

LGA/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 19: 26th September to 16th October 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.

Three Tier system of COVID Restrictions in England

The Government has [confirmed a new tier system for COVID Restrictions in England](#)

Level 1 (medium) – this will be the level which incorporates the current national restrictions, including the rule of six and the 10pm curfew on hospitality, and will currently cover the majority of the country.

Level 2 (high) – this will see people prevented from socialising with other households indoors. The rule of six will apply outdoors. The Prime Minister stated that of the areas already living under local restrictions will move into this category. Nottinghamshire, East and West Cheshire and a small area of High Peak will also move to this level due to rising infection rates. People will be advised to reduce the number of journeys they make where possible.

Level 3 (very high) – at this level, people will not be able to socialise with other households both indoors and in private gardens and bars/pubs will be closed unless they can operate as restaurants, serving alcohol only as part of a meal. Wedding receptions are not allowed, and people will be advised to avoid non-essential travel in and out of these areas. People should avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK if they are resident in a ‘very high’ area, or avoid staying overnight in these areas if they are resident elsewhere.

At this stage, [tier 3 will cover the Liverpool City Region](#). In this region, other leisure venues including gyms, leisure centres, betting shops, adult gaming centres and casinos will close. £14 million has been confirmed for the region to enhance localised measures including enforcement and testing and tracing.

These measures will be kept under constant review, with the regulations subject to a ‘sunset clause’ of four weeks for interventions in the ‘very high’ areas.

Guidance to the clinically extremely vulnerable updated (15th October)

The Government has [published new guidance](#) explaining the next steps for supporting clinically extremely vulnerable people in England. The guidance will be tied into the [new Local COVID Alert Levels framework](#), meaning those at the highest risk of serious illness from the virus will receive specific advice depending on the level of risk in their local area, as rates continue to rise. This latest guidance explains the current advice for each of the three tiers.

Enforcement and local compliance

The new tiered approach has additional implications for regulatory and other services already working to support local compliance and enforcement activity, with new regulations for areas in the ‘very high’ category including the closure of pubs and bars (and potentially other venues). Work to support compliance work around other new COVID regulations, including the duty on employers in relation to the self-isolation regulation, is also continuing. The LGA is continuing to push for a flexible approach for councils, for example around the definition of designated officers, and to highlight any issues with the interpretation of the new regulations as these become clear.

Test and trace

Government have also made a commitment that in ‘very high’ areas, further financial support for local test and trace will be provided, alongside potential support from the armed forces if desired. This recognises the urgent need to build upon councils’ successful local efforts to address the current inadequacies of the national scheme. Driving strong local action and effective contact tracing will add further pressure to already over-stretched council budgets. This much-needed additional funding for these ‘level 3’ areas has yet to be confirmed.

Test and Trace Support Payment scheme

The eligibility checker for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is now in place for councils to begin verifying claims and making payments. The Department of Health and Social Care have expressed their gratitude to councils in working so tirelessly and effectively to get the systems in place. To coincide with the launch, the Government published [new guidance on the eligibility and application process for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#). If someone has been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020, they [are under a legal obligation to do so](#), and could be eligible for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Jobs Support Scheme

The government has [published further details on the Jobs Support Scheme](#) (JSS). From 1 November, the JSS will provide temporary, localised support to businesses across the UK whose premises are legally required to close as a direct result of COVID-19 restrictions. A reminder that there is a [explainer of the JSS](#) on the LGA’s website.

The Local Restrictions Support Grant scheme

The [Government has also increased the Local Restrictions Support Grant scheme](#) so that businesses can receive up to £3,000 a month and are eligible for payment sooner, after only two weeks of closure rather than three. The Government is also extending the scheme to include businesses which have been required to close on a national rather than a local basis, or which have not been legally able to reopen since the first lockdown in March.

Travel corridors – quarantine

On 8th October the [guidance on travel corridors](#) was updated to reflect changes to the list of countries and territories from where you can travel to England and may not have to self-isolate. [Guidance for countries and territories exempt](#) from advice against ‘all but essential’ international travel exempting destinations that no longer pose an unacceptably high risk for British travellers was also updated.

COVID Workplace guidance Update (15th Oct)

The [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has updated guidance](#) on working from home, supporting staff to self-isolate, mandatory PPE for staff, construction and other outdoor work and many more other workplace scenarios.

Adult Social Care Winter Plan

The Government [has published guidance for those working in care homes](#) on how to work safely during this period of sustained COVID-19 transmission. The guidance includes:

- PPE recommendations for care home staff
- frequently asked questions on the use of PPE in care homes
- examples which help to identify the correct use of PPE when undertaking activities that require physical contact or activities which do not require physical contact but are carried out in close proximity to residents
- specific guidance for those providing support for people with learning disabilities and/or autism in care homes
- guide to putting on PPE for care homes
- guide to taking off PPE for care homes.

Impact of COVID-19 on people relying on adult social care

A [report about the impact of COVID](#) has been published by TLAP (Think Local Act Personal), working with an alliance of other organisations including the LGA and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS). The report seeks to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the people who access care and support through the voice of people with lived experience.

DHSC Coronavirus social care newsletter

This [Coronavirus Social care report special](#) highlights the COVID-19 Social Care Sector Taskforce report and features a blog from the BAME advisory group chairs explaining their vital contribution to the report.

Flu immunisation programme and COVID-19

[PHE has published its new guidance on the national flu immunisation programme](#) and the delivery of the 2020 to 20201 programme. This will be the largest national flu immunisation programme to date offering 30 million people a vaccine.

This resource focuses on the delivery of the programme, co-infection of flu and COVID-19 and calls to action for the wider health economy and councils as we prepare for the first winter with co-circulation of flu and COVID-19.

To support communications, PHE have published a range of resources, available to download from the [campaign resource centre](#). We encourage you to share these resources with your colleagues to increase the uptake of the flu vaccination in your local area.

ADPH Guide to support local communities

Directors of public health are being asked to provide advice which balances the need for interventions to protect our communities from COVID-19 whilst minimising adverse impacts on the economy, social life, inequalities, and overall health and wellbeing. Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) remain a core part of the set of tools available to reduce the spread of the virus. The [Association of Directors of Public Health \(ADPH\) have produced a guide to support local authorities](#), and partners, in considering the range of interventions that might be most appropriate.

Updated Guidance on safe working in Education, childcare and children's social care

[Guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#) during the pandemic has been updated. The guidance covers preventing and controlling infection, including the use of PPE, and has been updated to include new guidance on the test and trace process, social care visits, shielding, staff who have been in close contact with a positive case and the use of face masks.

Test kits for schools and further education providers

On 14th October the Government [updated the guidance for schools and further education \(FE\) providers on the initial supply of coronavirus home testing kits](#) for pupils, teachers and staff. The section 'making an order for additional coronavirus tests' has been updated with additional information for schools and FE providers in particularly high risk areas who may be eligible for an additional delivery of test kits.

Personal protective equipment

The Government has published its [new PPE Strategy](#). This sets out its plans to prepare a resilient supply chain of PPE for a second wave of COVID-19, alongside usual seasonal pressures. The Government have also said that they have now established a strong domestic supply base, which will improve their ability to respond to a crisis and providing greater resilience for any second wave.

Workforce COVID-19 Survey Update

Thanks again to the councils who are continuing to complete the fortnightly COVID-19 Workforce Survey. To view the most recent data see LG Inform reports here: [COVID-19 Workforce report](#) and [COVID-19 Workforce survey - trend data](#), please note you need to be signed into LG Inform to view these reports. If you have any questions about the survey results, benchmarking or please feel free to direct them to research@local.gov.uk.

Non COVID Update

LGA Submission to CSR

The LGA submitted a response to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) [called Rethinking Public Finances](#) . LGA has made the case that the first CSR in more than a decade must provide sustainable and certain long-term funding to councils, in order to bring power and resources closer to people. The submission also asks the government to finally begin cross-party work to provide a sustainable, long-term funding solution for adult social care services. This is an important milestone in how the sector engages with Government and the LGA will continue to make the case for greater funding for councils in discussions with Government Ministers

Local government reorganisation

The Secretary of State has issued an invitation to councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Somerset, including associated existing unitary councils, to submit proposals for moving to the establishment of unitary councils in those areas. Robert Jenrick published a [written parliamentary statement](#), which explains the process by which councils in these areas can discuss and conclude proposals for reorganisation, including the deadlines involved. If you would like to discuss how the LGA can help all the councils in any of the three areas, please get in touch with your [Principal Adviser](#).

The LGA continues to lobby the Government for devolution in its broadest sense supported by the powers and funding communities need to deliver an effective recovery.

Free recruitment support for ICT, planning and legal

On 29th September the LGA launched three new Return to Work campaigns to help councils recruit ICT, planning and legal professionals. Developed in collaboration with the [Government Equalities Office](#) (GEO), these campaigns will run a national recruitment drive and give councils the opportunity to connect with professionals who are eager to work in councils. Councils can sign up to our legal scheme from 12 October 2020 and to our ICT and planning programmes from 18 November 2020. These will give you access to our recruitment platform, free-of-charge, to help you find legal, ICT and planning professionals in your area. You can find more information on our [ICT](#), [planning](#) and [legal](#) websites.

Apply for a Kickstart Scheme grant: 30 or more and 29 or less job placements

On the 9 October the Government published [guidance for employers](#) looking to create [30 or more](#) and [29 or fewer](#) job placements for young people. The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding as part of the Kickstart Scheme.

The refreshed 2020 standards for employers of social workers are here!

Find out how the [Standards for employers of social workers in England](#) have changed and how you can use them to enhance #socialwork in your organisation and look out for the new Healthcheck this Autumn.

Behavioural insights

[Applications for the round of the LGA's Behavioural Insights Programme](#) are now open. Now in its sixth year, it will see councils chosen to receive £20,000 to deliver behavioural insights projects aimed at changing, or sustaining behaviour, which have arisen in communities during the pandemic. Councils will be asked to match fund the projects which will have national significance and learning for local authorities nationwide.

Digital Connectivity Programme

We are launching a [new Digital Connectivity Programme](#) – a grant funded programme that will provide resource for councils to build and develop connectivity capacity and capability to overcome some of their toughest accessibility challenges. The inaugural year of the programme will look to work with six local authorities from across urban and rural settings. Applications for funding from English councils and bids involving partner organisations are welcomed, for the application period 12 October - 12 November.

Training and skills

The [Government has announced an expansion of the training and skills system](#) to help the country recover from coronavirus, including free Level 3 courses for those who want to start new roles and occupations, which we have been calling for. In our response we say that using the [National Skills Fund to fund this is a step in the right direction](#) and it is right that courses should target employers skills needs, but they also must respond to the needs of different local areas, with a strong role for councils and combined authorities, as well as colleges.

LG Organisational Development Programme – Update

The National OD Network which was launched last month has now over sixty LG OD practitioners sharing learning and knowledge to support council's response and recovery during the pandemic. To join the network please contact nigel.carruthers@local.gov.uk. An update on the work of the programme can be found [here](#).

Public Sector Exit Payments Update (15th October)

The legislation to implement the [£95k cap on exit payments](#) in the public sector has completed the Parliamentary process and was signed into law last night meaning [the regulations](#), and therefore the cap, come into force on **4 November**.

As yet neither the Guidance nor Directions to accompany the regulations have been published. This means there is no further information regarding the waiver process or provision for current exits in progress.

[MHCLG's consultation](#) on changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme rules required to accommodate the £95k cap is ongoing and will not conclude before the cap comes into effect.

The LGA are raising concerns about the implementation of this legislation, including the treatment of exits currently in process, with MHCLG and HM Treasury.

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