

LG/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 34: 2nd August 2021 to 1st September 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 – post-19 July workforce FAQs, mandatory vaccines, self-isolation for critical workers, an unfair dismissal case, a case update on working time annual leave and voluntary overtime, ACAS hybrid working guidance, shared parental leave toolkit and the employment law timetable.

COVID-19 General Update

While COVID-19 has perhaps not been dominating the headlines in recent days, the virus is still very much with us, as local areas manage spikes in infections, utilising [the COVID-19 contain framework for local decision-makers](#).

COVID-19 deaths

[Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show there were 571 deaths registered in England and Wales that mentioned COVID-19 on the death certificate for the week ending 13 August](#). This accounted for 5.5% of all deaths, and an 8% increase on the previous week. It is the highest total since the week ending 26 March when 719 deaths were registered.

Latest COVID-19 vaccine surveillance report

The number of estimated deaths prevented by COVID-19 vaccines has risen above 100,000, according to [the latest weekly COVID-19 vaccine surveillance report](#) from Public Health England. It has estimated that 105,900 deaths and 24,088,000 infections have been prevented as a result of the vaccination programme, up to 20 August.

COVID-19 vaccine protection

Research suggests the protection provided by COVID-19 vaccines may start to fade over time, in particular against the Delta variant. Analysis of data from the ZOE COVID Study shows protection provided by two doses of either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine wanes over a number of months. However, two doses of COVID-19 vaccine remains the best way to protect against the Delta variant, according to analysis of two and a half million tests results by Oxford University and the Office for National Statistics. The study also found that Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines still offer good protection against new infections of the Delta variant, but effectiveness is reduced compared with Alpha

Changes to self-isolation 16th August

This month, from 16 August, people who are double jabbed or aged under 18 will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, those who have received both vaccine doses and under 18s identified as close contacts by NHS Test and Trace will be advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible to check if they have the virus and for variants of concern.

Long Covid prevalence

An estimated 945,000 people in the UK were experiencing self-reported Long Covid symptoms in the four weeks to 4 July, latest figures suggest. An estimated 380,000 people have experienced Long Covid for at least a year, according to the data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which is based on responses collected from people in private households. The survey defines Long Covid as symptoms persisting for more than four weeks after a person's first suspected coronavirus infection and is estimated to be adversely affecting the day-to-day activities of 611,000 people, with 182,000 reporting that their ability to undertake daily activities had been "limited a lot". Fatigue was the most common symptom reported, followed by shortness of breath, muscle ache and loss of smell.

Encouraging vaccine uptake in young people

Councils are being encouraged to let their networks know about a toolkit produced by the Department of Health and Social Care that is available to boost vaccine uptake for young people. This includes new materials from Public Health England to help councils promote the benefits of the vaccine, and a video explaining why it is important to be vaccinated.

In addition, the NHS has released [a powerful video featuring several young patients who experienced serious symptoms of COVID-19 or developed long COVID](#). The new film also features doctors and frontline staff who treated them and encourages young people to get their vaccines.

Managed Quarantine - exemptions

DHSC has updated its [guidance on exemptions from managed quarantine for medical and compassionate reasons](#) to include information about how to apply for an exemption. Those who need to apply for an exemption for medical or compassionate reasons should email MQS_new_Exemptions@dhsc.gov.uk at which point they will receive an automated response with a list of questions to answer.

‘Mass Participation Events’ Research

[Data from NHS Test and Trace has shown that mass participation events can be conducted safely](#), but caution must still be taken around specific aspects of event participation, such as when attendees are in close proximity for extended periods of time, when spectators are at high-density pinch points at venues, when travelling to and from events, and when mixing indoors before, during and after events. It follows the Government publishing data drawn from a range of 37 trial events that have formed the Events Research Programme (ERP).

Antibody surveillance programme

[DHSC has announced that the UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) is launching a UK-wide antibody surveillance programme for the general public](#). Home antibody tests will be available for up to 8,000 people a day who opt into the service through NHS Test and Trace. Data collected will help to estimate the proportion of people who got COVID-19 despite developing antibodies as a result of having had a vaccine or previously catching the virus.

Deal agreed for 35 million more vaccines

[The Government has agreed a contract for 35 million more doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, to be delivered from the second half of 2022](#). It is also preparing for a booster programme this year to ensure those most vulnerable to coronavirus are protected. The programme will be based on the final advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which is expected next

Local COVID-19 impact analysis reports

Councils in England can use freely available local COVID-19 impact analysis reports as part of their work to aid recovery. [The Local Data Spaces \(LDS\) programme](#) is a collaboration between the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK). Download your local area's reports for free [on the Consumer Data Research Centre website](#).

Latest data on furloughed employments

The total number of furloughed employments under the CJRS scheme in England at the end of June 2021 is 1,554,000 people. This fell by 435,000 in May, to seven per cent of the eligible population. [View the figures](#).

COVID Senior Manager Emergency Coaching Support Programme

During the early stages of the pandemic, the LGA and Solace launched an Emergency Coaching and Mentoring Support Programme. The programme was specifically aimed at chief executives, directors and professional leads working directly on managing the response to COVID-19. The success of the programme has now been summarised in [an evaluation report](#).

EDUCATION

Schools' guidance

The DfE has published an [updated contingency framework for education and childcare settings](#) and an [updated schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#). The updated contingency framework describes the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19, including responding to variants of concern, in education and childcare settings. It covers the types of measures that settings should be prepared for; who can recommend these measures and where; when measures should be lifted, and how decisions are made.

The updated schools COVID-19 operational guidance contains changes to the previous version, including [who is no longer required to isolate if identified as a close contact, including clarifying that this includes young people up to the age of 18 years and 6 months](#); [what close contacts should do whilst awaiting their PCR test results](#); and [updated information on boarding school pupils attending from abroad](#).

Back to school and college campaign

[The Department for Education has launched a 'back to school and college' campaign](#) to encourage secondary and college students to get tested before returning to school and college to minimise disruption to education over the autumn term.

Education setting status form resumes

The DfE has announced that [the educational setting status form](#) reopened on 26 August for the autumn term. The Department is asking councils and schools to continue submitting attendance data daily during September, so it can monitor attendance in schools and colleges after the summer break. From 1 October, the form will move to weekly reporting to reduce the time schools and colleges spend completing it. [Guidance is available on how to complete the form](#).

Early Career Teachers

All Early Career Teachers who start induction from 1 September 2021 will be required to follow the two years induction. [See LGA webpage for all you need to know](#).

FAQs for teachers' terms and conditions Update

LGA have updated and added an [FAQ related to notice periods and ill health retirement](#).

SOCIAL CARE

DHSC Guidance on vaccination of people working/deployed in care homes

This month [DHSC published operational guidance](#) on vaccination of people working/deployed in care homes. The regulations come into force on 11 November. The 16 week grace period for all care home workers began on 22 July. This means that, to meet the date the regulations come into force, workers have to have their first vaccinations no later than 16 September. The guidance is lengthy but has separate sections for local authorities, registered persons, staff, residents and their families and visiting professionals.

Parking concessions for health, care and volunteer workers

This month, [MHCLG published an update on the end of the Government's free council car parking scheme for health, care and volunteer workers](#). The temporary guidance was withdrawn on 21 June 2021 since when councils have again set local parking policy. During the COVID-19 response period councils in England voluntarily offered free car parking to NHS workers, social care staff and NHS volunteer responders.

Better Care Fund Policy Framework 2021-22

The Government has published the [Better Care Fund \(BCF\) policy framework for 2021 to 2022](#). The framework is one of Government's vehicles for driving health and social care integration and the document notes that there will be minimal change to the BCF in 2021 to 2022 given the ongoing pressures in systems. It has continued its focus on improving how and when people are discharged from hospital, which we support within a balanced integrated approach to supporting people to stay well, independent and at home, avoiding the need for a hospital stay where possible.

Social care workforce review deadline 6th September

Health Education England (HEE) has been asked by DHSC to [gather evidence](#) on the long term strategic trends in health and social care to inform workforce planning in the sector. As part of this project HEE has launched an [online survey](#) and are keen for contributions from local government. The call for evidence programme is scheduled until 6 September.

Children's Social Care Review

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care is keen to hear from more social workers as it moves into the next stage of its work. If social workers from your authority would like to take part in a series of short, anonymous polls, more information including how to sign up is available from the [What Works Centre for Children's Social Care](#).

PAY

Local government pay

The three local government unions (UNISON, GMB and Unite) have confirmed that their consultation ballots on the [National Employers' final pay offer](#) (including the [Craft final offer](#)) will run through to late September/early October. All three unions will be recommending the pay offer(s) be rejected.

Teachers' pay 2021 (England)

The LGA has produced a ['one stop webpage'](#) for all the information you need to understand the proposed changes following [Gavin Williamson's \(Secretary of State for Education\) announcement late on 21 July](#). In early September the National Employers Organisation for School Teachers will submit a response (informed by the views of councils) back to Government on the proposals that include a pay pause for qualified teachers' pay and a £250 pay award for eligible unqualified teachers for 2021.

Coroners' pay 2021/22

[Agreement has now been reached](#) within the Joint Negotiating Committee for Coroners to increase salaries and pay rates by 1.5 per cent, with effect from 1 April 2021.

Police staff Pay

The National Employers have [made a pay offer to the Police Staff Trade Union Side for this year](#) for a £250 consolidated increase to all police staff on pay points 7-18 and a review of police force leave arrangements on a without prejudice basis. The offer is being considered.

Other Workforce Updates

New 'flexible' apprenticeships announced

[The Chancellor has announced that many sectors can now bid for a share of a £7 million fund to support the creation of new flexible apprenticeships.](#) Sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles, such as adult social care, transport, digital and manufacturing will be able to benefit from the opportunities available, for example, someone working in adult social care could undertake care placements with a range of employers – including home care via a care agency, and in nursing home or hospice settings. The first apprenticeships organised through flexi-job apprenticeship agencies are expected to start in early 2022 and will build on the reforms set out in the [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#).

Extending new apprenticeships Incentives

The LGA have called for [incentives for new apprenticeships to be extended beyond the end of the furlough scheme](#). The incentives, which offer up to £3000 to employers per new apprentice start, are due to end on the same day as the current furlough scheme. We are calling on government to extend the duration of the incentives until at least 31 March 2022 to enable employers to use of them as part of local economic recovery plans. A recent survey of councils by the LGA has also found that councils have created 55,000 apprenticeship starts over the last four years. We emphasised that there is the real possibility of the number of people out of work or training rising as the furlough scheme ends. To ensure people can get access to apprenticeships when they are most needed, it is important that the incentive scheme is extended.

LGA Strategic Workforce Planning Support Extended 2021-22

The LGA has been successfully supporting councils to create better workforce plans as part of [our wider programme of support](#) into Strategic Workforce Planning. From October the LGA can support **a further 10 councils in England**. If your council is interested in joining this funded support programme, please complete the [online form](#).

LGA Workforce Webinars Sept to Dec 2021

[An alternative approach to conflict resolution in local government webinar](#)

8 September | LGA virtual event

[Building more gender equal workplaces](#)

17 September | LGA virtual event

[Flexible working in schools: Ideas and solutions for a whole-school approach](#)

20 September | LGA virtual event

[The essentials of inclusive leadership](#)

29 September 2021 | LGA virtual event

[Taking action on race equality at work](#)

12 October | LGA virtual event

[Managing a multi-generational workforce](#)

17 November | LGA virtual event

[Disability: shifting the focus to ability and accessibility](#)

9 December | LGA virtual event

Schools Webinar – Flexible Working Practices

Timewise and panellists are sharing learning about a proactive, whole-school approach to implement effective flexible working practices :

- Webinar for heads: [Tuesday 5 October at 10am](#)
- Webinar for school business professionals/HR: [Wednesday 6 October at 10am](#)
- Webinar for governors and trustees: [Tuesday 12 October at 2pm](#)

Embedding a wellbeing culture in the ASC workforce

The LGA's Care & Health Improvement (CHIP) Team are hosting a webinar on Thursday **30 September, 10-11am** that will look into what is meant by a culture of wellbeing, with examples of actions that can support wellbeing at the personal, managerial, organisational and community level. There will be a chance to hear from those who have taken successful steps in embedding a culture of wellbeing in their organisations at all levels and attendees will be encouraged to share good practice. Register for the event [click here](#)

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