

LGA/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 21: 31st October to 13th November 2020

The LGA is providing COVID-19 advice which can be accessed via our [home page](#) you will see a range of information explaining our work with government on the [COVID19 Hub](#).

LGA workforce Team continues to provide workforce advice on COVID-19 [here](#)

Employment Advice can be accessed via the LGA Workforce Employee Relations Unit (ERU) the [latest bulletin](#) provides updates on a range of COVID-19 issues.

New National Restrictions in England

I'm sure these will be all too familiar now but here is a reminder of the official Government advice for England for the new national restrictions:

- [Guidance: new national restrictions from 5 November](#)
- [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(England\) \(No. 4\) Regulations 2020](#)

This includes clarification on the restrictions facing a number of council venues and services, including community centres and halls (which must close except for a limited number of exempt services), libraries (must close for general use but can remain open for click-and-collect and to provide some other services), outdoor playgrounds (can remain open), civil registration offices (can remain open) and waste and recycling centres (can remain open).

Vaccine Hope

[Preliminary analysis shows that the first potential vaccine against COVID-19](#) could effectively prevent more than 90 per cent of people from contracting the virus. The developers, Pfizer and BioNTech, plan to apply for emergency approval to use the vaccine by the end of the November. The Government has procured 40 million doses of this vaccine, which requires two doses, and we are currently awaiting the full safety data which will allow the medicines regulator to consider whether it can be made available to the public.

Once approved, a vaccination programme will begin for those most at risk, as currently recommended by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The [JCVI published interim advice](#) back in September on the groups that should be prioritised for vaccination, if and when a vaccine is available.

Testing Kits Issued to DPHs

The Prime Minister announced that test kits will be issued to over 50 directors of public health across England this week. Each will receive a batch of 10,000 antigen lateral flow devices as part of a new pilot to enable councils to start proactively testing asymptomatic individuals from priority and high-risk groups in local communities. The Government has published the list of 67 councils who will be receiving batches as part of the initial pilot, which will build on successful trials in Stoke-on-Trent, Liverpool and Lancashire.

Mass testing update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, briefed councillors and directors of public health in a webinar this week about the next stage of mass testing. He thanked everybody for their hard work and spoke about the rollout of Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) and other technologies

Mr Hancock also spoke about the huge opportunity of using LFT in social care and that the Government's goal was a return to the tiered system from 3 December, with directors of public health having a 'critical role' in the vaccination programme.

Local contact tracing Update & Case Studies

LGA's response to the latest weekly test and trace figures stressed the key role councils are playing, with local health protection teams reaching just over 99 per cent of contacts who were asked to self-isolate compared with around six out of 10 in the national system. To assist council teams in building local contact tracing capacity, the LGA have put together a series of case studies. These showcase some of the work being done and the lessons being learned as councils pick up cases from the national team when contact has not been established with infected individuals within 24 hours, and how they are using their local knowledge to successfully trace cases. Please do get in touch with Alexander.Saul@local.gov.uk to share any learning.

NHS Test and Trace in the workplace Updated 5th November

The Government has updated its guidance on NHS Test and Trace for employers, businesses and workers to reflect employers' legal duties around staff who are self-isolating.

Supporting vulnerable people

The Government has confirmed that the vast majority of clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people should now have received a letter with advice on the current national lockdown, with one final batch of letters being sent out this week. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has clarified advice for parents of CEV children advised not to attend school who are unable to work from home.

NJC Circular - COVID-19: new national restrictions (England)

The National Joint Council has issued a further [circular](#), this time in relation to working arrangements during the current period of national restrictions in England, for people classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and Clinically Vulnerable.

Winter funding package

[The Government announced a new package of measures to support children and families.](#)

This includes:

- a £170 million Winter Grant Scheme for councils in England to support children, families and the most vulnerable over winter
- the Holiday Activities and Food Programme will be expanded to cover the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021 and will be available to every child in every local authority in England.
- a pledge of additional funding of £16 million for food distribution charities

The Government has made clear that it has chosen to distribute this funding through councils as councils can best understand which groups need support and can ensure appropriate holiday support is provided. This is a positive recognition of the role of place-based leadership and these measures will help continue our work helping those who face hardship, including preventing holiday hunger.

Funerals Update

During the National Lockdown period, people are permitted to leave their homes to attend a funeral or religious, belief-based or ceremonial events that are linked to a funeral. On 10 November, government published revised [guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#) to reflect the new lockdown restrictions.

University students - “Student Travel Window” - 3-9 December

The Government has [published new guidance to support students to travel home](#) at the end of term, once the national restrictions end on 2 December. From 3 to 9 December, which will be known as the ‘student travel window’, students will be allowed to travel home on staggered departure dates set by universities, who will work with other institutions in the region to manage pressure on transport infrastructure. Tests will be offered to as many students as possible before they travel home, with universities in areas of high prevalence prioritised. Universities have been asked to move learning online by 9 December.

LGA Report Leisure Under Lockdown

The LGA has published a report on [Leisure under lockdown: how culture and leisure services responded to COVID-19](#) which includes a series of case studies showing how people used culture, sport and leisure to connect and take care of each other during the first lockdown, from virtual gyms, streamed library rhyme time sessions and lamppost artwork, to theatres operating as food banks and leisure staff taking shielding calls.

NHS Volunteers Winter Scheme

The [NHS Volunteer Responders](#) programme has a recruitment campaign for new and existing volunteers to respond to requests for direct support this winter. NHS England who run the scheme are keen to work collaboratively with local volunteering leads and are happy to meet local health, care and VCSE partners to discuss this in further detail. Meetings can be requested by emailing: england.covid-communities@nhs.net

Schools: new guidance to reflect new national restrictions

The Department for Education has [published new guidance for education and childcare settings to reflect the new national restrictions](#). The guidance covers early years and childcare, children’s social care, FE and apprenticeships as well as schools, where all pupils in year 7 and above, as well as adults, should now wear face coverings when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Previously this was only the case for those schools that were in areas where local alert level ‘high’ and ‘very high’.

DfE School leadership support

The [Department for Education \(DfE\)](#) is offering [time-limited, school-to-school recovery support to schools](#) and academy trusts, to help overcome the challenges faced or exacerbated as a result of the pandemic. Support will be in the form of dedicated time with an experienced system leader for up to five days, with additional support to schools with particularly challenging needs may also be provided. This may be of interest to schools and trusts in your area.

Early years: Update Guidance of reporting COVID Cases

Ofsted has [published guidance](#) informing all early years provision to contact them if there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 in their setting. They have also said that settings should contact them if they have had to close due to this.

Mental health: Hertfordshire County Council good practice

The social distancing and self-isolation restrictions that are required to get COVID-19 under control affect people's mental health. Understanding the behaviours that support compliance is therefore key to the success of reducing and preventing the spread of the virus. Hertfordshire County Council has produced a [suite of excellent resources](#) about how to encourage people's compliance with social distancing and self-isolation whilst also supporting good mental health.

Universal credit extension

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Thérèse Coffey [has confirmed that the suspension of the Universal Credit 'Minimum Income Floor' will be extended](#) to the end of April 2021. The suspension had been due to expire on 12 November.

Refocusing commercial activity – Support for Council Commercial Teams

[The LGA have developed five new free masterclasses to support officers](#) as their local authorities refocus commercial activity that has been impacted by COVID-19 and changes to investment guidance by CIPFA and MHCLG.

CX Top tips for dealing with COVID restrictions

The LGA in collaboration with SOLACE has today launched ['Top Tips for Chief Executives'](#). This series of top tips and interviews highlights the experiences of chief executives that faced extra restrictions between the lifting of the spring national lockdown and the most recent national restrictions.

Age UK Care staff Survey – Need for Government Funding

The LGA responded to Age UK's report, [Time to bring our care workers in from the cold](#), published last week. The report surveyed care workers from across the UK and called for care workers pay and conditions to be brought in line with those in the NHS. The LGA [continues to push for a new deal for care workers](#) that addresses pay, training and development, career progression and professionalisation and recognition. Any such changes to pay and reward must be fully funded by national government. The LGA are calling on the Government to use the upcoming Spending Review as the basis for future reform of social care to place it on a long-term, sustainable footing.

Environmental Health Officers Together campaign – recruitment Support

Environmental health professionals have played a critical role in protecting public health during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the [extra pressures have also highlighted the lack of resilience in the longer term](#). To help councils support communities at this time MHCLG, NHS Test and Trace, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and the LGA have launched [Environmental Health Together](#), a new campaign designed to encourage environmental health professionals to work in local government. [Councils who get involved in the campaign through a simple sign-up form](#) will have access to an online register where they can find and engage with environmental health professionals. While currently only councils in England will be able to recruit from it, it is anticipated that many roles will be based remotely, allowing registrations from across the UK.

Housing Advisers Programme

The LGA has launched the [Housing Advisers Programme \(HAP\) for 2020/21](#). HAP is designed to support councils seeking to innovate in meeting the housing needs of their communities. The programme will award up to £20,000 to each project for the purpose of securing expert advice in transforming how a service or partnership meets the housing need of communities. This year, the programme will prioritise strategic housing projects that will support councils and their communities to address COVID-19 and its wider impacts. Applications will close on 7 January 2020. For more information visit www.local.gov.uk/housingadvisersprogramme or email housingadvisers@local.gov.uk.

Call to increase Adult Learning Funding to address rising unemployment

The LGA have responded to a [Social Market Foundation Report on adult education](#), calling for the reversal of the 50 per cent reduction in adult education budgets as a way to address rising levels of unemployment. [Cllr Sir Richard Lease, Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board, highlighted](#) the huge importance of council-commissioned Adult and Community Education services in transforming the lives of the 600,000 adults who use them every year. Funding for these services has halved over the last decade, and as we face a growing and stark unemployment crisis the Government needs to urgently ensure that councils receive the financial support they need to continue to deliver these vital courses.

Kickstart Scheme

The Government has [announced that over 19,000 job placements](#) for unemployed young people have been created under the Kickstart Scheme. The placements are across a variety of sectors and each placement lasts six months and is fully funded by the Government. Young people on Kickstart will also receive additional employment support and training to help them progress during their placement, with £1,500 available to employers to cover this training. If your councils has engaged with the Kickstart scheme the LGA would like to hear from you please email Sadique.miah@local.gov.uk

EU transition

As negotiations continue between the UK and the EU, the LGA continues to raise council concerns with Government on the preparations for the end of the transition period as outlined on LGA's [webpages](#).

Re-thinking the workplace – Webinar 27th November 10am

Councils accelerated flexible working and online services at pace, in order to manage the delivery of services at the start of this pandemic. Eight months on, the majority of staff who can work remotely are continuing to do so and whilst there appears to be no end in sight just now, questions are being asked about what will happen 'post COVID-19'? From redesigning workplaces; changing organisational culture, management and leadership; reviewing policies and deployment of resources and technology, there are many factors to consider. This webinar will explore some of the themes and offer perspectives from Councils on how they are adapting to change and preparing staff and communities for the future delivery of services.

Resident satisfaction polling

The LGA's latest polling into resident satisfaction with local government has again showed some very positive results.

The LGA have been tracking people's perceptions of their local council since 2012. The last survey in June saw record levels of satisfaction after the response of local government to the pandemic. The results may have dipped a little compared to June, but they are still encouraging as they sit above the average recorded over the last eight years.

The poll shows 68 per cent of people are satisfied with the way their local council runs things, 64 per cent trust it and 64 per cent feel they are kept informed by the services and benefits it provides.

[The detailed report gives a full breakdown of the results.](#) It is really encouraging to see such high levels of satisfaction, trust and belief in the extraordinary work councils are doing on behalf of local communities.

Exit Pay Reform Updates

The LGA [webpage on exit pay reform](#) has been updated to include the LGA's response to the MHCLG consultation on further reforms to local government exit pay.

The LGA's [webinar on local government exit pay reform is available online](#) and it contains information on what steps authorities may want to take in the interim period between the £95,000 exit payment cap coming into effect on 4 November and the reform of the LGPS rules.

The webinar has captions and a transcript and slide are available here <https://local.gov.uk/events/past-event-presentations>. If you missed the first webinar it can be accessed [here](#)

And finally..

Something to look forward too..

The Government has announced that there will be an additional bank holiday to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. The National Joint Council has [issued a circular](#) that provides initial advice on holiday entitlement during this historic occasion.