



### **The way out of lockdown**

- On Friday, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced his plans for **changes to the Job Retention Scheme**.
- There will be no change until July.
- From August, the Government will continue to pay 80% (no change) of salaries, but employers will have to pay NI and pensions contributions.
- From **September**, the **Government 's share will decrease to 70%**, while employers will be expected to pay 10% (plus NI and pension).
- From **October**, the **Government's contribution will decrease further to 60%** and employers will contribute 20% (plus NI and pension).
- From 1st July, employers will be able to bring back furloughed **employees on a part-time basis**. In this case, employers will pay for the days of work, while the Government will pay for the at-home days.
- Employers will have until **10th June** to add any employees to the furlough scheme; after this date, no more furloughed employees will be accepted.
- From this week, up to six people from different households will be able to meet while staying outdoors and 2 metres apart, in a further relaxing of lockdown measures in England.
- A new round of applications for **grants for self-employed people** will open in August and will allow applicants to receive financial support equalling 70% of their pre-lockdown income.

### **The new NHS Test and Trace service launched**

It is hoped the service will help identify, contain and control COVID-19, reduce the spread of the virus and ultimately save lives. From last week, anyone who tests positive for Coronavirus will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and will need to share information about their recent interactions. This could include household members, people with whom they have been in direct contact, or within two metres for more than 15 minutes. People identified as having been in close contact with someone who has a positive test must stay at home for 14 days, even if they do not have symptoms, to stop unknowingly spreading the virus. A package of £300 million of new funding has also been made available to local authorities to work with NHS Test and Trace to develop local outbreak control plans, building on the Councils have done so far to respond to Coronavirus across the UK. Essentially, your role will be to manage local outbreaks through preventative measures and also stopping the virus 'finding a host' through containment. More detail is expected soon – including what Councils share of the funding will be – but plans will be expected to focus on containing potential outbreaks in places such as workplaces, housing complexes, care homes and schools, ensuring testing capacity is deployed effectively. The message now appears to be that we can only beat COVID-19 through local



leadership and you will need to work at pace to develop your local outbreak control plan. The NAC will bring you further information as soon as they can.

### **Red-wall towns worst hit by lockdown job losses**

Industrial heartlands are at the sharp end of a surge in job losses, fuelling fears that the lockdown is undermining the government's pledge to level up the economy.

Workers are being made redundant in large numbers and vacancies are shrinking across the country but areas that were struggling before the crisis have been disproportionately hit, according to the Institute for Employment Studies.

In findings that lay bare the depth of damage to deprived areas, there are close to 12 unemployed workers for every job in industrial legacy towns. This is up from less than five in March.

The data suggests that the lockdown has made existing inequalities worse. Low skilled, low paid workers living in deprived areas have taken the biggest hit. Economists said that the government would have to make difficult decisions to ensure that it does not renege on its promise to "red wall" voters.

### **Public health officials accuse ministers of 'misjudging risk' as lockdown measures are eased across England**

Senior public health officials have accused ministers of "misjudging the balance of risk" as a wave of coronavirus lockdown measures are eased in England from Monday.

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) said it was "increasingly concerned" that the Government was lifting "too many restrictions, too quickly".

The ADPH said the Government's "room for manoeuvre" in easing lockdown measures while keeping the reproduction rate of the virus, known as R, below 1, remained "tight".

### **Rishi Sunak set for July stimulus package to stave off recession**

Ministers are preparing to unveil an economic stimulus package in July, in an attempt to mitigate what is expected to be the biggest recession in living memory following the coronavirus crisis.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak is developing proposals to pump money into training schemes and infrastructure projects, as well as providing help for technology companies, according to government insiders.

Officials confirmed on Sunday that plans were being drawn up for a "fiscal event" in July, but said the announcement would not constitute a Budget.



Some Number 10 officials are understood to be pushing for the national infrastructure strategy to be repackaged as spending that will contribute to Britain's economic recovery after the Covid-19 crisis.

Some of the spending is likely to be targeted at so-called red-wall constituencies in the Midlands and northern England that the Conservatives snatched off Labour at the December election.

### **UK hospitals to trial five new drugs in search for coronavirus treatment**

Five new drugs are to be trialled in 30 hospitals across the country in the race to find a treatment for Covid-19, it has emerged.

Just days after global trials of hydroxychloroquine, the drug promoted by Donald Trump as a cure, were halted, British scientists are looking to sign up hundreds of patients for trials of medicines they hope will prevent people becoming ill enough to need intensive care or ventilators.

They range from drugs such as Heparin, which is used for blood thinning, to therapies still in clinical trial for conditions such as muscular, lung and blood disorders, which have evidence of potent anti-viral or anti-inflammatory properties.

The studies are part of the Accord (accelerating Covid-19 research and development) programme involving doctors and scientists, industry, the NHS the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation.

### **Plans to reopen high streets revealed**

The Government has revealed a range of safety measures councils can take to enable customers to maintain social distancing when shops reopen in two weeks. Recommendations include 'queue zones' outside stores with spray markings and temporary barriers, the widening of pavements, and banning or limiting the number of cars driving down high streets. Signs reminding shoppers to follow social distancing rules by staying 2m apart will also be erected. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the Government "expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts", adding: "In the new world pedestrians will need more space."

### **Middlesbrough champions regional lockdown measures**

Mayor of **Middlesbrough** Andy Preston has expressed a desire for regional powers to control the spread of COVID-19, saying it is "blindingly obvious that a country the size of England, with a broad range of R rates, should not have a one-size-fits-all policy on softening or toughening lockdown". He added: "I'm really concerned about the potential for a second wave. We need the ability to turn up and turn down our degree of lockdown on a hyperlocal basis if we discover it in a particular building, care home or street". The current top four council areas with the highest confirmed case rates are all in the North East - **Sunderland, Gateshead, South Tyneside** and Middlesbrough. South Teesside's director of public health, Mark Adams, said: "We need to have a slightly different approach in Middlesbrough and across the North East, one that's potentially a little bit more stringent because although it's coming down we've still got a high infection rate."

**Children’s Commissioner calls for summer catch-up classes**

Children’s Commissioner Anne Longfield has urged ministers to set up summer camps for the most vulnerable students during July and August to help them catch up on the schoolwork they have missed during lockdown. The Government is understood to be considering the plans, as well as a “catch up premium” - where schools are given extra funding to spend on initiatives for disadvantaged pupils.

**Minister approves Yorkshire Energy Park**

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has given the go ahead for a £200m energy park in East Yorkshire. Developers say the project could create over 4,000 jobs and provide a significant boost to the region’s economy following the coronavirus pandemic. Plans for the former **Hull Council** owned aerodrome site were approved by councillors six to five, at a meeting in November, overturning a recommendation for refusal by planning officers. There was a potential call in as a departure from the Local Plan, but a letter to Cllr John Dennis - who has campaigned against the scheme - said Mr Jenrick is “satisfied that the application should be determined at a local level.”

*Up to six friends or relatives will be able to gather in parks and gardens from Monday, two metres apart, Boris Johnson said last week in a cautious easing of lockdown restrictions in England. The Prime Minister announced the latest modest easing of the lockdown at the daily Coronavirus briefing, though the chief scientific adviser – Sir Patrick Vallance – struck a markedly more cautious tone, stressing the fact that the infection rate, or R, remains “close to 1”. COVID-19 media messaging can be confusing at times and I don’t wish to sound like a broken record, but we are absolutely not out of danger yet and it is really important we all continue to adhere to social distancing rules and to stay at home as much as possible. These are unsettling times and COVID-19 is clearly impacting our personal and professional lives, and those that we love.*

**Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher****Equalities Officer - NAC**