

LG/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update Issue 35: 2nd September to 10th October 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 – Mandatory vaccines in care homes: Employment issues, Right to work checks: Covid-19 temporary adjustments extended, Health and disability employment policy developments, Sexual harassment in the workplace: Consultation response, Carer's leave: Consultation response, Data protection employment practices code to be updated and Flexible working requests: Consultation.

COVID-19 General Update

A [million and a half people were sent invitations last month to book a COVID booster jab](#) ahead of the key winter season with social care staff also being encouraged to get their free flu jab as soon as possible. The NHS's school-based vaccination programme for 12 to 15-year-olds in England also began in September following [the Government's decision](#) to offer this age group one dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, while new [COVID-19 vaccination programme guidance](#) has been published for schools, to support the roll-out of this programme. More details about this guidance and the booster jab arrangements can be found further in this bulletin update.

COVID-19 certification

The Government has released further detail on [proposals for mandatory COVID certification](#) in the [Plan B scenario set out in its COVID-19 autumn and winter plan](#). The proposals detail the types of setting, venues and events COVID-19 certification could be required in. With a small group of local compliance leads, the LGA has already been in discussions about what councils would need to enforce the measures if they were to be introduced. It is helpful to see that the proposals take on board feedback that powers to issue Coronavirus Improvement Notices, Restriction Notices and Immediate Restriction Notices would need to be reinstated. The [Government asked for feedback on these proposals](#) and the deadline for responses was the 11 October. If you have any feedback on the proposals, or can share details of your response, please contact ellie.greenwood@local.gov.uk

COVID-19 contain framework

[The Government has published updated guidance for councils and local decision-makers on containing and managing COVID-19 outbreaks at a local level.](#) The COVID-19 contain framework applies to the autumn and winter period and sets out the roles and responsibilities of councils.

COVID-19 regulations

The Government has [updated guidance on council powers](#) under COVID-19 regulations. It confirms the extension of the regulations until 24 March 2022 and covers what the regulations allow councils to do and how to exercise those powers.

Workplace Ventilation Guidance

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has [updated guidance to help councils and businesses identify poor ventilation in work areas](#) as people return to workplaces. It is a legal requirement for employers to ensure an adequate supply of fresh air (ventilation) in enclosed areas of the workplace to tackle the spread of COVID-19.

Vaccine booking for 16 and 17-year-olds

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced that all 16 and 17-year-olds can [book their COVID-19 vaccination appointments online](#) or find a [walk-in COVID-19 vaccination site](#). If young people cannot book appointments online, they can call 119 free of charge and can speak to a translator if they need to. DHSC has [updated the toolkit](#) which encourages vaccine uptake among young people, you are also able to download a [video explainer](#) featuring Love Island star, Yewande Biala.

Shielding Ends

DHSC has announced that people previously considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) will not be advised to shield again. DHSC said the closure of the shielding programme reflects the Government's view that it is now possible to take a more tailored approach to identifying those who are at a higher risk given the success of the vaccine programme and new treatments available. Those previously on the Shielded Patient List will receive a letter from the Government in the coming days to inform them of this decision. The Shielded Patient List that provides councils with details of the CEV population will end.

The next meeting of the LGA coordinated officer group that has been discussing support for the CEV and other vulnerable groups will meet on 4 November. If your council wish to join the group, please contact emma.jenkins@local.gov.uk.

Furlough scheme comes to a close

On 30 September the furlough scheme closed, with Office for National Statistics estimating that one million workers were expected to still be on the scheme on the date of closure. Since the start of the pandemic, it has helped pay the wages of 11.6 million workers. [The Chancellor confirmed the next phase of the Government's 'Plan for Jobs'](#), part of a £400 billion support package for the economy (see below).

Plan for Jobs Update

[The Government has announced a £500 million expansion to its Plan for Jobs programme](#), which aims to help workers leaving the furlough scheme and unemployed people over the age of 50 back into work. The Government is also enhancing its programme of support for workers on Universal Credit, from April 2022.

Pandemic Response - Chief executive survey

In partnership with Penna and the Municipal Journal, we have issued the 2021 Local Government Chief Executive Survey. It provides you with the opportunity to tell us about your experiences over the last 12 months and how your council is moving out of the pandemic. Please do [take a few minutes to complete this](#) if you haven't already done so. The provisional results are fascinating but it would be great to capture views from a large number of chief executives.

New Government Department - DLUHC

A new [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#) has been established absorbing the responsibilities of the former Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government along with some functions from the Cabinet Office. The change signals the Government's commitment to levelling up and reducing inequalities across communities and we understand that the Secretary of State will drive cross-Whitehall efforts to deliver a programme of improvements across the UK. The LGA continues to work closely with Ministers in the new department on our shared interests. We know that the new Secretary of State is a reformer, and we will be hoping to focus his experience and skill into transforming the things that really matter to councils. In other developments, former Chief Economist of the Bank of England, Andy Haldane has been appointed as the new Head of the Levelling Up Taskforce. The taskforce has been jointly established by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove MP and will report jointly to them.

Spending Review

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak will deliver his Spending Review and Autumn Statement next month and [the LGA have sent a detailed submission to the Treasury on behalf of local government](#). It sets out the urgent need for public spending to be reset in a way that is fit for the future, flexible to allow the delivery of local priorities, and empowers councils to deliver on the ambition to level up our communities that central and local government share.

The LGA analysis shows that councils in England face extra cost pressures of almost £8 billion by 2024/25 just to keep vital local services running at today's levels. This total is about addressing new pressures that will face councils in the next three years, it does not include the very real pressures that councils are facing here and now such as paying care workers a fair wage or investing in the early intervention services which help families and young people falling into crisis.

The significant financial pressures facing local services cannot be met by council tax income alone. Instead, the LGA's submission and [accompanying press release](#) is calling for the Spending Review to provide councils with a multi-year settlement which provides sufficient additional government funding and certainty to meet growing cost pressures and pre-existing challenges.

The LGA is continuing to press government for additional funding for frontline social care from the estimated £36 billion to be raised by the new UK-wide Health and Social Care levy over the next three years. Addressing the NHS backlog and freeing up hospital beds cannot be done without also fixing social care and our submission calls on the Government to commit to a greater share of the Levy to go to frontline social care from the outset.

Fuel crisis / HGV driver shortage

The Government has announced a package of measures to tackle the wider shortage of HGV drivers. More than [10,000 foreign workers will be temporarily permitted to work as lorry drivers and in the food sector, the Department for Transport has announced](#). The scheme will create opportunities for 5,000 HGV drivers and 5,500 poultry workers to take up employment in the UK until Christmas Eve. The Ministry of Defence is also stepping in to provide examiners for lorry driving tests as ministers look to steadily increase the size of the workforce. Another long-term measure to turn the situation around will see the Department for Education plough up to £10 million into creating new "skills bootcamps" to train up to 3,000 more people to become HGV drivers.

The Department for Education has announced that up to 4,000 people will soon be able to take advantage of training courses to become HGV drivers, as part of a joint package of measures to ease temporary supply chain pressures in food haulage industries.

Boot Camps for HGV Drivers

The Department for Education is investing up to £10 million to create new skills bootcamps to train more people to become HGV drivers. Skills Bootcamps are short, sector specific courses of up to 16 weeks developed with employers and providers to meet skills shortages, with a clear line of sight to a job at the end.

Anyone who is interested in becoming an HGV driver should visit the [National Careers Service website](#) or speak to a local careers adviser at nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/contact-us to find out more about their options.

In addition, the Department for Transport will work with Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency to ensure that tests will be available for participants who have completed training courses as soon as possible. The Ministry of Defence also announced the immediate deployment of Defence Driving Examiners to increase the country's testing capacity.

Boost for Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship

Apprenticeships are also playing a vital part in providing the skilled talent pipeline businesses and the country need to recover from the pandemic. The government has worked closely with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and employers to boost the apprenticeships on offer for large goods vehicle drivers including by updating the current Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship and increasing its funding. The Institute and the Government are also supporting the development of a new Urban Delivery Driver apprenticeship, which is due to be introduced later this year, and employers in the industry can take advantage of an additional £3,000 payment until 30 September for every new apprentice hired.

Public health funding

The LGA have [co-signed a joint open letter](#) with 50 other leading charities and representative bodies, calling for urgent action on public health funding in the upcoming Spending Review. The letter [cites new analysis by the Health Foundation](#), which says that the public health grant has been cut by 24 per cent on a real-terms per capita basis since 2015/16 and that restoring the grant to its historical value, accounting for both cost pressures and demand levels, would require an additional £1.4 billion a year by 2024/25. In [the LGA media response](#) to the new analysis, the LGA stated that if we are to truly level up, we must focus on reducing poor health outcomes as well as economic imbalances between regions, supported by the right resources.

Late EU Settlement Scheme Applications

There is still time for eligible EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members to submit a late EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) application. The Home Office is encouraging councils to continue to promote and support the EUSS within their communities and has resources to support you promote this message. They include [a toolkit](#), [social media copy](#) and a [factsheet for late applications](#).

Cyber Awareness Month

October is cyber awareness month, and we are using this as an opportunity to promote useful guidance and advice for reducing cyber risk. Phishing is when attackers attempt to trick users into doing 'the wrong thing,' such as clicking a bad link that can install malware (such as ransomware), or direct them to an insecure webpage. The National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) guidance, '[phishing attacks: defending your organisation](#)', provides a multi-layered set of mitigations to improve your organisations resilience against phishing attacks, whilst minimising disruption to user productivity. NCSC have also produced guidance to help [defend against malware and ransomware attacks](#). For further information or support please email LGAcybersecurity@local.gov.uk

Housing retrofit skills

The LGA has [launched a new programme to support local authorities](#) in creating housing retrofit skills and jobs in their communities.

Creating Local Green Jobs report

Following the successful completion of the Leading and Learning Programme, [this report seeks to capture the learnings across all of the individual authorities involved](#), the process and the outputs from the Action Learning Sets and the output from the final symposium

LG Inform publish new report on Digital Skills

[The 'digital skills pipeline' report](#) outlines the economic and employment contributions of the UK's digital tech sector and the key role that councils play in supporting local digital skills progression in the face of likely growth.

EDUCATION

New Secretary of State for Education

Earlier this month, [the LGA met with the new Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi](#), to discuss how councils have supported young people throughout the pandemic and to set out the priority areas for collaboration between his Department and local government.

Fake vaccination consent forms in Schools

The Department for Education (DfE) has said it is aware that a fake consent form for COVID-19 vaccinations has been sent to some schools for onward circulation to parents. This contains misleading information and should not be circulated. [The only consent form that should be shared by schools can be found on GOV.UK. Schools should get in touch with their local School Age Immunisation Service \(SAIS\) provider](#) if in doubt or if they receive a form that they think may not be genuine. Further guidance can be found in the COVID-19 vaccination programme for children and young people guidance for schools.

Teachers' Pay 2021

[This page](#) brings together all the information you will need in relation to school teachers' pay in 2021/22. The LGA provides the secretariat for NEOST (National Employers Organisation for School Teachers).

[NEOST have responded](#) (informed by views of councils) to the governments consultation on teachers' pay (pay pause for qualified teachers and £250 uplift for eligible unqualified teachers) supporting the uplift for lower paid unqualified teachers, whilst agreeing with the STRB's conclusion that it is likely to increase existing recruitment and retention difficulties. The final version of the School Teachers Pay & Conditions Document 2021 is expected to be laid in Parliament on 24 September 2021 to become a legal document on 15 October and be backdated with effect from 1 September 2021.

National Professional Qualifications

On 12th October the Government announced the expanded eligibility criteria enabling all state funded schools and state funded organisations that offer 16-19 places in England to access a [fully funded National Professional Qualifications \(NPQs\) from autumn 2021](#), to support teachers and pupils following the disruption to learning faced as a result of COVID-19. The £184 million funding is expected to provide 150,000 NPQs over the next three years.

SOCIAL CARE

Adult social care funding and reform

The Government announced last month significant plans for the future of adult social care. The Government's ['Build back better: our plan for health and social care'](#) publication was launched, containing a number of eye-catching proposals. The centrepiece of the plan is a new UK-wide 1.25 per cent Health and Social Care Levy (the Levy) based on National Insurance contributions that will be ringfenced to fund the plan's range of proposals. For adult social care, these include:

- The introduction of a cap on personal care costs (ie not accommodation costs for people in residential care), set at £86,000, effective from October 2023.
- Changes to the social care financial means test thresholds so that: people will not have to pay towards the cost of their care from their assets if they are less than £20,000 (up from the current threshold of £14,250); people will only be required to pay for the full cost of their own care if their assets are more than £100,000 (up from the current threshold of £23,250). People with assets between £20,000 and £100,000 will likely be required to contribute towards the cost of their care.
- Self-funders will be able to request that their council arranges their care so they can access it at council-funded rates.
- An expectation that councils will use some of the additional funding to pay providers a 'fair price for care'.
- Investment of £500 million for new measures to support the care workforce.
- More support for unpaid carers.
- Investment in Disabled Facilities Grant and supported housing.

In addition, the Government's plan commits to working with councils, the social care sector, people with lived experience and the NHS to develop a new white paper for wider social care reforms. It also states that the Government will ensure councils have access to sustainable funding for core budgets at the Spending Review (confirmed today for 27 October). However, the plan also states that the Government's expectation is for cost pressures to be funded through council tax, the social care precept and long-term efficiencies.

The Levy is expected to raise an additional £12 billion a year on average, hypothecated for health and care, across the UK.

ADASS and LGA responses to social care funding announcement

Both ADASS and the LGA have issued responses following the launch of the Government's '[Build back better: our plan for health and social care](#)' publication, including plans for a new Health and Social Care Levy.

- [ADASS Responds to PM's Announcement on Adult Social Care Reform Plans and Funding](#)
- [LGA responds to social care funding announcement](#)

Health and Social Care Levy - DHSC communications materials

DHSC has compiled a list of materials and resources to provide further information about the Health and Social Care Levy:

- [Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care](#) - This paper sets out the government's new plan for health and social care. It includes details of the plan for adult social care in England, including a cap on social care costs and how financial assistance will work for those without substantial assets.
- Press notice: [Record £36 billion investment to reform NHS and Social Care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Health and Social Care Levy – Stakeholder Q&A](#)

Mandatory vaccines for care homes: employment issues

As reported previously the Government published [operational guidance](#) in August on the requirement for those who enter care homes to be fully vaccinated unless an exemption applies.

Subsequently, the Department of Health and Social Care issued a [letter setting out details of the medical exemptions](#) and the processes that will apply. There is a temporary self-certification process, but this is due to be replaced by the NHS COVID Pass system soon. Once the NHS COVID Pass system is launched, care home workers will need to apply for a formal medical exemption through that process. The temporary self-certification will expire 12 weeks after the NHS COVID Pass system is launched.

Acas has issued general [guidance on supporting people to have the vaccine](#) and specific guidance on the [requirement to have the vaccine for care homes](#). This guidance sets out advice that employers may wish to refer to when considering the steps they need to take.

The latest ERU Bulletin provides further advice and guidance for council employers read the [latest bulletin here](#)

Consultation on mandatory vaccination for frontline health and care staff

On 10th September the Government launch a [6-week consultation](#) seeking views on plans for staff in health and care settings in England to be required to have COVID-19 and flu vaccines to protect vulnerable people. The consultation look at whether requirements should apply for health and wider social care workers: those in contact with patients and people receiving care. It would mean only those who are fully vaccinated, unless medically exempt, could be deployed to deliver health and care services.

Social Care Workers can now book their COVID-19 booster vaccination

The National Booking Service is now open for frontline health and social care colleagues to book their COVID-19 booster vaccines, providing it has been six months since they received their second dose. They can [book their booster appointment through the National Booking Service online](#), by ringing 119, or by visiting their nearest walk-in centre.

Access to booster vaccinations at walk-in sites is subject to ID requirements set out below, and staff should be aware that walk-in sites and the National Booking Service will perform checks to verify vaccination history, to ensure a booster vaccine is due.

As part of the booking process, social care workers will need to self-declare they are a frontline health or social care worker. When booking, they will be advised on the evidence they will need to provide at the vaccination site as of proof of employment, otherwise they may be turned away.

Proof of employment will be accepted, using one of the following:

- A workplace photo ID,
- A recent letter from their employer (last 3 months), or
- A recent payslip which shows their employer (last 3 months).

Unpaid carers receiving COVID-19 booster jab

On 5 October, NHS England and national partners including the LGA, ADASS, Carers UK and the Carers Trust published the updated [Standard Operating Procedure](#) setting out how unpaid carers can get their COVID-19 booster vaccinations as part of Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority group 6. The NHS has already begun to offer the booster to unpaid carers as soon as they reach the 6 month point since their second vaccination dose. Unpaid carers not already registered as a carer with their General Practice are also strongly encouraged to do so to ensure that future vaccinations can be offered to them as quickly as possible.

PHE Guidance on Flu immunisation for social care staff

PHE has [produced guidance and leaflets](#) for providers, social care workers and personal care assistants on the free flu winter vaccine

Skills for Care report on sustainability in ASC

[Social care contributes £50.3 billion to the economy in England and provides significant societal benefits](#), according to a new report by Skills for Care. The workforce development agency also argues that the best way to make adult social care sustainable in the long-term is to move away from payment for adult social care processes to payment based on better outcomes for people who draw on care and support services. The LGA [media stated, social care still faces a huge recruitment and retention crisis](#), with more than 100,000 vacancies available on any given day and extremely high turnover rates. The Government's social care plan was a step towards tackling this, but the Spending Review must also set out how immediate and short-term pressures in social care will be addressed, working with councils, care workers and those with lived experience to build back better and help develop a care and support system fit for the future.

New funding to prevent COVID-19 spread in care settings

Health Secretary Sajid Javid announced an [additional £388.3 million to prevent the spread of infection in social care settings](#), including £25 million to support care workers to access COVID-19 and flu vaccines over the winter months. This will ensure social care staff who need to travel to receive their COVID-19 or flu vaccinations are paid their usual wages to do so and can be support with travel costs. To boost flu vaccine uptake among social care staff, GP practices will also be able to vaccinate care home staff that are not registered at their practice. Uptake will be regularly monitored by region to allow a targeted approach, and more flu vaccines will be available earlier this year.

LGA launch digital support offer for ASC in councils

Councils can [apply now for the new CHIP digital support programme](#). This is aimed at councils with ambitions to improve their use and application of care technology and adoption of digital tools and solutions in adult social care. Applications close midday on 20 October. The launch of the programme takes place on 12 October 14:00-14:45. Register to attend by emailing socialcaredigital@local.gov.uk.

New Podcast on Government Plan for Health & Social Care

The LGA explores what the Government's plan for health and care means for councils, in the new episode of [Forget What You Think You Know podcast series](#).

Top tips for embedding a wellbeing culture in ASC

Councils and providers have developed [varied and innovative approaches to boost support for the workforce and embed a wellbeing culture](#). Building on good practice implemented by councils and providers to date, the LGA's CHIP team has developed a new guide: [Top tips for embedding a wellbeing culture](#) and on 30 September hosted a webinar to introduce the guide. During the webinar, attendees heard a personal perspective from a carer as well as hearing about what Cornwall County Council is doing to embed a wellbeing culture. All webinar [presentations are available here](#).

NHS England issues new Integrated Care Services guidance

NHS England has published a suite of guidance documents broadly focused on effective partnership working within Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). The documents are for all ICS partners and leaders, including local authority officer and elected members:

- [Thriving Places: guidance on the development of place-based partnerships as part of statutory integrated care systems](#). Co-produced by NHS England; NHS Improvement and LGA, this guidance will support all partner organisations in ICSs. It is published alongside [Delivering together for residents](#), prepared by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers.
- [Building strong integrated care systems everywhere: ICS implementation guidance on effective clinical and care professional leadership](#) supports the development of distributed clinical and care professional leadership across ICSs, and describes what “good” looks like. It is based on extensive engagement involving more than 2,000 clinical and care professional leaders.
- [Building strong integrated care systems everywhere: ICS implementation guidance on partnerships with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector](#) suggests how voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector partnerships might be embedded in ICSs.
- [Building strong integrated care systems everywhere: ICS implementation guidance on working with people and communities](#) sets out expectations and principles for how ICBs can develop approaches to working with people and communities.
- NHSX has also recently published: [ICS ‘What Good Looks Like’ Framework \(Digital & Data\)](#) to provide clear guidance for health and care leaders to digitise, connect and transform services safely and securely.

Webinar - Inspiring quality in social care: celebrating quality now and creating quality in future

This free Skills for Care online webinar gives you space to [explore people's experiences and perspectives about what quality means in adult social care](#), both now in pandemic management and recovery planning, and what quality social care means in the future. The webinar, taking place on Thursday 14 October, 13:30 – 15:00, will hear from leaders and practitioners from across the social care sector sharing tips for quality social care from the perspectives of local government commissioners, providers, and people with lived experience.

Webinar: Technology for our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation report launch and webinar

Inspired by the HAPPI design principles, the Technology for our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (TAPPI) launches its Inquiry findings and recommendations on Tuesday, 26 October 2021 at 4pm. Chaired by Professor Roy Sandbach OBE and funded by the Dunhill Medical Trust, the virtual launch will set out the importance of a person-centred approach to reduce digital inequalities and deliver more digitally integrated technology enabled care and housing. The LGA were represented on the TAPPI Panel by Hannah Gill, Senior Advisor on the Care and Health Improvement programmes. [Register for the free launch event as part of the Housing LIN's autumn series of HAPPI Hour sessions.](#)

PAY

Local government pay

During September, each of the three local government unions consulted their memberships on the National Employers' [final pay offer to local government services \('Green Book'\) employees](#) with a recommendation that it be rejected. The results of those consultations were announced earlier this week.

UNISON members voted by a majority of 79 per cent to 21 per cent to reject the final offer. Its local government committee has also decided to begin preparations for an industrial action ballot.

GMB members voted by a majority of 75 per cent to 25 per cent to reject the final offer. It will shortly conduct a consultative industrial action ballot, the result of which will determine whether there is support to then hold a formal ballot for industrial action. GMB members also voted by a majority of 90 per cent to 10 per cent to reject the National Employers' [final pay offer to Craftworker \('Red Book'\) employees](#).

Unite members voted by a majority of 81 per cent to 19 per cent to reject the final offer. Unite's local government committee met yesterday and decided to begin preparations for an industrial action ballot. Unite members also voted by a majority of 84 per cent to 16 per cent to reject the National Employers' final pay offer to Craftworker employees.

Accordingly, the Trade Unions have registered a pay dispute with the National Employers. The National Employers will be meeting on 19 October to take stock of the situation. I will continue to keep you informed of developments.

Youth and community workers

The National Employers have [made an offer of 1.75 per cent](#) to the Trade Union Side on all pay points and allowances for Youth and Community Workers for 2021.

Political Assistant Pay

In England there is a maximum pay for a Political Assistant appointed by a council under s.9 of The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 is specified in Regulations. [The Local Government \(Assistants for Political Groups\) \(Remuneration\) \(England\) Order 2021](#) will take effect from 6 December 2021 and will link the maximum pay of Political Assistants in England to National Joint Council for Local Government Services Spinal Column Point 38 (currently £41,881 as at 1.4.2020 – 2021 pay award pending). It will then be equivalent to the approach in Wales. The Govt have also issued [non statutory guidance on political assistants](#) for local authorities in England who employ, or are considering employing, local authority political assistants.

Other Workforce Updates

Consultation on making flexible working the default

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) launched a consultation last month seeking views from individuals and employers on proposals to reform flexible working regulations. This consultation also covers wider work by the government to encourage and support flexible working, and responds to relevant proposals from the previous July 2019 consultation, 'Good Work Plan: Proposals to support families'. The proposals being consulted on include making the right to request flexible working a day one entitlement, appropriate reasons for refusal and the extent to which employers would be required to consider alternatives. You can [respond to the consultation](#) directly to BEIS until 1 December 2021 or submit information to inform the [LGA response](#) by 12 November 2021.

Fit for the Future initiative – executive summary and next steps

Fire and rescue authority chairs and chief fire officers will be meeting in October to discuss the next steps to the [Fit for the Future initiative](#). Fit for the Future is a partnership initiative developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the National Employers (England) and the LGA to develop a joint picture of the future of the fire and rescue service in England

Council Support for [workplace equalities](#)

Recent events challenged councils to think about equality issues and whether our working practices, cultures and behaviours provide innovative, supportive, and enjoyable places to work. [The LGA's Diverse by Design guide](#) supported by LGA's [equalities webinars with ACAS](#) help councils to understand what fair values, practices and behaviours ensure staff will be treated equally, with dignity and able to give their best at work.

Leadership Essentials: Economic Growth

The LGA Improvement Team will be delivering two new Leadership Essentials programmes for councillors as part of our economic growth support offer. The aim is to give councillors the confidence, capacity, and skills to lead the response to building back local economies post-pandemic. It will cover a range of topics such as business engagement, skills, employment and high streets to provide members with the space and time to reflect on their economic growth challenges. Booking information is available on the [Leadership Essentials section of the LGA website](#)

National Graduate Development Programme

The National Graduate Development Programme seeks to match bright, passionate graduates with councils where they can deliver key projects and amazing value for money. Applications for the latest cohort of graduates are [now open, please promote this within your networks](#). It's not too late to [sign up your council](#) to this year's programme, deadline is 31 March 2022.

Cyber Security Course for Business Leaders

The LGA Cyber Security Programme has teamed up with SOLACE to deliver grant funding for a cohort of Chief Executives to enrol on a university-led cyber security course for business leaders. We're currently taking expressions of interest from those wanting to enhance their understanding of cyber risk to enable better strategic decisions for a cyber-resilient future. Funding is available for Chief Executives and those who have been through the SOLACE Springboard and Total Leadership programmes. Places are limited and will be funded on a first come first serve basis. For further information and for expressions of interest please email LGAcybersecurity@local.gov.uk

Solace/LGA Emergency Coaching and Mentoring Support Programme Evaluation - June 2021

In April 2020, Solace and the LGA launched an Emergency Coaching and Mentoring Support Programme for those leading the response to the COVID-19 pandemic across local government in England. The programme was specifically aimed at chief executives, directors and professional leads working directly on managing the response to COVID-19. The [evaluation](#) is now available.

Apprenticeship Incentives Extended until January 2022

The government have announced that they will be extending the Apprenticeship Incentives until January 2022. The incentives were first introduced in August 2020, and have been worth £3,000 per new apprentice since April 2021. They were due to expire on 30 September 2021, but have now been extended for a further four months.

LGA Workforce Webinars Nov & Dec 2021

[Managing a multi-generational workforce](#)

17 November | LGA virtual event

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

9 December | LGA virtual event

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