

LGA/NARE: COVID-19 & Workforce Update

Issue 14: 18th July 2020 – 31th July 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 [COVID-19 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.

GENERAL COVID-19 UPDATE

Local Lockdown Update – Lifting of Restrictions this weekend delayed

[The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(England\) \(No.3\) Regulations 2020](#) came into force on 18 July. The new regulations give local and national government additional powers to stop local transmission of the virus. These will allow them to restrict local public gatherings and events, and close local businesses premises and outdoor spaces. The Department of Health and Social Care has published statutory guidance for councils in England on what the new regulations allow them to do and how they should exercise those powers, how those powers should be enforced and guidance for those affected by local authority directions.

These new local and national powers are further outlined in [the Government's framework for containing and controlling future outbreaks](#) in England.

Last night the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock announced that as a result of localised COVID-19 outbreaks, [new restrictions](#) would be imposed in parts of Greater Manchester, East Lancashire and West Yorkshire from today. These restrictions mean that people should no longer meet indoors or in a private garden with anyone from a different household, unless part of a support bubble. People in the affected areas should not socialise with people they do not live with in other indoor public venues. Local authorities in these areas are working closely with central government and the police to ensure that these restrictions are enforced, with new laws to be passed to enforce these changes.

The Prime Minister also [announced](#) today that several measures to ease lockdown, intended for 1 August will no longer go ahead. Venues that had been due to open tomorrow will not do so until at least 15 August and changes to wedding celebrations will also be postponed.

Vaccines

Over the last fortnight the Government has [signed a deal for the supply of up to 60 million doses of a potential coronavirus vaccine](#), developed by Sanofi Pasteur and GlaxoSmithKline. This has secured early access to 4 different types of immunisation and a total of 250 million doses. They have also secured access to treatments containing COVID-19-neutralising antibodies to protect those who cannot receive vaccines such as cancer and immunocompromised patients. The [University of Oxford also announced positive findings](#) in the development of a vaccine they are leading.

The Government has launched the [NHS COVID-19 vaccine research registry](#). This new website will enable people in the UK to play their part by volunteering for future vaccine studies. The aim is to get 500,000 people signed up by October

NHS Capacity over Winter

To help alleviate excess demand for NHS services during winter, the number of ventilators has been increased, the "biggest ever flu vaccination programme" will be rolled out, Nightingale hospitals will be maintained until the end of March 2021 and £3 billion of new money will be provided to the NHS.

COVID-19 FUNDING UPDATE

As you will recall on 2 July, the Government announced a [new package of financial support for local government](#). This included £500 million of unringfenced funding for local authority spending pressures, a scheme to compensate local authorities for some lost income from some sales, fees and charges, and the ability to spread local tax (council tax and business rates) deficits over three years. On 17th July, [the Government announced individual local authority allocations](#) of the £500 million unringfenced grant. £6 million has been top-sliced to fund a small number of councils to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. The [allocations spreadsheet](#) includes information on how the allocations have been calculated. It also includes a link to a [technical note](#) giving more detail on the design and scope of the scheme, and how both the three-year phasing of collection fund deficits and the income loss scheme for sales fees and charges will work as well as the detailed methodology used for the £500 million allocation.

Fiscal devolution & the Pandemic

This week the LGA launched a new joint report with Localis: '[Fiscal devolution: an international approach](#)'. The report finds that, across the western world, local government has been able to react to the pandemic with greater power and autonomy than in the UK. It finds that authorities in Germany, Switzerland and Holland can access a diverse range of revenue sources and are able to adjust and introduce local levies in consultation with their residents and businesses. On the back of the findings [the LGA has called for the Government to work with councils](#) on how its forthcoming Devolution and Recovery White Paper can explore options for greater fiscal freedom for local communities in the UK. If the UK is to bounce back from the economic shock of COVID-19, it is crucial that councils are empowered to raise more money locally and have greater control over how national taxation is spent.

Data sharing for local outbreak

The Government [announced that enhanced level data](#) will be provided to councils' directors of public health to help with locating and preventing potential future outbreaks. [The LGA response](#) sets out how councils have the unique expertise and understanding of their communities to ensure the test and trace system is effective. It calls for more councils' to be given more powers, flexibilities and the long-term funding to ensure they can manage potential outbreaks and prevent the spread of infection.

COVID-19 ADULT SOCIAL CARE UPDATE

Need for Social Care Reform

In light of the COVID-19 crisis the LGA has developed [a set of seven key principles which must underpin the reform of social care and support](#), considering the lessons learned from the pandemic. These cover every part of social care, support and wellbeing. More than 30 prominent national organisations spanning the health and care sector - including the Alzheimer's Society, NHS Confederation and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services - have acted as signatories to these principles.

Self-Isolation Rules for Overseas Health & Care Workers

There has been a change in isolation rules for health and care workers. Please note this change will enact from 31 July. From this date, registered health and care professionals travelling to the UK from high risk countries will lawfully be required to self-isolate for 14 days. **They will no longer be exempt.** The move will bring health and care professionals in line with the general public and further protects the NHS and social care system from the spread of coronavirus from overseas, as signs of second waves begin to show in other countries.

PPE Update for Care Homes

The guidance for PPE use in [care homes](#) and [domiciliary care](#) has been updated. The updates include the new recommendations (July 2020) for the use of face masks and coverings in care homes to prevent COVID-19 transmission as follows. Additional questions and answers have been added including adapting advice provided by NHS England for hospital settings to this context and updates to some existing questions and answers have been made.

COVID-19 and ethnicity

[UK scientists are to receive Government funding](#) for a series of studies to learn why people from an ethnic minority background are at greater risk from COVID-19. Six projects will analyse data on social circumstances, health and day-to-day activities, as well as investigating genetic risk factors, with one **study following 30,000 health and social care staff for a year**. Greater understanding of why the virus disproportionately affects certain communities and demographics – including people from ethnic minority communities – will help central and local governments across the world defeat this virus.

TESTING UPDATE

The Department of Health and Social Care has published [guidance for the public on the different types of testing](#) available. This includes which types of test they should use and when, and what the public should do when they receive a test result.

The first set of NHS Test and Trace Action Cards, which aim to provide signposting of clear guidance about community protection actions for a range of common scenarios, were published on 24th July. These [quick-reference guides provide key steps to help identify, report and respond to any potential COVID-19 outbreak](#) within local communities. These were produced by NHS Test and Trace with support from the Joint Biosecurity Centre who are taking a leading role in putting these Action Cards together.

These are as follows;

- [Workplace Action Cards](#)
- [Small & Large Gatherings Workplace Action Cards](#)
- [Residential Workplace Action Cards](#)

SCHOOLS COVID-19 UPDATE

The Department for Education has updated [their guidance for schools on full opening from September](#). This outlines what all schools will need to do from the start of the new academic year. Specific updates include more advice on risk management, supporting those with education, health and care plans, and managing contractors and visitors to schools. It also provides clarification on the age requirements relating to face coverings on public transport, details of the test and trace programme and provides advice to staff who are clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable.

The [latest LGA Schools Workforce update](#) includes employer relevant clarification on the above with regards to the use of face coverings and more to support councils and schools planning for the full restart in September.

SHIELDING UPDATE

Shielding clinically extremely vulnerable people

An [updated version of the shielding guidance document](#) was sent to council chief executives this month. The document - intended for councils, Local Resilience Forums and other local delivery partners - follows on from the announcement on the 22 June in which the Government set out the relaxation of advice for those shielding.

Some councils have reported that in some isolated cases there are still employees who are still unable to return to work due to shielding and who cannot work from home or be redeployed at this time. The [12 June NJC Guidance on returning to work](#) is still valid and should be considered when reviewing individual cases.

Quarantine: Travelling / Returning from Spain

The government [updated its advice](#) on countries and territories exempt from 'all but essential' international travel. This update means that from 25 July, the FCO advised against all non-essential travel to Spain, including the Balearic and Canary Islands, based on the current assessment of COVID-19 risks in the country. This advice is based on evidence of increases in cases of COVID-19 in several regions, but particularly in Aragon, Navarra and Catalonia (which include the cities of Zaragoza, Pamplona and Barcelona). The FCO is not advising those already travelling in Spain to leave at this time. If someone is returning from Spain they will be [required to self-isolate for 14 days on their return to the UK](#), but the FCO is not advising people to cut short their visit.

The [NJC circular NJC 5 June](#) provide guidance on Quarantine on entering or returning to the UK. The [NJC circular dated 12 February](#) drew attention to the provision set out in the 'Green Book' sickness scheme at Part 2 Para 10.9, as follows:

"An employee who is prevented from attending work because of contact with infectious disease shall be entitled to receive normal pay. The period of absence on this account shall not be reckoned against the employee's entitlements under this scheme"

The NJC advice was that if an employee was required to self-isolate or was placed in quarantine, the provision above should be applied. However, the advice in that circular, in respect of travel abroad, was intended to cover circumstances in which an employee unwittingly found themselves needing to self-isolate due to regulations in the UK changing whilst they were out of the country.

The situation now is that employees booking holidays from 26th July will be going abroad fully cognisant of the quarantine requirements on re-entering the UK. Accordingly, some employers may assume that an employee who travels abroad in full knowledge of the requirement to self-isolate on their return should be required to take additional leave (paid or unpaid) to cover the 14-day period, unless it is agreed they are able to carry out their work from home.

Job Retention Scheme Reminder

As set out in the LGA's [guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#), councils are reminded that claims under the scheme for periods ending or before 30 June must be submitted by 31 July 2020. That is also the deadline for amending any previous claims to add any additional employees that may have been missed off in error. As of 1 August, although the Government will continue to pay 80 per cent of wage costs, employers will have to pay employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions on that 80 per cent.

[National OD Support Project: Respond & Renew](#)

Thank you to all the councils who have contacted the national OD project to date. Discussions have taken place in the North West, East of England and West Midlands regions. Further regional discussions are due to take place over the coming weeks. If you want to register your interest in support this work please contact [Kash Haroon](#) at North West Employers or [Nigel Carruthers](#) at the LGA.

COVID-19 Cases Tracker data from LG Inform

The LGA has a new and updated suite of publicly available reports using COVID-19 data. The [local authority report](#) gives a quick view of cases for a selected council and comparison group. The [England overview](#) gives data for all councils in England including the top ten councils. The [weekly deaths report](#) gives a summary of Office for National Statistics (ONS) weekly deaths data. The [care homes report](#) focuses on deaths in care homes in particular.

The [vulnerable groups report](#) gives estimates of local population sizes likely to be vulnerable to COVID-19. The [area characteristics report](#) compares case rates to other factors at a local area level, such as deprivation.

Social Work Together Campaign Update

With many councils experiencing a rise in demand for children's social services in recent months, LGA continues to provide an offer of support to councils to help hire experienced social workers without the cost of agency fees. Over 90 councils have signed up to the [Social Work Together](#) campaign and have been given access to a free online search tool, which they can use to connect with social workers ready to return to work in their areas. The LGA developed this free tool in collaboration with Social Work England and central government, to help you recruit social workers whilst redirecting the costs of agency fees to other key areas.

COVID-19 councillor guidance

The LGA have published an [updated version of the COVID-19 councillor guidance](#), originally published back in March. As things have moved on significantly since then, the new [councillor guidance is on reset and recovery](#) and looks at the role that councillors play supporting local communities through the process of recovery.

COVID-19 Local Authority Workforce Data latest report

Thanks again to all those councils who complete the fortnightly COVID-19 Workforce survey. The data is still a key part of LRF dashboards. The headlines from the most recent survey showed that for the fortnight 29th June to week ending 10th July:

- 5350 additional staff had been recruited
- 209 in Service Deaths reported since lockdown (106 councils)
- 7,070 FT staff furloughed - 1% Workforce
- 3,435 PT staff furloughed
- 80% had redeployed staff (in total there were 12,003 staff redeployed)
- 30,462 staff unavailable for work, 5% per cent of the current workforce.
- 31% unavailable through 'self-isolation' and 37% 'Non-COVID sickness'.
- Schools in county council areas most badly due to staffing numbers
- 3% councils reporting PPE shortages
- 84% councils said staff can access testing when they need it
- 58% considering making no substantive changes to staffing numbers in 2020
- 67% considering increasing flexible working options
- 50% considering changing models of service delivery

The [COVID-19 Workforce Data collection](#) will continue throughout the summer and the LGA thanks all councils for their continued support in completing the data returns.

OTHER NEWS

Exit payments

In 2015 the Government first announced plans to introduce [a cap on exit payments in the public sector](#). The cap, which will apply to redundancies and other exits, is set at £95,000 including pension strain costs which can be significant. Earlier this week, HM Treasury published the [Government's response](#) to the consultation (to which [we responded](#) last year) and laid the [implementing regulations](#) in Parliament. As this is an affirmative process, these regulations will need to be debated in Parliament before they come into force. We are considering the text of the regulations and Government's response to the consultation and will update councils further in due course.

Public Service Pensions Consultation and Update

Following the Court of Appeal judgment in December 2018, the Government has been working to fix the discrimination identified in the policy of transitional protection that was part of the 2015 reforms to public service pension schemes. As part of this work, they have launched a [consultation which sets out the proposals for addressing this discrimination in the unfunded public service schemes along with the Government's plans for the future](#). They are asking for your views by 11 October 2020.

Teacher training

The Department for Education has produced a new [Initial teacher training \(ITT\): criteria and supporting advice](#) and [Early Years Initial Teacher Training requirements and support advice](#). Both give advice for providers looking to offer initial teacher training (ITT). If you are aware of any providers who may be interested in applying for early years ITT, you can help them '[Get into Teaching](#)' [here](#).

Teachers Pay – England

The Government published the School Teachers Review Body's (STRB) 30th report on the teachers' pay award for 2020 on Tuesday 21 July 2020, and we have begun consulting with local authorities on the Government's response and the Draft Teachers Pay and Conditions Document. We have launched [a page on our website](#) to bring together all the information you might need in relation to the consultation. Those responses will inform the NEOST response (the national employer's body of which the LGA provides the secretariat).

We are [seeking views to a small number questions](#) through our new webpage. Our consultation closes on 18 August 2020.

Welsh teachers proposed pay award for 2020

The Education Minister for Wales proposed a 3.1% overall pay award for teachers on 29 July. The proposals follow the publication of the [Independent Welsh Pay Review Body \(IWPRB\) report](#) which the Minister has accepted and has also proposed further enhancements to ensure teachers in Wales receive the same increase compared to the [proposal for teachers' pay in England](#). Both the English and Welsh proposals are estimated to add an additional 3.1 per cent (3.2 per cent for London) on the average increase of the teachers' pay bill with no additional funding for the pay awards being announced at the time of publication. The differences include the percentage increases for starting salaries for new teachers with 8.48 per cent in Wales, compared to a 5.5 per cent in England. The proposals for classroom teachers show a 3.75 per cent pay rise in Wales compared to a 2.75 per cent increase in England. School leaders and more experienced teachers are proposed a 2.75 per cent pay raise for both England and Wales.

Details of the NEOST/LGA consultation for England are [here](#).

NHS People Plan

[The NHS have launched their 'People Plan'](#) 30th July. This plan sets out practical actions for employers and systems, as well as the actions that NHS England and NHS Improvement and Health Education England will take, over the remainder of 2020/21.

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