

COVID-19 roadmap, immunity passports and huge layoffs at Uber and Airbnb

Maddyness provides you with a quick digest of three news items to keep you up to date with the startup scene, emerging trends and other noteworthy stories.

COVID-19: A roadmap to reopen schools and shops

Similar to other European countries, Boris Johnson will encourage more people to go back to work if they can do so safely as he prepares to ease the coronavirus lockdown on Monday. Boris Johnson will use his much-anticipated address to the nation this Sunday to lay out his step-by-step strategy for phase two of the shutdown.

As part of his announcements, he will inform people if they can take exercise either on their own or with members of their household. Many businesses however will have to wait longer to reopen. The Government's actions will be based on predictions supplied by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies on how much the rate of infection may increase under different scenarios.

The government is also preparing to drop the "stay at home" message after Public Health England told councils to prepare to remove it from websites.

Local government communications teams have been told to expect a “transition to a new phase of the campaign”. Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said work on building sites is “slowly starting to resume”, with the government considering how to make it easier to walk or cycle to work.

5 UK startups pitching for COVID-19 immunity passports

The UK is planning to roll out COVID-19 immunity passports with five companies currently pitching their visions for how the system could work. Within the next year, the government could possibly implement COVID-19 immunity passports while Boris Johnson is trying to find a way to end the country’s quarantine, and this is one of the ways to do it. I.D. verification startups are trying to figure out how people who have recovered from the virus can show proof that they are immune to the virus and can resume a sense of normality in their lives outside of the lockdown.

Once people test negative in COVID-19, they are given more freedom and will be able to visit shops, offices or even friends and relatives. For this to work, work is required to combine official documents, like passports, driving licenses, facial recognition, QR codes with test results. NHSX, which is the innovation arm of the UK’s health service, has published the first batch of preliminary proposals by private companies pitching their ideas to the Science and Technology Committee.

Read also

ID and facial recognition specialist Onfido raises £80M

Uber and Airbnb to sack a combined total of 5,600 employees

Last week, Uber disclosed plans to lay off 3,700 employees (around 14% of its total workforce). In a document, the company states that the job loss is part of a planned reduction in operating expenses:

“...in response to the economic challenges and uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the company’s business.” – Uber

While Uber hasn’t suspended operations altogether, the company has taken a massive hit to its bottom line as governments have issued “stay at home” orders for non-essential workers.

In a letter to staff (see Tweet below), Dara Khosrowshahi, Uber’s CEO noted that the cuts will come from community operations and recruiting. Uber will also be closing around 40% of its Greenlight locations used for in-person driver assistance.

Layoffs have now hit Uber, with about 14 percent losing jobs today. Dara’s note to employees:
pic.twitter.com/6kxpstqhCc

— kate conger (@kateconger) May 6, 2020

Similarly, Airbnb announced that they will lay off around a quarter of its workforce, due to the massive decline in revenue. In a note handed to TechCrunch by Airbnb’s CEO and co-founder Brian Chesky, the company said that 1,900 employees will be laid off (25.3% of its 7,500 workers). The redundancies will impact a number of internal product groups, including *Transportation* and *Airbnb Studios*, efforts that will be placed on hold, and its *Hotels and Lux* work, which will be reviewed and scaled back.