

LG/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update Issue 30: Week Ending 7th May

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.

General COVID Update

On Monday, the Government will announce whether the [further easing of national restrictions](#) will come into effect as planned on May 17. This would include the return of international travel, indoor gatherings and overnight stays involving two households or six individuals, indoor opening at pubs and restaurants, the re-opening of cinemas and hotels and limited events at sporting venues.

With case rates and deaths continuing to fall, the signs are promising. [The R number for England has fallen slightly to between 0.8 and 1, latest figures show](#). A total of 15,593 people tested positive for COVID-19 in England at least once in the week to April 28, according to the [latest Test and Trace figures](#). This is down 8 per cent on the previous week and is the lowest number since the week to September 2. The number of patients in hospital in England with COVID-19 has dropped below 1,000 for the first time since September. [Deaths involving COVID-19 among people aged 70 and over have fallen by 98 per cent since the second-wave peak in January](#). Deaths for those aged 65-69 fell 96 per cent in the same period, with drops of 95 per cent for those aged 60-64 and 96 per cent for those aged both 55-59 and 50-54.

COVID-19 vaccinations

[The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\) has issued advice to the Government today](#) suggesting preference for adults aged 30 to 39 without underlying health conditions to receive an alternative to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine – where this is available and only if this does not cause substantial delays in being vaccinated.

The [Government has this week confirmed its intention to offer COVID-19 booster jabs to those most vulnerable to the virus from September](#).

Vaccination data in LG Inform

[LG Inform report on vaccination data](#) has been updated to reflect the recent publication of second dose statistics at local authority level. The report allows you to view the count and rate of first and second dose vaccinations in your area, both overall and by age-bands. Simply select your authority at the top of the report.

COVID-19 vaccine efficacy

The [first nationwide data from Israel shows that two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer/BioNTech can provide more than 95 per cent protection against infection](#), severe illness and death. More than half of the Israeli population have received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine. A single dose of the jab, meanwhile, is associated with 58 per cent protection against infection, 76 per cent against hospital admission, and 77 per cent against death, research published in the journal The Lancet suggests.

Encouraging vaccine take-up Government UK Campaign

The Government has launched the 'Every vaccination gives us hope' campaign, to encourage under-50s to take up the offer of a COVID-19 vaccine during the second phase of the roll-out. [Adverts](#) aim to highlight the significant role the vaccine is playing in preventing infections, hospitalisations and deaths as we continue on the path back to recovery and re-set. The adverts will run across TV, radio, multicultural media, social media and billboards in prominent locations across the UK.

Surge testing – Sharing Learning

The presentations from [Manchester City Council](#) and [Surrey County Council](#), who shared their experiences of, and learnings from surge testing for variants of concern are available on the LGA website. There is also [a presentation from the Department of Health and Social Care](#) (DHSC), who focused on the task of surge testing across London's Wandsworth and Lambeth boroughs.

COVID-status certification

[The Government published statement in Parliament on COVID-status certification.](#) The Government has previously committed to explore whether and how COVID-status certification might be used to reopen the economy, reduce restrictions on social contact and improve safety. The statement, confirmed that the Government will trial COVID-status certification in certain settings such as large events but also set out that there are some settings, including essential public services, public transport and essential shops, where certification should never be required. The government committed to continuing to explore the equity and ethical concerns about any form of COVID-status certification which will be set out ahead of any full implementation.

Secondary school COVID-19 case rate study

Around 0.33 per cent of pupils and 0.32 per cent of staff in secondary schools tested positive for COVID-19 from mid to late March, according to the [Schools Infection Study by the Office for National Statistics, Public Health England and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine](#). This compares with 1.22 per cent and 1.64 per cent respectively in December.

Home testing kits for schools Update

The Government has [updated guidance for schools and further education \(FE\) providers](#) on the supply of COVID-19 home testing kits for pupils, teachers and staff. The update includes information to explain when schools and further education providers may provide Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test kits to staff or students who are showing symptoms of COVID-19 and how they can order further PCR tests for symptomatic testing.

Variant of Concern PHE Update

Public Health England has declared [a coronavirus strain first detected in India as a Variant of Concern \(VOC\), following a rise in cases in the UK and evidence of community transmission](#). PHE says there is currently insufficient evidence to indicate that any of the variants recently detected in India cause more severe disease or render the vaccines currently deployed any less effective.

Applying behavioural insights to improve COVID vaccination uptake

The LGA have published [a new resource for councils which are working to encourage COVID-19 vaccine uptake](#); show how behavioural insights (BI) can be applied to specific challenges related to vaccine uptake; and provide support for councils that are interested in applying more advanced BI methods, tools, and techniques.

Online 'Council' meetings Update

Following the recent judgement relating to online and hybrid meetings, the [High Court has made an additional judgement](#) relating to public access to meetings under the Local Government Act 1972. The question was whether a meeting which is required by the 1972 Act to take place in person is “open to the public” or “held in public” if the only means by which the public are permitted to access it are online. The court found that a meeting involves participants gathering to meet face-to-face at a designated physical location and “attending” a meeting involves physically going to that location. A requirement that this meeting is to be “open to the public” or “held in public” means that members of public must be admitted in person to the place where the meeting is being held.

However, the judges held that this does not prevent a local authority from broadcasting or live-streaming some or all its meetings to allow wider public access. But such broadcasting or live-streaming does not, on its own, satisfy the requirement for the meeting to be “open to the public” or “held in public”. However, they suggested that the numbers of the members of the public who should be admitted in person would be subject to current public health or government guidance.

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.

Non-COVID Updates

Local elections - councillor hub

The LGA has developed a new councillor hub to provide newly elected members with all the essential information they need and complement the induction support councils have in place. It covers the councillor's role, how local government is organised, the model code of conduct and standards and decision making. It includes information on the offers and services offered by the LGA with links to the political groups at the LGA, regional teams, information on our support and development offers and a host of other information essential for newly elected members. The Hub is a live and evolving resource which will be updated and provide information and links relevant to new members. Do signpost newly elected councillors to the hub as a means of accessing essential information about local government.

Local elections - newly elected councillors webinars

Following the elections yesterday the LGA is providing webinars for all newly elected councillors to attend virtual national welcome events, hosted via Zoom. This will be a great opportunity for new councillors to explore what their role means, learn about challenges facing councils, and meet colleagues from other councils. The session will cover a range of national and regional issues of interest, along with an opportunity to meet experienced councillors.

The virtual events are free and will run for 90 mins at 2pm on 11 June, 10am on 22 June and 5.30pm on 28 June and delegates can choose to attend one of these sessions to suit their availability. The sessions will be hosted by the LGA and will complement regional and council's own induction programmes. To register please visit the [LGA's events page](#).

Mental Health Awareness Week 10th-16th May – PHE Resources

Next week, 10 - 16 May, is Mental Health Awareness week and this year's theme is 'nature'. Public Health England (PHE) has developed a range of communication materials that councils can use during Mental Health Awareness Week, available on their [Campaign Resource Centre](#).

Academy trusts

All schools will have the option to 'try the academy experience before they buy' for a set period with no commitment, the Education Secretary has announced. In [a speech to the Confederation of School Trusts](#), the Government's vision is for every school to be part of a family of schools in multi-academy trusts.

Workforce data update

The LGA has provided an updated [workforce data summary](#), available in an Infographic as well as accessible format. Updates include workforce numbers and some information on social care. The aim of which is provide quick access to the various sources of workforce data provided by the LGA.

Return to Work Campaigns end

[The LGA has closed the Return to Work programmes](#), the campaigns which aimed to help councils fill their employment vacancies and help people return to work following a career break. The campaign helped to prepare more than 300 professionals across the ICT, Planning and Social Work sectors to re-enter the workplace with renewed confidence and refreshed skills. Congratulations to those completing the programme.

Teacher Pension - "End Of Year Certificate" Webinars

The Teacher Pension Service have set up 3 webinars to take Employers through completing their "End Of Year Certificate" (EOYC). The webinars are ideal for any employers new to the task or in need of a refresher. The webinars will take place during May before the EOYC deadline. To find out more and book their place, Employers can follow the link [here](#)

Workforce Improvement Support: Strategy Workforce Planning

As part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) improvement grant the LGA is providing up to 25 councils with targeted support on Strategic Workforce Planning in 2021. To apply for this fully funded support offer please follow the link [WFP2021](#) the deadline for applications has been extended to 14th May

Hybrid Working Support Update

The LGA has hosted two successful Roundtable events on Hybrid working which was complimented by the National OD Network session run by North West Employers this week. The sessions focused on new ways of working and over 100 councils we able to share practice and gain insights into developing Hybrid working. There is a further national Round table session planned for [12th May](#) and some regions are holding sessions for council HR teams in their area. The learning from these events will be shared further. If your council is developing a Hybrid approach to work please share your ideas, progress and learning by contacting nigel.carruthers@local.gov.uk

Environmental Health Together Update

Environmental Health Together programme continues to gather momentum. The programme is the dedicated solution for councils experiencing capacity issues within their environmental health departments as they respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Backed by government, it is a register of professionals with relevant environmental health qualifications and experience who have signed up to assist LAs during this crisis. It is free, easy to use and the process is simple. Once access is granted, you can search candidates by location, skills and experience to find the best match for your requirements. By taking advantage of remote working, you can include potential candidates who might normally be geographically out of reach, thereby increasing the number available to you. For more information see the [LGAs website](#)

Proposal for new data return on exit payments Update

As you are aware a letter proposing a specification for a new data return on exit payments was sent to Chief Financial Officers and representatives on 6th April. This included an online survey questionnaire as an efficient method to gather feedback on the proposal. The deadline for responses on the proposal was 26th April. The LGA is in discussions with MHCLG seeking clarifications on the specifications, purpose and timing of this new data return.

And finally, the LGA has a new President....

[Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson is to become the new LGA President](#), succeeding outgoing President Lord Kerlake. As a Crossbench Peer and LGA Vice President, she has used her experience and knowledge during debates in the House of Lords and spoken on a range of issues including disability rights, welfare reform, and sport. We look forward to working with Baroness Grey-Thompson, who will be formally elected at the LGA's General Assembly in July, to ensure local government continues to have a strong, credible, and influential voice within Parliament.

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