see increased engagement with this update as followers can leave quick reactions and replies on frames with link stickers, whereas at present, users can't receive any feedback on those that have a "swipe up" link. With rumours that this update might roll out to accounts with fewer than 10,000 followers, it opens up a number of new doors for content creators and businesses.

### **TikTok is testing longer video uploads**

As TikTok continues to expand and evolve, some users now have the option of uploading videos up to five minutes in length, which could spark a major shift in platform usage. TikTok has already extended its video length limit multiple times, first allowing users to upload 60 second clips (up from 15 seconds originally), then expanding to three minutes in July this year. The longer time limits allow for more creative capacity, and will also enable TikTok to insert more ad slots. This would put TikTok on a more direct footing with video rivals including YouTube, Facebook and

IGTV.

## MICE UPDATE

### **Government reports no COVID-19 transmissions at pilot business events**

There were no reported transmissions of COVID-19 at either of the business events that took place as part of the government's Events Research Programme. The Change Business for Good event at ACC Liverpool and the Home and Gift Buyers Festival at Harrogate Convention Centre did not report any cases who acquired infection around the time of either event. The data does not necessarily mean that there were no transmissions at either event, as figures less than five were suppressed, but it does mean that transmissions were very close to, if not zero at both events.

Additionally, data from the 37 pilot events that made up the Events Research Programme, including sporting events, music concerts and theatre, found case numbers were "largely in line with or below" community infection rates. Culture secretary Oliver Dowden, said the data shows major events can be conducted safely.

## LIGHTER NOTE

A family's mission, which they chose to accept, led to an encounter with Hollywood royalty when none other than Tom Cruise arrived by helicopter in their garden. See it [here](#).