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### News

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# Covid restriction-free event trial praised after just 15 cases recorded of 58,000 attendees

Kate Nicholls, CEO of UKHospitality, said the trial was a “positive” step forwards for the sector





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**By Molly Blackall**

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The UK's leading hospitality body has welcomed the results of a trial of restriction-free events, which saw just 15 coronavirus cases recorded out of 58,000 attendees.

Events including the Brit awards and the FA cup final were hosted without masks or social distancing, as part of a government trial into the safety of large scale events. Attendees were required to produce a negative test result prior to the events, and their health was tracked afterwards.

Kate Nicholls, CEO of UKHospitality, welcomed the results as a “positive” step forwards for the sector, which has been badly hit by coronavirus restrictions.

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“The results of these test events are certainly positive news, and should start to unlock the safe return of business conferences, festivals, nightclubs, concerts and larger weddings, helping people safely return to normal life from 21st June,” Ms Nicholls told i.

“Our industry is expert in safely producing world-class, large-scale events, and these welcome figures show that the huge investment and hard work of operators to protect customers during the pandemic has paid off.”

However, Ms Nicholls said it was imperative that the Government stick to its plan for the easing of restrictions, which would see hospitality venues allowed to reopen in full from 21 June.

“We urge the Government to ease all restrictions from 21 June in order to protect jobs in the sector and to allow us to help power the UK’s economic and social recovery,” she said.

Jane Pendlebury, chief executive of HOSPA, the hospitality professionals association, said the results “really are fantastic to hear”.

“The emergence of the Indian variant in recent weeks has left the hospitality industry feeling very anxious. We’ve had the rug pulled out from under us so many times over the past 18 months that there’s enormous trepidation it will happen again as we approach 21 June. The news then that Government Covid trials have been such a success is sure to set off a huge ripple of relief throughout our sector.”

Pendlebury said she hoped the news meant that a full reopening on 21 June was now more likely.

Michael Kill, CEO of the Night Time Industries Association, said the results showed “that these environments are no different than retail & supermarkets, which are currently open and are able to trade.”

“The Government needs to have confidence in the sector’s ability to deliver safe events, and continue to stand strong with the roadmap and ensure we are open on the 21st June without fail, ending the suffering of some of the hardest hit industries across the UK.”

“Opening the doors of these businesses is the only way that we are going to be able to save these industries and safeguard the amazing people that work within them.”

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden told the Evening Standard that no cases were recorded after the Brit awards earlier this month, which saw **2,500 key workers enjoy live music** from stars including Dua Lipa without masks or social distancing measures. The FA Cup final at



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Following 17 days of the World Snooker Championships, which took place indoors in Sheffield, four cases were recorded. There were just two cases following a 5,900-attendee outdoor music festival in Sefton.

The results of the trial suggest that clubbing poses the highest risk for spreading coronavirus, but incidences were still low. Of 6,000 party-goers who enjoyed **two nights of clubbing in Liverpool**, nine cases were recorded.

Mr Dowden also announced a second round of trials, with bigger crowds, at large scale venues, to develop a clearer picture of the risks of reopening.

The cabinet minister praised the initial results as a “real success” and said that he was “hopeful” that venues could open at full capacity on 21 June, as planned in the Government’s roadmap out of lockdown. **i**

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