

## LGA/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 22: 14<sup>th</sup> November to 4<sup>th</sup> December 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.

### Vaccine!

This week came an announcement we have all been waiting for as the official regulator [approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#). This provides a way out what has undoubtedly been the most difficult period any of us in local government have experienced. Yesterday the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) [listed the priority groups](#) to be tested first. Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers top the list, followed by all those aged 80 and over and frontline health and social care workers.

The LGA has set up a new page on [COVID-19 vaccination](#). This shares the latest information and guidance relating to the COVID-19 vaccinations and the page includes the Government's COVID-19 communications toolkit. Further resources will follow, and we will continue to update this page with the latest information and guidance.

### Training vaccinators

Health Education England (HEE) are working with individual NHS organisations and driving local recruitment efforts to train and onboard vaccinators. HEE's e-Learning for Healthcare team have worked with PHE to put together and host a comprehensive training package for vaccinators. This was launched on the [e-Learning for Healthcare Hub](#) last Friday. HEE also putting in place national arrangements with NHS Professionals to recruit additional people to support the vaccination roll out, as well as with St John Ambulance to source trained volunteers and train additional volunteers; and taking up the offer made by retired staff to come back to the NHS.

### R Number Falling

It is also welcome to see that the reproduction or [R number has fallen to between 0.8 and 1](#), the second week running. It has been announced (see page 2) that a review of the current tiers will be conducted on 16 December with a view to implement them on 19 December. The new tiers will be announced on 17 December.

## New Local restrictions – Return to Tiers

[The Prime Minister gave a statement to the House of Commons](#) this week on the new coronavirus regulations. He stated that the regulations come with a sunset clause at the end of **2 February**, and that the **Government would review the allocation of tiers every 14 days**, starting on **16 December**. The Prime Minister also called for as many people as possible to take part in community testing, to help areas move down the tiers. A full [cost-benefit analysis](#) of the tiers has also been published.

To help explain the tiers of restrictions, the [Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government \(MHCLG\) has published a series of posters displaying information about the various tiers of restrictions](#) in England.

## Community testing new DHSC Guide Published

On 30<sup>th</sup> November DHSC published an [explainer and guide for local delivery on community testing](#). The guide invites councils with public health responsibilities in Tier 3 areas to work with the Government to develop plans for community testing. The guide sets out what community testing is, how this fits within Whitehall's overarching testing strategy and what support will be available from government. If your council needs any further assistance to develop your plans, please contact [alexander.saul@local.gov.uk](mailto:alexander.saul@local.gov.uk).

## Council Contact Tracing Good Practice

[More than 200 councils](#) have now launched their own locally-supported contact tracing arrangements and the leading role they are playing in tackling the spread of COVID-19 has been illustrated by the [latest COVID-19 test and trace figures](#). The statistics show that that cases handled by these local public health teams are continuing to reach the vast majority of complex cases assigned to them, with a tremendous 99 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.

To help share good practice between councils, we currently have [13 case studies on local contact tracing](#). They showcase successes including councils picking up cases from the national team where contact couldn't be made with infected individuals within 24 hours. If you have any successes or insights you would be willing to share with colleagues please email [alexander.saul@local.gov.uk](mailto:alexander.saul@local.gov.uk).

## LG Inform COVID-19 Workforce Survey: latest update

The LGA is continuing to run a fortnightly workforce data collection for councils to provide vital evidence to monitor the impact of the pandemic. The survey provides vital information to inform government response plans and funding. The survey has been running since May and the latest findings can be found here: [COVID-19 Workforce Survey](#).

To access your council's data and see how this has changed over time, please visit the [Trend report](#). Just use the modifiers to customise the report to your area. If you are not sure if your authority is taking part in this collection, please email [research@local.gov.uk](mailto:research@local.gov.uk)

## Enforcement – Its scotch eggs all round

Many councils have raised several queries relating to the new regulations. The Government has now published a suite of updated guidance on [business closures and restrictions, festive restrictions and activities](#) and [events](#). The LGA is seeking guidance from the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) on the queries raised, and as a reminder, council legal teams and compliance officers can now sign up to OPSS's [business restrictions mailing list](#) to receive their updates, templates notices and guidance directly.

The LGA has updated guidance on the issue of substantial meals as the original version of the guidance already referred to various pork-based snacks, but not scotch eggs! The LGA has also published a [compliance framework](#) on behalf of MHCLG.

## Environmental Health Officers Together campaign – Enforcement 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.

## Environmental health workforce survey – making the case for future resources

This week is the final opportunity to take part in the [Chartered Institute of Environmental Health workforce survey](#) which aims to find out more about the state of the environmental health workforce in local authorities. The data collected as part of this survey will be a vital part in making the case for additional environmental health resource to central government, so please do ask your heads of service to ensure they have completed it, which should take around 15 minutes. The survey will close at the end of this week. Any questions about the survey can be sent to [policy@cieh.org](mailto:policy@cieh.org).

## Job Retention Scheme Extended to 31 March 2021

The [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) has now been further extended until 31 March 2021. As a consequence, the [Job Support Scheme](#) which had originally been planned to replace the Job Retention Scheme from 1 November has been [put on hold](#) as has the [Job Retention Bonus](#).

## COVID-19: volunteering guidance

The Government has published [guidance on volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), to help organisations understand the safe and effective use of volunteers. Amongst other points it confirms that organisations have a duty of care to volunteers to ensure that as far as is reasonably practicable they are not exposed to health and safety risks. It also states that where a volunteer is working in an [essential worker role](#) they will be prioritised for coronavirus testing, and that individuals who are furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme can volunteer for another employer or organisation while furloughed.

## Supporting people who are vulnerable – Updated Advice

Government has issued updated [advice for people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable \(CEV\)](#) based on the [tiers of local restrictions](#). Communications are due to be sent to individual CEV people which may result in increased queries to councils over the coming days.

## Adult social care - Visiting Care homes Updated Guidance published

The Government has published [updated Guidance](#) designed to support families to visit their loved ones in care homes where this can be done safely, alongside proportionate measures to manage and mitigate the risks arising from increased numbers of visitors. The Government have also published [new Guidance](#) for those of working age in residential settings on making visits out of their care setting.

## Adult Social Care - New online Leadership for Personalised Care Programme

An new [online leadership development programme](#) from Leadership for Personalised Care Team, in partnership with the NHS Leadership Academy, has a focus on co-production, personalised care in a complex system, collaborative leadership for personalised care and leading for equality, wellbeing and inclusion. Four free online modules are aimed at leaders at all levels within health and social care. Email [england.leadership@nhs.net](mailto:england.leadership@nhs.net) for more information.

## Adult & Children's Social Work Health Check 2020

The [Social Work Health Check](#) has been live for a week and has had over 1000 responses so far with over 100 councils registering to take part. This version is designed to be used across Adults and Children and Families. Principal Social Workers can implement the Health Check locally and use it to assess the wellbeing of social workers and progress against [the Standards for Employers of Social Workers](#). It's quick and simple to use and will provide organisations with a free bespoke report in January. To opt in email [workforce@local.gov.uk](mailto:workforce@local.gov.uk).

## Schools - School Examinations Support

The Secretary of State for Education has announced that the Government will introduce a [range of extra measures to support students ahead of next summer's exams](#). Further to the three week delay to exams that was announced in October, students will also benefit from more generous grading than usual, in line with national outcomes from 2020, so they are not disadvantaged.

## Schools - Ofsted Inspections Update

Ofsted has announced that inspection activity in 2021 will happen in phases, with no graded inspections for education or social care providers planned before the summer term. Inspectors will discuss the approach to routine inspection in 2021 with sector representatives and test it through a series of pilot visits, where necessary. Additional information on arrangements for maintained schools and nurseries, independent schools, education and skills, early years, children's social care and SEND area inspections is [available on the Department for Education website](#)

## Schools – New Funding to support schools to cover staff absence

Additional funding for schools to cover some of the cost of high levels of staff absence during the pandemic has been [made available](#). The Department for Education has announced that schools facing the greatest combined staffing and funding pressures will be able to claim via a new short-term Covid workforce fund, as part of the government's national priority of keeping education settings open. The fund which will be backdated to 01 November and cover the current half term, with detailed guidance due to be published shortly.

## After Christmas Uni Return – Higher Education Guidance published

The Department for Education has also published [guidance for higher education institutions on managing the return of students after Christmas](#). The guidance recommends a staggered return over five weeks, that students are offered two 'rapid' lateral flow tests three days apart during which period they limit contact with others, and that students travelling from tier 3 areas take a test where possible before returning to University.

## Brexit

The Government has updated its [UK transition local communications toolkit](#) to support your local communications campaigns.

## UK points-based immigration system

From 1 January 2021, free movement between the UK and other members of the EU will end and the new points-based immigration system (which comes into force for others on 1 December 2020) will apply to those who arrive from this date. The new system will then treat EU and non-EU citizens equally and transform the way in which all migrants come to the UK to work.

It will not apply to people who already have legal rights to live and work in the UK such as those who have indefinite leave to enter or indefinite leave to remain in the UK, Irish citizens or other residents from the European Economic Area that are granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

A [full suite of detailed guidance](#) is available on the Home Office website.

## Local government Pay 2021

As set out in our [Spending Review On-the-Day Briefing](#), national government cannot impose a pay freeze nor mandate a pay increase for just lower paid workers in local government or fire and rescue services, as pay is determined between the employers and unions (either nationally or locally). The National Joint Council ('NJC Green Book') unions for local government have informed us that their pay claim will not be lodged until next year. Councils will be consulted on it in order to inform the National Employers' position for when they reach the stage of formally responding.

A continuing huge challenge for the NJC National Employers arises from the Government's target for the National Living Wage (NLW) to reach two thirds of median earnings in 2024; [current forecasts](#) show that to be £10.69 per hour. The bottom hourly rate for 'Green Book' employees is currently £9.25 (outside London) so, if the forecast remains unchanged, there are only three or four pay rounds remaining in order to increase just the bottom pay point by a potential further 15.6 per cent.

Teachers' pay is determined each year by the DfE following recommendations from the independent pay review body, the School Teachers Review Body (STRB). The STRB is given a remit which we expect before Christmas and is likely to reflect the stated government policy on public sector pay. At that point we will consult councils to inform the [National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers \(NEOST\)](#) response. There are still matters to consider beyond the pay award itself, so the remit remains important despite the headline freeze.

### LGA Webinar - A guide to senior manager recruitment for councillors

Friday 15 January 2021, 10.30am – 12.00pm

In the light of the £95K cap it will be more important than ever to ensure members are fully involved in the recruitment to senior posts, and the process is thorough and systematic. In this context the LGA are [running a webinar](#) for elected members, which will highlight the features of a 'good' process and explain their role and responsibilities. The webinar will highlight the need to get some expert advice for members promoting the role and value of regional employers' organisation as the first point of contact for support.

### LGA Webinar - Exit payment reform

Thursday 17 December 2020 12:30 to 1:30

The LGA will be jointly hosting [a webinar](#) to provide an update on exit payment reforms aimed at *teaching and non-teaching staff at academies and non-uniformed staff of police and fire and rescue authorities*. The webinar will cover the latest position on the £95k cap and proposals for further exit payment reforms.

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