

LG/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 20: 17th October 2020 to 30th 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.

COVID-19 Grant Funding for Councils

On 23rd October, the Secretary of State Robert Jenrick [published the local authority allocations of tranche 4 of the COVID-19 grant funding](#) announced by the Prime Minister earlier this month. Over £900 million of this funding will be provided to councils for their ongoing work to support communities during the pandemic. It brings the total funding given to councils since the start of the pandemic, to help with spending pressures, to £4.6 billion. Councils can also claim funding through a compensation scheme for lost income from sales, fees and charges to address the ongoing challenges local authority leisure centres are facing, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has also confirmed a £100 million [fund to support leisure centres](#) most in need.

'R' Rate Increase and COVID-19 studies

The [reproduction \('R'\) rate for the UK](#) is now 1.1-1.3 (a slight dip on the previous week), with a growth rate range of + 2 per cent plus + 4 per cent.

Academics from [Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI have published their latest study](#) estimate that the number of people infected is doubling every nine days, with cases rising in every age group and region of England.

The [same organisations have also published another study](#) which suggests that the antibody response to COVID-19 reduces over time following infection. It still remains unclear whether antibodies provide any effective level of immunity or, if such immunity exists, for how long it might last.

The [Office for National Statistics infection survey](#) found cases continue to rise steeply, with an average of 51,900 new cases per day in private homes between October 17 and 23. This is up 47 per cent on the previous week's estimates. Overall, around one in 100 people had COVID-19 over the course of the latest week.

Local restrictions Update

The following changes to local restrictions have been announced during this period:

As of today (00.01 Friday 30 October) [Nottinghamshire has moved from local COVID alert level 'high' to 'very high'](#). This covers the whole of Nottinghamshire, comprising the areas of Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Nottingham and Rushcliffe.

All of [West Yorkshire will also move from 'high' to 'very high'](#) from 00.01 on Monday 2 November. This covers the 5 areas of Calderdale, City of Bradford, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

The following [areas](#) are moving from 'medium' to 'high' from 00.01 on Saturday – East Riding of Yorkshire, Kingston-Upon-Hull, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire; Dudley, Staffordshire, Telford and the Wrekin; Amber Valley, Bolsover, Derbyshire Dales, Derby City, South Derbyshire, the whole of High Peak; Charnwood; Luton; and Oxford City.

Earlier this week on 27th October from 00:01, [Warrington moved](#) from local COVID alert level 'high' to 'very high'.

Please continue to visit the [guidance on each COVID alert level](#) as well as the [postcode checker](#) to understand the restrictions in your area.

Enforcement – COVID-19 Secure

LGA expects government to introduce legislation in parliament early next week in response to local authorities' request for more effective enforcement powers. It is anticipated the regulations will give councils powers to introduce improvement notices and, where these are not complied with, closure powers to shut premises failing to make their businesses COVID-secure. The LGA will be briefing Parliamentarians ahead of next week's debate on this basis,

Earlier this week LGA [published guidance](#) for councils on the interpretation of the key issues within the tier 3 regulations which covers issues councils have raised with the LGA and outlines how these could be managed with a focus on the specific restrictions on hospitality premises. [Amendments to the Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Local COVID-19 Alert Level\) \(Very High\) \(England\) Regulations 2020](#) have been made today to make it clear that social clubs as well as pubs and bars can only remain open where alcohol is served as part of a table meal.

Public Health on the frontline: responding to COVID-19

In a series of interviews, directors of public health from across the country talk about the local response to COVID-19. <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/coronavirus-information-councils/covid-19-service-information/covid-19-public-health-0>

COVID-19 antibody testing study

The Government has published the results of a COVID-19 antibody study. [The study conducted by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI](#) show antibody responses to COVID-19 reduce over time following infection. The results suggest that people who did not show symptoms of COVID-19 are likely to lose detectable antibodies sooner than those who did show symptoms and that the loss of antibodies was slower in 18 to 24-year-olds compared to those aged 75 and over.

Long-term effects of COVID-19

Earlier in the week, DHSC [released a film](#) featuring the stories of four people, one aged just 22, who are living with the long-term effects of COVID-19. The film urges the public, particularly young people, to follow the rules and protect themselves. It follows new data which suggests around 10 per cent of 18 to 49 year olds who become unwell with the virus suffer the long-term effects.

Provision of School Meals During Pandemic

Many councils are already looking at ways to support children in the communities during half term and beyond. Once again, demonstrating the pivotal role local government plays in supporting families facing hardship and those worst affected by the impact of the pandemic. The LGA's [media response](#), warned that demand from households experiencing financial difficulty as a result of COVID-19 had now outstripped the £63 million welfare funding provided for councils by the Government in the summer, and that councils were having to top this up from already stretched budgets. The LGA has called on the Government to restore local welfare funding so councils can provide preventative support to all households who need it, many of whom are likely to be economically vulnerable for some time to come.

Test and trace Latest Figures

Councils' expert skills and knowledge of local areas has been illustrated by the [latest COVID-19 test and trace figures](#). These show that cases handled by local public health teams are continuing to reach the vast majority of complex cases assigned to them, with a tremendous 97 per cent of people contacted and asked to self-isolate during this latest period. This compares to the figures for those contacted by NHS Test and Trace, who successfully contacted 60.3 per cent of close contacts for the cases assigned to them.

Employers Guide Updated for Test & Trace

Elsewhere, the Government has [updated guidance on NHS Test and Trace](#) for employers, businesses and workers to reflect employers' legal duties around staff who are self-isolating.

Test and Trace Support Payment scheme

The Department for Health and Social Care has [updated their guidance](#) setting out what councils in England need to do to enable people in their area to claim the Test and Trace Support Payment, including discretionary payments if they have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. You can [view further information](#) about the scheme or contact soc.support@dhsc.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Designated COVID-19 care settings

Following last week's [DHSC letter to directors of adult services](#) highlighting the requirement for designated care settings for people discharged from hospital who have a COVID-19 positive status, we have continued to work with the department, directors and providers to support effective implementation that recognises the policy intent without imposing a 'one size fits all' solution. We are clear that councils must have the flexibility to adapt to the needs of their residents, including ensuring an individual's wishes on discharge are enabled and that the scheme builds on local arrangements. We are pushing also for recognition that the 'Home First' principle must remain the most appropriate way to support our residents' wellbeing and independence.

National Shielding Support Service launched

The National Shielding Support Service (NSSS) went live on Tuesday 20th October. The NSSS is a web platform that will allow clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people to register their support needs if shielding is re-introduced in any part of the country. For now, the [NSSS platform](#) can be only used in areas in the Tier 3 very high alert level, by CEV users to register their support needs or by local authorities to register needs [on behalf of people who are CEV](#). Further development work is being undertaken to prepare for the system to correctly route users from both 'very high' and 'very high + shielding' areas if shielding is reintroduced, and the shielding team are continuing to engage with council data leads on this.

COVID-19 ethnicity disparities

The Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch MP, announced the first quarterly report on the progress to understand and tackle [COVID-19 disparities experienced by individuals from an ethnic minority backgrounds](#). The Minister said that the evidence and data gathered has given the Government a better understanding of the risk factors for ethnic minority people, including occupational exposure and existing medical conditions

COVID-19 data sets

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), Office of National Statistics (ONS), Administrative Data Research UK and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are partnering on the Local Data Spaces (LDS) project, which aims to give councils access to more granular COVID-19 related data sets such as those relating to NHS Test & Trace and the COVID-19 Infection survey. The LDS is looking to engage councils and/or logical groupings of authorities, to pilot the project over the coming months. The team would like to understand councils' needs and invite you to participate in this [LDS User Needs Survey](#) where you can also express your interest in participating in the pilot. Closing date for submissions is 3 November deadline. Please contact jbc.lids@dhsc.gov.uk if you have further questions.

Digital innovation in adult social care Webinars Next Week

Councils are continuing to develop and deliver digital services to support health and wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 period. 14 adult social care council teams have co-produced digital innovations funded by the Social Care Digital Innovation Programme (SCDIP) 2019-21. Councils can learn more about these new technologies supporting health and wellbeing from the councils themselves at the following webinars:

- [Monday 2 November, 10am-12pm](#)
- [Monday 2 November, 2-3pm](#)
- [Tuesday 3 November, 10am-12pm](#)
- [Tuesday 3 November, 2-3pm](#)

NHS COVID-19 app Update

The Government has [announced that NHS COVID-19 app users will benefit](#) from updates to the app which are intended to improve its efficacy and usability.

Updated COVID funeral management guidance

On Friday 23 October, the Government released updated [guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#). This reflects the recent changes to the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(Self-Isolation\) \(England\) Regulations 2020](#), which allow for COVID-19 positive people (whether symptomatic or asymptomatic) to leave their self-isolation for specific purposes, including to attend the funeral of a close family member. The updated guidance strongly recommends that people with symptoms of COVID-19, and those required to self-isolate, should not attend and are encouraged to participate virtually in the first instance.

Childcare entitlement support

The Government has announced that [working parents who are on the Government's coronavirus support schemes will still be eligible for childcare support](#), including the 30 hours offer and Tax-Free Childcare, even if their income levels fall below the threshold temporarily whilst on these schemes. DfE [attendance data](#) has highlighted that more parents are returning to their formal childcare settings, with attendance at early years settings now at 86 per cent of pre-coronavirus daily levels. This is set to increase further as the latest [parent survey by Ipsos MORI](#), shows that in September, 94 per cent of parents whose child received formal childcare before the pandemic were either using formal childcare now, or were intending to return their child to formal childcare if they could by January 2021. Announcing the measures, Children and Families Minister, Vicky Ford praised the hard work of early years professionals and said that the Government was committed to protecting working parents and the dedicated early years sector.

Test kits for schools

The Government has [updated guidance for schools and further education providers](#) on the initial supply of home testing kits for pupils, teachers and staff. This includes additional information for providers in particularly high-risk areas who may be eligible for an additional delivery of test kits.

Schools COVID Advice Update

The Department for Education has published [updated guidance for schools on actions that need to be taken during the pandemic](#). This guidance provides updated information on prevention, other considerations (system of controls), response to any infection, pupils travelling from abroad, attendance, workforce, safeguarding, school uniform, wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity, behaviour expectations, hospital schools and contingency planning for outbreaks.

Free school travel Update

The Department for Education has [updated guidance on additional school and college transport capacity funding allocations](#) for home-to-school travel for children from low-income families. The update provides new information on the funding local authorities will receive to support additional dedicated school and college transport for the Autumn term.

Schools - Remote education lesson plans

The Department for Education (DfE) has [published guidance on lesson plans](#) shared by schools to help teachers adapt their practice for remote education, following the outbreak of coronavirus. The lesson plans are an optional resource designed to help teachers consider how they might adapt their teaching practice for the remote context. DfE is also offering several school-led webinars on remote education to help share good practice. [Find out more](#) about the webinars.

Early years Alliance Survey Call for funding

Childcare providers have been a vital part of the nation's response to COVID-19 and another stark [survey from the Early Years Alliance](#), published last week, shows the plight that many continue to face. It has found that one in six early years settings say that they could close by Christmas if their income doesn't increase, rising to one in four in the most deprived local authorities. The LGA [have called on the Government to provide an urgent injection of funding](#) in the Spending Review to protect childcare providers at risk of closure as a result of the pandemic.

Travel corridors

The [Government announced](#) that the Canary Islands, Denmark, Maldives and Mykonos were added to the Government's travel corridor list at 4am on 25 October. The Government also announced that people arriving in England from Liechtenstein from 4am on 25 October have to self-isolate for two weeks. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [has also updated its global advisory](#) against 'all but essential' travel exempting destinations that no longer pose an unacceptably high risk for British travellers. Please see the [FCDO guidance on travel corridors](#) for more. Cyprus and Lithuania have both been [removed from list of travel corridors](#). People arriving into the UK from these countries from 4am Sunday 1 November 2020 will need to self-isolate for two weeks.

Job Support Scheme

The [LGA guidance](#) has been updated to reflect updates from government on access to the [job support scheme](#). The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has confirmed that despite the suggestion that local authorities should approach the department before accessing the scheme; there are no plans for specific guidance and if councils wish to use the scheme, in line with its rules, then they should apply directly like other businesses.

OTHER NEWS...

Exit payments Update 30th October

On 29th October HM Treasury published the [Guidance, Directions and Equalities Impact Assessment](#) to accompany the [Exit Payment Cap Regulations](#) that come into force on 4 November. Unfortunately, many of the issues [raised by the LGA](#) in the consultation process have been left unaddressed, including the treatment of exits in progress. There is still no guidance from MHCLG on the implementation of these Regulations in the sector, particularly in light of the legal uncertainty resulting from the implementation of these Regulations ahead of the required amendments to the Local Government Pension Scheme that now do not look like taking place until 2021.

In addition, the Local Government Minister, Luke Hall, [wrote to all chief executives and administering authorities](#) on Wednesday providing the government's view on the treatment of exit related pension payments pending the amendment of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations. The Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board has taken legal advice on this matter and will publish that advice together with commentary for LGPS administering authorities and scheme employers on the [public sector exits page](#) of its website.

The LGA has updated its webpages with the latest [information available to councils](#) on exit payments. This information reflects the current position in relation to the apparent legal inconsistency between the Exit Cap Regulations and the LGPS rules which, until MHCLG complete their consultation, are unamended. There are a number of outstanding issues, notably around the treatment of exits in progress. MHCLG have said they will issue guidance to councils on this but as yet this has not been provided.

The LGA is also aware of four pre-action letters relating to potential judicial review of the Exit Cap Regulations being submitted to HMT but as things stand the Exit Cap Regulations will come into force on 4 November and it looks unlikely that the LGPS Regs will be amended before the new year.

The LGA is strongly advising any councils with exits due to take place after the 4 November to take legal advice on how best to proceed.

CSR – Update

The Chancellor has [confirmed that the one-year Spending Review will conclude with a statement on 25 November](#). The LGA will be continuing to push government to address the very significant financial pressures facing councils. The [LGA's detailed and evidenced submission](#) – with input from the Institute for Fiscal Studies – highlights both the funding needed to stand-still, and the investment required to rebuild our communities in a way that levels up inequalities and ensures every area can prosper.

The LGA will be emphasising councils' priorities in their response to the Housing, Communities and Local Government's [new inquiry into the Spending Review and local government finance](#), which was launched this week.

EU transition

While the negotiations between the UK and the EU continue, the LGA's cross-party EU Exit Taskforce continues to engage with the Government highlighting the key issues for councils, to help them to prepare for the end of the transition period. Please do continue to share any priority issues or areas of concern you have. There are [details on the LGA website showing the priority issues that councils have raised](#) so far, and we like to know if there are other issues of concern. Please share your feedback via EUtransition@local.gov.uk

Cyber security

Following last week's cyber-attack on Hackney Council some initial technical guidance has been shared with IT colleagues, containing some important advice and actions to take. You may also find the following helpful:

- An article in First magazine written by Councillor Neil Prior on [managing cyber security risks](#). It contains tips on what we can be doing as individuals, and also gives general advice on the type of questions we should be asking our colleagues.
- NCSC have a [suite of guidance on their website](#) including [mitigating malware and ransomware](#), [incident management](#), and [10 steps to cyber security](#).
- The NCSC recommends local authorities join their [free Early Warning Service](#)—you may wish to highlight this to your IT team / provider for action.

You may also be aware of the Sopra Steria cyber incident. We understand that some local authorities may be customers and therefore wanted to draw your attention to their [public statement](#). If any local authorities have been affected by the incident, and need to report it to the NCSC, could you use their [web portal](#) and quote reference number 44843.

The latest advice shared with IT officers includes information on [mitigating malware and ransomware attacks](#). If your council would like any additional advice or support, please contact cybersecurity@local.gov.uk.

Adult social care funding

The Health and Social Care Committee has published its [report on 'social care: funding and workforce'](#). The report called for a £7 billion annual increase in social care funding and urged Government to bring forward proposals for long-term reform. The Committee also recognised the importance of parity of esteem, and called for improved pay, training and conditions for the adult social care workforce, as well as a 10-year people plan for adult social care. The [LGA submitted written evidence to this inquiry](#).

Apprenticeship rankings

The Government announced its [Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers rankings](#) this week. Nine councils and two combined authorities feature on the list, flying the flag for the excellent work that local government does up and down the country to create apprenticeship opportunities for residents. Since the apprenticeship levy was introduced, apprenticeship starts in local government have almost trebled, so it's terrific to see the sector rightly rewarded for its excellent work.

Congratulations to City of Lincoln Council (33rd), Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (43rd), Leeds City Council (47th), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (58th), Hertfordshire County Council (61st), Medway Council (79th), Chesterfield Borough Council (82nd), Rochdale Borough Council (83rd), Durham County Council (91st), Salford City Council (94th), and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (98th).

For more information visit [Apprenticeship Support Programme](#) to find out how the LGA is supporting the sector.

Return to Work campaign

The LGA's new [return to work campaigns](#) to help councils recruit ICT, planning and legal professionals are still available. Developed in collaboration with the [Government Equalities Office \(GEO\)](#), these free campaigns provide a national recruitment drive on behalf of councils and give them the opportunity to connect with professionals who are eager to work in councils. You can [register your interest](#) to take part as a council via the LGAs website.

LGA Devolution Hub

The LGA have launched an improved [Devolution Hub](#) which brings together all of the information needed to understand and navigate devolution.

#CouncilsCan Day – 10 November

The LGA's second #CouncilsCan Day – an online campaign to highlight the critical role of local government during the pandemic – will take place on 10 November. This is a great opportunity for us all to come together to shine a spotlight on councils' outstanding work to share the amazing work you have been doing during the pandemic please use the hashtag **#CouncilsCan** across your social networks. [Resources to help councils promote #CouncilsCan Day](#) locally and join the national conversation are now available on the LGA website. If you have any questions, or stories from your council you want the LGA to share on the day, please email amelia.sutton@local.gov.uk

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