

LG/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update Issue 31: Week Ending 4th June

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

A total of 17,162 people tested positive for COVID-19 in England at least once in the week to May 26, up 22 per cent on the previous week, according to the [latest Test and Trace figures](#). COVID-19 case rates have increased in all regions of England, according to the [latest weekly surveillance report from Public Health England](#). However, the highest rate is among 10 to 19-year-olds, with 72.3 cases per 100,000 people in the seven days to May 30, up week-on-week from 55.1. The second highest rate is among 20 to 29-year-olds, up from 31.6 to 52.

Latest figures show the proportion of deaths involving coronavirus in England and Wales is at its lowest level since September. [There were 9,860 deaths from all causes registered in the week ending May 21, according to the Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#). Of these, 1.1 per cent had “coronavirus” mentioned on the death certificate. At the peak of the second wave, in the week ending January 29, COVID-19 accounted for 45.7 per cent of registered deaths.

Vaccinations

[Three quarters of adults in the UK have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine with half of adults in the UK estimated to have received both doses](#). Working in partnership with NHS colleagues, councils can be hugely proud of the vital role they have played in this extraordinary effort and incredible achievement.

Future pandemic planning

Chief Scientific Officer [Sir Patrick Vallance has written about the Government’s aim to have high-quality vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics available at scale within 100 days of any future pandemic being declared](#). Sir Patrick admits the target is “extremely ambitious” but insists it is a target that the world can and should measure progress against.

Variant testing

The [Delta coronavirus variant \(first originated in India\) is now believed to be dominant in the UK](#), with a total of 12,431 cases now confirmed, up 79 per cent from last week, Public Health England said.

[COVID-19 testing is being stepped up in Blackburn with Darwen](#). People without symptoms who live, work or study in certain postcodes are being asked to take a PCR test at any of its five new mobile testing units amid concerns over the spread of the Delta variant (first identified in India). [Surge testing is also being deployed in Derbyshire](#) following the identification of a small number of confirmed cases of the same variant.

COVID-19 health inequalities

The Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch has published a [third quarterly report summarising work undertaken by government departments, councils and others to reduce COVID-19 disparities](#). The report focuses on the work done to increase vaccine uptake amongst ethnic minority groups, particularly during Ramadan and extending the use of places of worship as vaccination centres. The report also summarises the progress of the Community Champions scheme, outlining activity across the 60 local authorities that received funding through this scheme

Vaccinations – ethnic minority communities

The Government has [published a report which highlights improving vaccine confidence among ethnic minority groups](#). The data shows vaccine confidence has steadily increased with 93 per cent of adults reporting positive sentiment towards the vaccine saying they have already been vaccinated, or would be likely to accept a vaccine. However, some groups are still less likely to get the jab with 30 per cent of Black or Black British adults reported vaccine hesitancy, the highest compared with all ethnic groups.

Vaccinations – social care workers

While the majority of social care workers have taken up the COVID-19 vaccine, some may still have questions or concerns about getting vaccinated. In this light, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) hosted a webinar with Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, and Dr Nikita Kanani, Director of Primary Care at NHS England, to give social care workers the opportunity to have their questions answered about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines. [The webinar was recorded and is available online for those who couldn't attend](#).

Withdrawal of COVID-19 parking pass for critical care workers

Following the publication of its roadmap for lifting COVID-19 restrictions, the Government has now [published its decision](#) to withdraw the emergency parking pass and guidance by 21 June 2021. The Government advice is that those who have been distributing paper versions of the pass can now desist from issuing new parking passes wherever possible. This is in line with the joint LGA, British Parking Association (BPA) and London Councils [advice issued in April](#) issued in April which sets out operational advice to councils, including the phased withdrawal of the pass.

International travel

The Government's COVID-19 global travel taskforce, chaired by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps and Health Secretary Matt Hancock, has announced details of the first three-week review of the Department for Transport (DfT) traffic light system around international travel. [Portugal \(including Madeira and the Azores\) has been moved to amber list. Seven countries – Afghanistan, Bahrain, Costa Rica, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Trinidad and Tobago – have also been added to the red list.](#) The changes will come into effect from 4am on June 8.

The Government has published an [updated toolkit setting out key messages and assets](#) to help councils communicate awareness and requirements for international travel.

With the new system for international travel, the LGA has published [joint guidance](#) with the unions to support the continued safe return of schools after school holidays.

Surge testing communications: Lambeth Council case study

As some of our colleagues continue to lead on local surge testing, you might be interested to read [this report from the London Borough of Lambeth](#) on their approach to communications and engagement on surge testing. Back in early April, the council was tasked with surge testing hundreds of thousands of residents alongside their neighbouring borough of Wandsworth. Here, the council outlines its challenges, approach and lessons learned from its communications response.

Booster study

A [new government-funded clinical trial will look at the potential impact of different COVID-19 'booster' vaccines](#). The Cov-Boost study, led by University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, will trial seven existing vaccines and provide vital data on the impact of a third dose on patients' immune responses. Some 2,886 people aged 30 and older are being recruited at 18 NHS sites, with the first booster jabs expected to be administered in early June. The initial findings of the world-leading study are expected in September.

COVID-19 vaccines for care homes staff

On 14 April the Government published a consultation on 'Making [Covid-19] vaccination a condition of deployment in older adult care homes'. This recognised that, while vaccination uptake rates amongst older adult care home residents and staff have increased week on week, the figure for staff masked significant variation at regional, local and individual care home level. The consultation posed a series of questions around the core proposal of introducing a new requirement on older adult care home providers to deploy only those workers who have received their Covid-19 vaccination. The consultation was extended to 26 May and the LGA's [submission is available on our website](#). The government is considering the consultation feedback and will publish its response shortly.

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.

Living Longer Evidence Cards

The Centre for Ageing Better have launched a new set of [downloadable evidence cards](#) about living longer, to help professionals better understand the evidence base and opportunities around demographic changes and trends. They've been designed to use in workshops and provide key stats and context around England's ageing population through infographics.

EU Settlement Scheme

June 1st marked 30 days to the deadline for applications to the [EU Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\)](#). The [Association of Directors of Adult Social Services](#) is grant funded by the Home Office (HO) to support councils and the adult social care sector, raise awareness and increase applications. It is hosting a [series of webinars](#) in the run-up to the deadline and afterwards, with a focus on issues councils have been raising such as signposting people to support, the impact of the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) policy and those needing late applications. The [No Recourse to Public Funds Network](#) has updated its [factsheet on the process and possible impacts on individuals and on councils](#). The HO has [shared new social media 30 Days To Go resources](#) to help highlight the fast-approaching deadline [for applications via their dedicated website](#).

Education recovery plan

Pupils will be offered up to 100 million hours of tuition as part of the Government's catch-up programme for children in England who have faced disruption to schooling during the pandemic. [The Department for Education \(DfE\) has announced £1 billion to support up to six million, 15-hour tutoring courses for disadvantaged pupils](#), as well as an expansion of the 16-19 tuition fund which will target subjects such as maths and English. A further £400 million will go towards providing high-quality training to early years practitioners and school teachers to ensure children progress while some Year 13 students will be given the option to repeat their final year if they have been badly affected by COVID-19.

Recovery support should be made available to all children and young people but – as the LGA set out in a [media response](#) - it is vital that vulnerable children, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, are the focus of this work. Councils stand ready to use their role as local leaders and education system conveners to ensure that the Government's national education recovery objectives meet the needs of local communities.

You will have seen that the [Government's education recovery commissioner Sir Kevan Collins has resigned his position](#), suggesting the package announced by the Government "falls far short of what is needed".

Children's services overspend

Supporting and protecting vulnerable children is one of the most important roles played by councils but the demand on children's social care services is unsustainable. [The LGA have warned that more than eight in 10 councils in England responsible for children's social care overspent in the year to 2019/20 amid soaring demand to help safeguard children and funding pressures.](#) This comes despite councils increasing their budgets by £535 million that year and by £1.1 billion in the past two years. The LGA will continue to stress that it remains critical that children's services are fully funded to give children the right help at the right time, which includes providing the early intervention and prevention support that can stop children and families reaching crisis point in the first place.

Social Work Teaching Partnership Programme

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced the expansion of the Social Work Teaching Partnership Programme, inviting local authorities and universities not already involved in the programme, to apply to take part for 2021/2022. It aims to strengthen collaborations between local authorities and universities to ensure a steady stream of high-calibre social workers to the frontline, working with children, families, and vulnerable adults. Applications are now open. Please email the Social Work Teaching Partnership Programme for an application form and any queries you may have at socialwork.teachingpartnerships@education.gov.uk.

Local employment and skills recovery hub

Throughout the pandemic, local government has been leading efforts to coordinate employment, training and business support locally. The LGA have launched a [Local employment and skills recovery learning hub](#) to share learning across the sector. It brings together practical examples of what councils and combined authorities have done during the pandemic to coordinate a local jobs and skills offer plus some reflections on what council teams may need in the future, alongside tips on what the sector can do to ensure jobs and skills are at the heart of local recovery. Alongside this [the LGA launched a report capturing learning to support councils to identify challenges in fulfilling their statutory duties for young people](#) and identify solutions.

Skills and Post-16 Education Bill

The [Government has introduced the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill in Parliament](#). The Bill sets out the Government's plan to reform the skills system and help communities recover from the pandemic, through introducing more routes into skilled employment and boosting opportunities to train and retrain in sectors the economy needs such as engineering, digital, clean energy and manufacturing. Alongside the Bill, the Government has also launched a new £83 million Post-16 Capacity Fund, to support further education providers to build more facilities in areas where there is an increase in 16-19 year old students for the 2022/23 academic year. As leaders of place, councils are uniquely placed to bring together these diverse national schemes to ensure delivery on the ground is more effective. As the Bill makes its way through Parliament, the LGA will continue to make the case for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service that brings together information, advice and guidance, alongside existing and new training schemes to best meet the needs of communities.

Remote meetings

At the first Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government webinar since the local elections, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick reiterated his view that it would be good to find an opportunity to legislate to allow councils to run virtual and hybrid council meetings but stressed there remains a lot of competition for government parliamentary time. He added that MHCLG will be closely considering what is submitted to the [call for evidence on Virtual and hybrid meetings](#), which closes on June 17. The LGA continues to encourage councils to respond to the call for evidence and provide as much information as possible. If you have already submitted your call for evidence and would like to share it with the LGA please email Jessica.norman@local.gov.uk.

Emergency Alerts

The Government is launching a new [Emergency Alerts](#) system this summer, which will warn people via their mobile phone or tablet if there's a danger to life nearby, such as severe flooding or a terror attack. Councils are being encouraged to raise awareness of the initiative through their communication channels ahead of the national launch date which is yet to be confirmed.

World Environment Day

Tomorrow (5th June), the UK and beyond will be celebrating [World Environment Day](#) – an annual United Nations initiative which has been encouraging awareness and action on protecting the environment since 1974. This year the day will be used to raise global awareness on restoring our planet's ecosystems. You can find some video examples of a wide range of environmental projects and activities that councils are leading alongside their residents and businesses at the LGA's [A local path to net zero](#) hub.

Platinum Jubilee celebrations

[The Royal Family has announced details of national events to be held to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next summer.](#) It will be the first time a British sovereign has been on the throne for seven decades. Events will include a live concert and a service of thanksgiving while a four-day bank holiday weekend will run from Thursday 2 June until Sunday 5 June, with the late May bank holiday moving to 2 June to allow the extended break. [Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will be working with councils and communities to plan street parties, events, decorating our high streets and a national network of beacons.](#)

Procurement guidance

[New information and guidance](#) published in a [Procurement Policy Note by the Cabinet Office has set out how public spending should help drive wider benefits,](#) from job creation to helping protect the environment. It is aimed at officials in central government as well as those at other public organisations such as local authorities, NHS trusts and police forces, all of whom will be required to have regard to national strategic priorities for public procurement alongside their own local priorities.

T Level - Employer Incentives £1k per student

The DfE have announced that employers will be able to claim £1000 for every T Level student they host on a high-quality industry placement, as part of a new incentive scheme <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cash-boost-for-t-levels>. The T Level employer incentive fund recognises the impact of the pandemic on many businesses, and has been designed to help cover financial constraints employers may face as a barrier to hosting placements in the short term. Employers will be able to claim £1000 for up to 20 students they host on a 45 day (315 hour) industry placement, from now until July 2022.

DfE also provided an [Employer Guide](#) to help employers understand how to host an industry placement. This includes details on what is expected of employers during the placement. If you would like support or help in providing a T Level Industry placement in your council please contact the LGAs T Level Advisor Sadique.miah@local.gov.uk or for more information join the DfE [Live panel discussion on T Levels](#) on 10th June.

Apprenticeships

From 1st June, [employers of all sizes in England can now claim £3,000 for each new apprentice hired as a new employee from 1 April until 30 September](#). The incentive is designed to help more employers invest in the skilled workforce they need.

Exit payment data and guidance

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has requested exit pay data from councils going back to 2014/15 with data for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to be uploaded by Monday 14 June via the DELTA platform. It has asked for data for the years of 2014/15 to 2018/19 to be uploaded by Wednesday 30 June.

The [Treasury guidance detailing the criteria that public sector employers should consider before proposing a special severance payment to employees](#) only applies to central government departments, but similar guidance will be published by MHCLG shortly which will apply to councils.

Diverse by Design – a new workforce equalities guide

The LGA have published a [new guide](#) which captures 15 key steps that we believe are fundamental in helping local government employers to embed fair values, systems and behaviours throughout their organisation.

Local government pay

The local government trade unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) have today rejected the [1.5 per cent pay offer](#) made last week to local government services ('Green Book') employees. The unions have asked for urgent talks with the National Employers.

Firefighters' pay

The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services negotiating body covers firefighters and roles up to, and including, middle managers. A pay claim has been received seeking an '...increase of more than £4,000 to restore real wages...' and 'a settlement for 2021 [that] should urgently begin to address this through an immediate and significant pay rise as well as by setting out a roadmap for further significant improvements in pay'. The National Employers will be consulting fire and rescue authorities before considering a response.

Senior fire service managers' pay

The NJC for Brigade Managers covers senior fire service managers such as chief fire officers, deputy chief fire officers and assistant chief fire officers. A pay claim has been received seeking '...an unconditional pay increase for all brigade managers, with effect from 1 January 2021, that is commensurate with other fire and rescue staff in the UK'. The National Employers will be consulting fire and rescue authorities before considering a response.

New Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services

The LGA launched [a new Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services today with the National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners \(APCC\)](#) to help employees of the fire and rescue service act in the best way towards each other while serving the public. It will sit alongside the Code of Ethics Fire Standard developed by the Fire Standards Board. Developed in consultation with the sector, the Core Code sets out five ethical principles, based on the Seven Principles of Public Life, which provide a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour.

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.

Webinars

Below are a few webinars coming up which may be of interest:

[Live panel discussion on T Levels](#)

Thursday 10 June, 10am-11.25am

[T Levels](#) are a new, 2-year qualification for 16 to 19 year olds, with an in-depth 45-day industry placement at the heart of each course. This discussion will bring together speakers from key public sector organisations – including LGA workforce senior advisor Nigel Carruthers - to discuss how to make industry placements a success across NHS Trusts, local government and the civil service.

[Newly elected councillor event](#)

Friday 11 June, 2pm – 3.30pm

A great opportunity for new councillors to explore their role; learn about challenges facing councils; and meet colleagues from other councils. The session will cover national and regional issues, along with an opportunity to meet experienced councillors and hear more about the LGA's support. Delegates can choose to attend one of the three 90 minute events - [11 June \(2pm\)](#), [22 June \(10am\)](#) or [28 June \(5:30pm\)](#).

[COVID-19 communications: communicating easing of restrictions](#)

Thursday 17 June 2021, 10.30am – 12pm

As we continue through the third stage of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown, councils are planning for what comes next. In the months to come, communications and engagement will be key to ensuring that residents stay alert to the ongoing risks of the virus and that any ongoing or additional restrictions are adhered to. In this webinar, in partnership with LGcomms, we'll hear from councils who have been planning for the future and working on new ways to successfully communicate with residents.

Support for care leavers – advice for corporate parents

Wednesday 23 June 2021, 10am – 11.30am

This workshop will give practical advice about how to be a good corporate parent to care leavers, with ideas to improve the lives of care leavers and ensure they can be healthy, happy and fulfil their potential.

LGA Virtual Annual Conference

Tuesday 6 – Thursday 8 July 2021

Speakers include **Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP**, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government; **Sir Ed Davey**, Leader, Liberal Democrats; **Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho**, Crossbench Peer; **Lord Stephen Greenhalgh**, Minister for Building Safety and Communities; **Councillor Anntoinette Bramble**, Deputy Mayor, London Borough of Hackney; **Roman Kemp**, DJ and Broadcast Presenter and **Ojay McDonald**, Chief Executive, Association of Town & City Management. Colleagues can get details of the full programme and book places on our [Annual Conference website](#).

--end--