

LGA/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 18: 12th to 25th September 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 New National Restrictions

This week the Cabinet Office has published an [explainer of the further national measures](#) to address rising cases of COVID-19 in England. This covers the changes in the requirements and advice on face coverings, working from home, the rules governing businesses and premises, and meeting people safely.

The Government published the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(No. 2\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 5\) Regulations 2020](#) which ratifies the new restrictions the government announcements into law. This includes:

- Imposing restricted opening hours and other [restrictions on certain businesses in England](#) (apart from Bolton) selling goods or providing services.
- Make changes to the restrictions on gatherings in England, in relation to gatherings for support groups, [weddings and other significant events](#), and sports gatherings.
- Make changes to the amounts of fines which can be imposed by fixed penalty notices for breach of restrictions in certain regulations made under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.

Rule of Six

[New COVID-19 rules came into force on 14th September](#), which allows police to disperse gatherings of over six people and fine those individuals involved. These rules apply to both indoor and outdoor settings. The measures simplify and strengthen the rules on social gatherings and means that – apart from a set of limited exemptions, including work and education – any social gatherings of more than six people will be against the law. Police will be able to fine individuals involved you can [read more about these regulations online](#).

Local Restrictions

Tighter restrictions on socialising with people outside your own household have been introduced for people living in Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Gateshead, Sunderland and County Durham during this period. Hospitality for food and drink are restricted to table service only and late-night restrictions of operating hours have been introduced for leisure and entertainment venues.

New restrictions were also announced for Lancashire, Merseyside, Warrington, West Yorkshire, Halton and Wolverhampton which will come into force on Tuesday. Residents in these areas will be should not meet with others outside their support bubbles and a 10pm curfew will be placed on nightlife. People in affected areas should only use public transport for essential purposes, such as travelling to school or work, and avoid attending amateur or semi-professional sports events as spectators. Residents should also take holidays only with people in their own household or support bubble. Preston, Pendle and Blackburn with Darwen, which already have restrictions in place, will be included under the stricter measures.

A list of areas with additional local restrictions is available on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), including information for local authorities, residents and workers about what to do and how to manage the outbreak.

Safer transport

On 23 September the government updated safer transport guidance for both operators and passengers to reflect new legislation on social contact and the requirement for passengers to wear face coverings in taxis and private hire vehicles.

Funding for Enforcing COVID-19 Rules – Marshals

The Government announced this week that the police and local authorities will be granted an extra £60 million to “enforce the rules and ensure a greater police presence on our streets”.

The LGA are seeking further clarification to how this additional funding for compliance will be allocated and whether it is intended to support the deployment of ‘COVID’ marshals. MHCLG are working with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) on this policy and have reiterated that while details are still being developed, they are keen to work with councils to help shape this. It is not expected that the proposal for marshals will become mandatory, with MHCLG reiterating the earlier suggestions that the approach should be locally led.

MHCLG is keen to hear from councils who have employed marshals or ambassadors in their areas. If you have any examples, or would like to feed into this work, please email ellie.greenwood@local.gov.uk.

NHS COVID-19 app launched

The [NHS COVID-19 app launched nationwide](#) on yesterday (24th September) to help control coronavirus transmission alongside national and local contact tracing. Features of the app include contact tracing using Bluetooth, risk alerts based on postcode district, QR check-in at venues, symptom checker and test booking – with user privacy and data security at its heart. Additionally, businesses are now required by law to display the official NHS QR code posters so people can check-in at different premises.

The Government had previously announced that certain venues, including venues run by local authorities will now be [legally required to display NHS QR posters in their venues by the 24 September](#) along with the mandatory requirements to collect customer contact details as part of the track and trace system. This includes all venues from the following sectors:

- hospitality;
- leisure and tourism;
- close contact services;
- places of worship; and
- local authority venues.

To support councils, the Government has prepared [a bank of resources](#) which you can share with your own venues or with businesses in your area. Further materials on the [business to business campaign](#) which also may be useful are available.

Testing Priority for Key Workers

The Government [has published its rationing list for COVID-19 tests](#) and key workers in local government have been made a priority. Those working in acute clinical care will be first priority, followed by care home workers and residents. In care homes, staff will be tested every week, residents will be tested every 28 days and all new admissions will be tested. This includes those with and without symptoms. NHS staff are next in line, followed by targeted testing for outbreak management. Teachers with symptoms are fifth on the priority list.

Test and Trace

You may be interested in a new worrying [study on the adherence to the test, trace and isolate system](#), conducted by a number of universities and organisations, which found that only 18 per cent of people self-isolate after developing symptoms, and only 11 per cent quarantine after being told by NHS Test and Trace that they've been in contact with a confirmed case.

New package to support and enforce self-isolation

On 20 September the Government announced a [new package to support and enforce self-isolation](#).

From 28 September, people will be required by law to self-isolate when instructed to by NHS Test and Trace. Those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result will be supported by a payment of £500.

New fines for those breaching self-isolation rules will start at £1,000 – bringing this in line with the penalty for breaking quarantine after international travel – but could increase to up to £10,000 for repeat offences and for the most egregious breaches, including for those preventing others from self-isolating.

The Department of Health and Social Care and MHCLG are engaging with local authorities to take this work forward. A Test and Trace Support Payment Implementation Group has been established and will meet daily, starting from 21 September, to test approaches and work through all implementation issues.

Autumn Budget cancelled – Government Winter Economy Plan

HM Treasury have said: “Now is not the right time to outline long-term plans - people want to see us focused on the here and now. So we are confirming today that there will be no Budget this autumn.” The Chancellor did however reveal his [winter economy plan](#) on 24th September.

The Chancellor [announced a package of measures](#) aimed at protecting jobs and help businesses through the months ahead. The package includes a [new Job Support Scheme](#) aiming to protect millions of returning workers, extending the Self Employment Income Support Scheme and a 15% VAT cut for the hospitality and tourism sectors, and help for businesses in repaying government-backed loans.

Adult Social Care Winter Plan

The Government published [the Adult Social Care winter plan](#), setting out its ambitions for the sector and the challenges facing adult social care this winter. The plan includes key actions for national bodies (DHSC), local systems (councils and NHS England) and adult social care providers.

The plan covers four themes:

- preventing and controlling the spread of infection in care settings
- collaboration across health and care services
- supporting people who receive social care, **the workforce**, and carers
- supporting the system

To coincide with publication the Minister for Care, [wrote to councils](#) to outline the expectations of local authorities in relation to the adult social care winter plan. The Government also published [the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce report](#), which sets out the progress and learning from the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools COVID-19 Update

An [online portal](#) is now live for schools and further education (FE) providers to order additional coronavirus (COVID-19) test kits if they have run out, or are running out, of their initial 10 kits supplied for use in line with [Government guidance](#). They will help schools and colleges get their symptomatic staff who test negative back to work as soon as they feel well enough, to ensure the continuity of education for pupils and students. DHSC will be holding [a webinar on how to use the testing kits](#), which you can sign up for on the Government's website.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published [guidance for education and childcare settings](#) on the process for managing confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 when the person is known to have been in a school, college or early years setting. The guidance to schools says that instead of calling their local health protection team when there is a confirmed case in their setting, schools should now call the DfE's helpline to be directed to the dedicated NHS advice team for nurseries, schools and colleges with confirmed cases. Other guidance suggests that schools may also want to inform the council of a positive case in their setting. It says that where more detailed local arrangements are in place with your council, and are working, schools can continue to receive support through that route to take action in response to a positive case.

The LGA have raised strong concerns, shared by Directors of Public Health, that providing a separate reporting mechanism for schools, separate from other local public health reporting systems will remove local oversight of infection rates in schools and colleges. Schools and colleges are significant institutions which bring large groups together and local reporting must be maintained for this significant group. The LGA have also sought assurances that data will be shared from any national helpline with local teams.

'Hands. Face. Space' public information campaign

To coincide with the new measures being introduced nationally the Government has launched the ['Hands. Face. Space' public information campaign](#). This urges the public to continue to wash their hands, cover their face and make space to control infection rates and avoid a second peak. This will run across TV, radio, print, social and digital display advertising, as well as on community media channels in the coming weeks.

Flu vaccination campaign for Social Care workers

This week NHS England launched the [Health and Social Care Workers Flu immunisation campaign](#). Social care workers can get the vaccine free of charge from GPs and community pharmacies, and personal assistants and other social care workers employed are eligible for free vaccinations through Direct Payments for the first time this year. The flu jab will be crucial this year, as we are set to battle influenza and COVID-19 together for the first time. We are therefore urging councils to encourage their staff to take up the vaccine. Public Health England have helpfully put together [downloaded assets and communications resources](#) for the campaign, which we are encouraging you to use over the coming weeks.

Personal Protective Equipment Update

Following the [DHSC announcement on the future of PPE](#), which stated that DHSC will be paying for Covid PPE needs, all CQC care providers, regardless of size, are encouraged to take up their invitation for registration to the [PPE portal](#). The portal is no longer to be used as an emergency source and care providers are encouraged to order as much of their supply as they are able to via the portal. DHSC, has acknowledged that at present there are limits on the amount of PPE available to order which means that for many providers the portal will only be able to source about 20% of their Covid PPE needs. DHSC have assured the LGA that over the next month, the third phase of our roll-out will see the portal's order limits rise to meet 100% of COVID-19 demand for PPE. The LGA are therefore encouraging all care providers to order as much of their Covid PPE requirements as possible through the PPE portal.

The LGA will continue to push to ensure that the 100% of the PPE needs are met across not just adult social care but all sectors as set out in the DHSC announcement.

Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce: report

The Government published the [final report](#), advice and recommendations of Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce on 18 September. The report sets out the progress and learning from the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 Workplace Guidance Updated

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.

EU transition

The Government published further information about its [reasonable worst-case scenario planning assumptions](#) for potential disruption to freight travelling between Great Britain and the European Union at the end of the transition period.

The LGA has been raising consequences for councils to Government. This includes the capacity for regulatory services to take on additional roles, as the services is already stretched as a result of ongoing and new COVID-19 work. In addition to this, we have raised concerns about the preparedness for transit points, especially in areas outside Dover.

It is expected that next week (30 September), the Home Office will launch a national campaign, aimed at employers, on the new points-based immigration system. There will be a toolkit which is intended to help employers support their staff through this.

Local Government Earnings Survey Published

The first [local government earnings and demography survey since 2015 has been published this week along with an updated version of the LGA's workforce data infographic.](#)

Standards for Employers of Social Workers Updated

The Standards for Employers of Social Work have [been updated](#). The standards are used to review and enhance social work in your organisation. A social worker health check survey will take place later this year for the 55,000 social workers working across councils in England.

Data tables on local government finance

The [live data tables on local government finance](#) have been updated today (24 September) with capital payments and receipts Q1 2020 to 2021, England.

Workforce Race Equality Standard for social care staff employed Councils

This initiative is designed to promote racial equality within the directly employed social care workforce, drawing some learning from the standards and methodology used by the NHS since 2015. ADASS has been working with the Chief Social Workers (and ADCS) to develop this and councils are being invited to act as sites to pilot this. The engagement event on 5 October is an opportunity to learn more and consider whether individual councils wish to be pilot sites. Please see attached invitation document with details on how to register.

Quarantine - International travel

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), on advice of the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England, continue to update their [foreign travel advice](#). At the time of writing, people arriving in England from Denmark, Slovakia, Iceland and the Caribbean island of Curaçao from 4am on the morning of Saturday 26 September will need to self-isolate for two weeks as the countries have been removed from the travel exemptions list. The FCO now advise against all but essential travel to these countries.

Shaping the future Sector-led improvement offer – Have your say

The recent [independent review of Sector led-improvement](#) (SLI) by Shared Intelligence emphasised the benefits of a longer term approach to our SLI offer. We are therefore keen to get your views on the support you require over the next three years to ensure our offer reflects your councils' needs.

Have your say on our improvement offer by responding to [this short webform](#). As mentioned in last week's bulletin, you are also invited to our webinar event [Shaping the future Sector-led improvement offer](#), which is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 6 October, 3.00pm– 4.30pm.

In this interactive Zoom session, we will ask attendees what councils' needs are likely to be in the next three years and how the LGA's support offer can be adapted or enhanced to meet those needs. The session will be facilitated by LGA Head of Improvement, **Dennis Skinner**, and will allow all attendees to feed in their views to directly shape the support offer to local government over the next three years.

Places are limited places so please register in advance. If you are unable to attend, please forward this invite to deputising colleagues and email improvement@local.gov.uk if you have any questions. We hope to see you there.

Workforce COVID-19 Survey Update

Thanks again to the 53% of 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. Reminder: the deadline for this fortnight's collection is 5pm, Wednesday 30 September 2020. If you have any questions about the survey results, benchmarking or please feel free to direct them to research@local.gov.uk.

Exit payments cap Update

The Government has brought forward the [Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020](#) (the Cap Regulations) which are going through Parliament now. This is earlier than expected and the Regulations place a £95,000 cap on [public sector exit payments](#). They come into force 21 days after the day they are approved by Parliament (with approval potentially on or before 23 September). At this point, the Directions, Guidance and the Equalities Impact Assessment that should accompany these Regulations have not been published. The timing of the Parliamentary debate means the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations cannot be amended in time for the introduction of the cap, and they are not expected to be amended until the end of this year. The LGA are seeking urgent clarification from HM Treasury on a number of issues in connection with this, including the apparent conflict between the LGPS Regulations, which until amended require an immediate payment of an unreduced pension from the pension fund for those aged 55 or over on an exit, and the Cap Regulations, which will cap the associated employers' payment into the fund. The LGA are also seeking clarity on how the cap will impact exits under discussion prior to the implementation of the cap.

The LGA provided a webinar on the Exit Payment cap this week the slide deck from that session can be [found on our website](#), a recording of the webinar will be available to download early next week.

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