

End pingdemic now – it's crippling London's economy, say business leaders

Desperate [London](#) business leaders have called for the immediate [scrapping of self-isolation rules](#) to end the “pingdemic hell” they say is crippling the capital's [economy](#).

Thousands of [workers](#) and customers are daily being forced to isolate after being alerted by the NHS app following contact with people infected with [Covid](#). Bosses point to Scotland where similar restrictions are being relaxed on Monday, a full week before they are due to end for fully-vaccinated people south of the border on August 16.

[Although numbers began to slow in late July](#), there were still almost 400,000 test and trace alerts in England and Wales in the last week of the month. Business owners say the sheer volume of staff still made to stay at home is making their lives almost impossible, despite a tweak to the app announced earlier this week to make it less sensitive.

Richard Burge, chief executive of London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said: “The Government should already have put in place a system whereby the need to self-isolate depends on a test result. Scotland are moving to such a system from Monday, yet many of London's businesses face a further week of adverse impact from staff, largely needlessly, self-isolating.”

Simon Thomas, chief executive of the Hippodrome Casino in Leicester Square, also called on the Prime Minister “to free business from pingdemic hell with immediate effect”. The problem has hit businesses from all sectors including supermarkets, train operators and car manufacturers and has been particularly acute in London's hospitality sector.

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Kate Nicholls, chief executive of trade body UKHospitality, said: "Team members who are fully-vaccinated should be able to test now after a ping and, subject to a negative result, carry on with their lives. For those not fully-vaccinated – a significant proportion of our relatively young workforce – two negative tests should be sufficient to return to work."

Ros Morgan, chief executive of the Heart of London Business Alliance, said she wanted "an end to restrictions immediately". "This will provide a lifeline to central London's businesses, too many of the which are now being forced to shut or scale back their operations."