**EMC POLICY BRIEF**

**A weekly roundup of local government news in the East Midlands brought to you by**

**East Midlands Councils**

29 August 2025

Top items this week:

* LRF Pandemic response exercise
* Preparing for the Renters’ Rights reforms
* New Grant Funding opportunity for ESOL in the East Midlands
* Tender opportunity for ESOL in the East Midlands
* Coaching Opportunities
* East Midlands Communications Network

**LRF Pandemic response exercise**

All of England’s Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) will take part in Exercise Pegasus, a nationwide simulation designed to test how the country would respond to a future pandemic. Running from September to November, it will involve government officials, councils, and emergency services.

The exercise follows findings from the Covid-19 Inquiry that local government had not been adequately involved in previous planning. Unlike Exercise Cygnus in 2016, where only eight of 42 LRFs took part, every LRF will now be engaged. Ministers have described Pegasus as one of the most comprehensive exercises of its kind, aiming to assess both local and national response plans.

**Local councils and charities urged to help more people get online with £9.5m Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund**

Yesterday (13 August), the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) [launched the Digital Inclusion Innovation fund](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/local-councils-and-charities-urged-to-help-more-people-get-online-with-95-million-government-fund) (£9.5m) to tackle digital exclusion and support economic growth.

The fund aims to help the 1.6m people in the UK who remain offline, and the 7.9m lacking basic digital skills. Local councils, charities and research organisations in England can apply for grants ranging from £25,000 to £500,000 to deliver initiatives such as workshops and device donation schemes. The devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will determine their own arrangements for the distribution of funding to best support local digital inclusion initiatives.

The initiative builds on the Digital Inclusion Action Plan and supports the government’s Plan for Change. By empowering local organisations, the fund seeks to improve employment opportunities, accessibility to essential services and reduce the cost-of-living gap faced by digitally excluded individuals.

[Applications are now open and local organisations are encouraged to apply.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-inclusion-innovation-fund)

**Preparing for the Renters’ Rights reforms**

Operation Jigsaw is a network helping local councils prepare for the Renters’ Rights Bill. They have launched K-Hub, a new space to collaborate with your peers. Public sector employees can sign up to K-Hub for free. Through the tool, you can access updated information, guidance, and webinars on the Renters’ Rights Bill, all designed for a local council audience. You can also stay informed of upcoming in-person training events and provide feedback and suggestions.

[Sign up using your.gov.uk or equivalent email address here.](https://khub.net/group/jigsaw)

**Funding opportunity for ESOL in the East Midlands**
East Midlands Councils has received funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to increase and improve the provision of community-based ESOL. Training. Grants of up to £10,000 are available for VCSE groups in the region to provide English language training, build ESOL capacity, and upskill volunteer tutors.

[Funding now open to boost ESOL provision across the East Midlands](https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/funding-now-open-to-boost-esol-provision-across-the-east-midlands/)

**Tender opportunity for ESOL in the East Midlands**
We have launched a Tender opportunity for an organisation to provide technical support to ESOL forums, deliver strategic recommendations, convene a good practice event, and maintain online resources. More information can be found on our website here:

[Tender for the Provision of Support for the Regional Coordination of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) - East Midlands Councils](https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/tender/tender-for-the-provision-of-support-for-the-regional-coordination-of-english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-esol/)

**East Midlands Communications Network**

 The next LGcomms East Midlands regional network meeting will take place on Tuesday 23 September 2025 at Nottinghamshire County Hall. The session, open to communications professionals across the region, will focus on creative budget management. Members are also invited to suggest additional topics or agenda items for discussion by contacting Rachael.pengelly@emcouncils.gov.uk.

Book your space: <https://lgcomms.org.uk/event/lgcomms-east-midlands-regional-network-meeting-2/>