

LG/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update Issue 33: 2nd July 2021 to 2nd August 2021

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 General Update

Last week we saw a [37 per cent drop in people testing positive for COVID-19](#) and this is showing that the COVID-19 vaccines are having a positive impact on hospitalisations and deaths. A new study by Public Health England suggests that [COVID-19 vaccines have prevented an estimated 22 million infections and 60,000 deaths in England](#).

The so-called “pingdemic” continues with a record 689,313 alerts sent to users of the NHS COVID-19 app last week telling them they had been in close contact with someone who had tested positive. There are also some concerning signs that public willingness to follow guidance on reducing transmission is waning slightly, with [one in four people aged 18-34 who test positive no longer following the rules for self-isolating for the entire 10-day period](#), a new study by the Office for National Statistics suggests. While the study shows that most people are still following the requirement to self-isolate, levels have dropped in the past two months.

Furthermore [around nine in 10 adults in all parts of the UK are now likely to have COVID-19 antibodies](#), new figures suggest. In England, the latest estimate of 91.9 per cent adults is up from 83.7 per cent a month ago.

Vaccine take-up among young people

[Figures to July 18 suggest that 66.4 per cent of people aged 18 to 29 in England have taken up the offer of a first jab](#). An estimated 73 per cent of women aged 25 to 29 have had a first dose, compared with 66.3 per cent of men. Among 18 to 24-year-olds, 70 per cent of women are estimated to have received one dose, and 62.2 per cent of men.

Vaccination Access

A letter from NHS England, NHS Improvement and Public Health England explains how people do not need to be registered with a GP or have an NHS number to get the COVID-19 vaccine, and reassures that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and available to every adult living in the UK, free of charge without any immigration checks. People can organise their vaccination by contacting their local GP practice or by going to a walk-in or pop-up vaccination centre. This information has also been published in [COVID-19: migrant health guide](#). The letter also advises that children and young people aged 12 years and over with specific underlying health conditions should be offered the COVID-19 vaccination.

Long COVID

Around one in 16 UK adults have experienced Long COVID at some point during the pandemic, [Office for National Statistics data](#) has revealed. Almost a quarter (22 per cent) of those who faced Long COVID reported their household finances had been affected by the pandemic while 30 per cent reported experiencing moderate to severe depressive symptoms in the past two weeks.

International travel and vaccine distribution

[United States and European Union travellers who are fully vaccinated against coronavirus can enter England without the need to quarantine](#) from 4am today (August 2). The exemption will apply to passengers who are fully vaccinated in the EU with vaccines authorised by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) or in the USA with vaccines authorised by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), or in the Swiss vaccination programme. International cruising can now also resume from this date. [Different rules will continue to apply for those arriving from France](#).

COVID-19 post 19 July workforce FAQs

Following the removal of many of the COVID restrictions in England from 19 July, the Government has issued updated workplace guidance for employers. Further information and a link to the latest NJC circular is available on the [LGA website](#). In the LGA Workforce Employee Relations Unit (ERU) the [latest bulletin](#) provides advice on these issues outlining the legal implications.

Municipal waste operatives and self-isolation

The Government has announced that healthcare, hazardous and municipal waste operatives are included in the list of [fully vaccinated critical workers able to leave self-isolation in exceptional circumstances](#). The process applies only to named individuals who have been identified as close contacts and told to self-isolate at the time of the request. This will only apply to a very narrow cohort of critical workers. For the latest version of the list, please refer to the 'critical roles to be undertaken' section of the [request form](#).

Mandatory care home worker vaccinations

Vaccination as a condition of deployment regulations have been signed and therefore the 16-week grace period began last Thursday 22 July. This means that the regulations will come into force on Thursday 11 November. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) intend to publish full guidance for care providers in the coming weeks.

DHSC has created a [digital asset outlining the timeline](#), for you to use if you wish.

DHSC will produce a full impact assessment. As an interim measure, it has published a [Statement of Impact](#). This offers an upper, lower and central estimate of the proportion of the workforce who may be unvaccinated by the end of the grace period: upper 12%; lower 3%; central 7% - which equates to roughly 40,000 workers in CQC-registered care homes.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Employees

Employers will need to consider what steps they may need to take in respect of workers who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV). Where possible that will include allowing CEV workers to work at home, or if they need to return to the workplace, specific measures that may need to be taken. The Government has produced [guidance](#) on this, alongside [HSE guidance](#) and the NJC for Local Government Services also included advice in the [NJC Circular COVID-19: working arrangements from 19 July](#)

The Government guidance also indicates that it may be possible to place CEV individuals on the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#), which is available until 30 September 2021.

Vaccinations for pregnant women

[Public Health England, the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, are encouraging more pregnant women to take up the offer of a COVID-19 vaccine.](#) The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are recommended for pregnant women in the UK.

NHS COVID pass

[Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi has laid out plans for a UK-wide NHS Covid pass.](#) Available via the NHS App (not the NHS COVID-19 App), the NHS website or by asking for a written document it will be able to be used by people to demonstrate their COVID-19 status, whether it is proof of vaccination status, test results, or natural immunity. Businesses and organisations in England will be able to adopt the pass as a means of entry where it is suitable for their venue or premises when they can see its potential to keep their clients or their customers safe.

Public Health at the Front Line

In a [series of interviews](#), directors of public health from across the country talk about the local response to COVID-19. Since March 2020, the LGA have conducted over 40 interviews with Directors of Public Health, the latest update includes interviews with Dr Rachel Wigglesworth (Cornwall), Dr Helen Lowey (Bolton) and Vicki Head (Bedford, Milton Keynes and Central Beds)

COVID-19: good council practice

The LGA have updated their website so that a wide range of resources focusing on [good council practice can be found in one new hub](#). The LGA will continue to build on this range of resources to help councils as they navigate the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

ADASS/ ADPH Guidance: Exceptional exemptions from self-isolation following COVID exposure

On 22 July, guidance for managers and staff in health care settings was updated. On 26 July, DHSC wrote to stakeholders explaining the policy further and sharing a Q&A. ADASS and ADPH have stressed the clinical vulnerability of many of those people supported by frontline social care staff, so have underlined the importance of careful risk assessments, mitigations, and a case by case approach, in which decision making is time-specific and regularly refreshed. Building on the excellent work of regional and local colleagues, ADASS has worked with ADPH to put together the following documents to support decision making:

- [Self-Isolation Exemption - General Guidance](#)
- [Decision Making Flow-Chart and Risk Assessment Template](#)

Resources to encourage vaccine take by unpaid carers

DHSC has worked with Carers UK to create a new video encouraging unpaid carers to get their COVID vaccination. It's now available on the [DHSC Adult Social Care YouTube](#). The original file can be downloaded via [Google Drive](#). The video has been shared across DHSC social media channels and will be cascaded through its adult social care newsletter this week see the social media links below:

- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

Adult social care : new workforce vision and priorities

The LGA has published a new shared vision and priorities on [what a social workforce strategy should include](#) alongside the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, Care Provider Alliance, Care and Support Alliance, Skills for Care, Social Care Institute for Excellence and Think Local Act Personal. These priorities have been developed based on shared understanding from leaders in adult social care of the key workforce challenges which they say must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Pupil testing and isolation

The Department for Education has produced [updated FAQs](#) on the role of Test and Trace and schools in responding to an occasion where a pupil tests positive for COVID-19. It says schools should not ask pupils to self-isolate, although they may want to take extra precautions should any pupils or staff be clinically extremely vulnerable. When schools return in September, no pupils should be self-isolating unless they have had a positive PCR test. No child under 5 will be expected to have a PCR test unless a member of their own household tests positive. The FAQs clarify that schools should not assist carers in identifying the close contact of their child as this contravenes GDPR legislation. If local public health teams are concerned there is an outbreak in a school, they can directly work with the school to identify contacts. Schools should also be informing their local public health team if they are concerned there is an outbreak.

Better Health campaign

[Public Health England \(PHE\) has launched the latest Better Health campaign](#) to encourage adults across the nation to lose excess weight, eat healthier and get active this summer. The new campaign offers [free evidence-based support and guidance](#) to those working towards a healthier weight. There are a variety of NHS endorsed apps which will help people to introduce changes that will help them eat better and get active this summer, including the newly updated NHS Weight Loss Plan app. Councils are encouraged to share details of the new health campaign with their communities and other interested parties.

Local government pay offer

The National Employers have made a final pay offer of 1.75 per cent for all staff covered by the National Joint Council for [local government services \('Green Book'\)](#), with the exception of pay point 1 where the offer is 2.75 per cent. The offer also includes proposals on producing joint guidance on homeworking; mental health support; and the national maternity scheme. Pay offers have also been made to council [Chief Executives](#) (1.5 per cent), [Chief Officers](#) (1.5 per cent) and [Craftworkers](#) (1.75 per cent).

Teachers Pay

[Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has confirmed](#) that there will be a pay freeze for most teachers in England in 2021/22. Teachers earning under £24,000 will receive an uplift of £250 to their annual salary. All the information regarding [teachers' pay for 2021 is now available on our website](#), including the [link to our short consultation](#) which we are asking local authorities to complete by 24 August.

NHS Pay

NHS staff in England including nurses, paramedics, consultants, salaried GPs, dentists, porters and cleaners are to receive a 3 per cent pay increase, the Department for Health and Social Care has announced. It will be backdated to April. This pay increase will not include specialist doctors or doctors and dentists currently in training. It is not clear whether the cost of the rise will be met from existing NHS budgets or not. The Government has also said pay for police officers earning over £24,000 would be frozen this year.

Hybrid Working the employment law implications

As the COVID restrictions ease and thoughts focus on staff returning to the workplace, many local authorities are looking at embedding [hybrid models of working](#), which feature a mixture of office and remote working, whether that be at the employee's home or elsewhere. There will be differences of approach in terms of whether the new ways of working become compulsory or remain optional for employees and there will be consideration as to whether existing contracts and policies provide the necessary powers and flexibilities for employers to impose changes. Details of those considerations are set out in the LGA's ERU [Advisory Bulletin 691](#).

ACAS has issued guidance on managing the transition to [hybrid working](#). The resources include advice on preparing and consulting on a policy and treating staff fairly. LGA has also produced its own [information and resources on new ways of working](#)

EU Settlement Scheme late applications

Councils are still supporting their communities to apply for the EU settlement scheme, with the Home Office continuing to accept applications after the June deadline. Updated [community toolkit and guides](#) for late applicants and citizens with status/pending applications have been issued, alongside the toolkits for [councils](#), [landlords](#) and [employers](#). The Department for Work and Pensions is working with councils on encouraging those receiving benefits to apply within the current grace period and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services has [resources](#) and [webinars](#) aimed at those working with adults receiving care and support who may still need to apply.

Public sector exit payments update

MHCLG has published a [further time series on exit payment data](#) which went live on 30th July (please note that the file on the site is in OpenDocument format which you may need to convert into Excel in order to see all the data).

T Level incentives and council support

The DfE have announced that employers will be able to [claim up to £20k by hosting T Level industry placements](#), as part of a new incentive scheme. The LGA is providing [support to councils so they can set up and run T Level industry placements](#)

Green jobs

The Independent Green Jobs Taskforce, [convened in November 2020](#), has published its [findings and 15 recommendations on how the government, industry and skills sector can best deliver the green jobs and skills of the future](#). The taskforce, made up of members from industry, trade unions and the skills sector, calls for more to be done to promote good green jobs, skills and competitive supply chains and ensure green careers advice and pathways into good green jobs.

The Government's [Skills Bootcamp](#) training programmes will be expanded across the country, offering an extra 16,000 fully funded places for adults to upskill or retrain, the Department for Education has announced.

Further education and adult skills funding

The Government has announced a [consultation](#) to simplify further education funding and accountability systems. It proposes to replace the Adult Education Budget (AEB) – which currently funds local authority adult and community learning provision – with a new Skills Fund. The closing date is October 7. To feed into the LGA response, please email jasbir.jhas@local.gov.uk by 16 September.

A further National Skills Fund [consultation](#) is also looking at the offers that it is funding including the new publicly funded level 3 qualifications offer, skills bootcamps and how it can meet critical skills needs. The closing date is 17 September.

Skills trailblazers

The [18 successful Skills Accelerator trailblazers](#) have been announced. They will test new ways of working between employers, colleges and other FE providers, and local stakeholders to shape technical skills provision so that it meets local labour market needs.

Youth unemployment Parliamentary Committee

The [Youth Unemployment Committee](#) heard from Nick Gibb MP, the Minister for School Standards and Gillian Keegan MP, the Minister for Digital Apprenticeships and Skills. Ms Keegan highlighted that youth unemployment has risen to 13.2 per cent, and said the Government is focussed on preventing young people from becoming Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) by ensuring they stay in education until age 18, and can take up opportunities to move into work through the Government's introduction of kickstart, traineeships and expanded apprenticeships. The Minister acknowledged that the analysis of the skills gap needs improving to align training with jobs, and said that the Government hopes to achieve this through establishing a national skills and productivity board, and working collaboratively with employers, local authorities and education providers. In [the LGA's written evidence](#) to the Committee earlier this year, LGA made a case for moving towards a place-based, integrated skills and employment system to deliver the best outcomes for young people in every community.

In other news....

Unitary councils - Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick has announced [new unitary councils will be created in Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Somerset](#) to replace the current two-tier system. In North Yorkshire and Somerset, a new single unitary council will be established for each county area. For Cumbria two unitary councils will be established - an East unitary council covering Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland and a West unitary council covering Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland. The plans will be subject to Parliamentary approval and the LGA is ready to support all the councils in these areas during the transition.

Model Councillor Code of Conduct guidance

The LGA have published [supporting guidance](#) which is aimed to help understanding and consistency of approach towards the [Model Councillor Code of Conduct](#). The code, together with the guidance, has been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct, and safeguard the public's trust and confidence in the role of councillor in local government.

New NHS England chief executive appointed

[Amanda Pritchard has been appointed as the new chief executive of NHS England](#). Ms Pritchard has held roles across the health service, including running the London trust Guy's and St Thomas' and as chief executive of NHS Improvement. She has been working as NHS England's chief operating officer and will take over from Lord Stevens.

And finally.....Happy Birthday LG Inform!

[LG Inform](#), the LGA's free online data and benchmarking service which provides contextual and performance data for your local area, celebrates its 10th birthday in July. We were launched at the LG Inform Conference in 2011 with a prototype site containing just 300 metrics.

Ten years on, ninety-six per cent of councils are signed up to LG Inform. Users are reviewing and comparing performance with other authorities via the LG Inform [themed reports](#) or finding specific [metrics from the database](#), which now contains over 8,500 items.

--end---