

With vaccinations being rolled out rapidly, there have been numerous calls from the business lobby for the UK lockdown to be lifted sooner than the dates set out in the official government roadmap for reopening. The mental health costs and economic effects on lower income, younger workers and minority groups has been disproportionate. Before the rollout of vaccines, the main policy to control COVID-19 was the use of social distancing measures and lockdowns. These have been effective in bringing down infections and deaths, but in our view the political appetite for imposing such measures may have waned in some quarters. As well as this tragic toll, the pandemic has also had severe economic effects. There have been more than 120,000 deaths directly due to the virus in the UK – one of the highest in the world. The UK's GDP dropped by 10% in 2020. In the UK, London and other areas of the south of England have seen more of a recovery than other parts of the country.