

LGA/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 16: 14th August 2020 – 28th August 2020

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.

CSR – Responding to COVID-19

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) provides a unique opportunity to secure the funding, freedoms and flexibilities councils needs to deliver fundamental changes for residents and businesses, as we seek to rebuild the economy so it benefits everyone. While the Spending Review will look at the longer-term funding path for public services, it is important the sector continues to press the case on sufficient funding for this year as well. The LGA are working hard behind the scenes putting together our submission. If you would like to feed into our lobbying on this, or if we can support you in any way, please do liaise with your [Principal Adviser](#). We are also encouraging councils to send in your own representation to the CSR, ahead of the deadline of 24 September. If you do submit, please share a copy with us by emailing lgsfinance@local.gov.uk

Local restrictions Update

Over the last fortnight there were updates to the [enhanced restrictions facing some parts of the country](#). Additional measures will be put into place in Oldham, Blackburn and parts of Pendle to curb the spread of infection. New restrictions include local residents not being permitted to socialise with anyone from outside their household. It does not prevent people from shopping, going to work or attending childcare settings or schools, but it does mean any social activities indoors and outdoors can only be shared with people that you live with and in your immediate household. The existing ban on indoor gatherings of more than two households remains in place across parts of Lancashire, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire and in Leicester. However, Wigan, Darwen and Rossendale have been removed from intervention. Public Health England's [weekly surveillance report](#) also includes changes to the watch list of local authority areas with higher-than-average incidences of COVID-19.

Contain framework

The Government is updating its [Contain Framework](#) to ensure that each week local authorities in an area of national intervention bring forward a combined proposal on the geography which should be included. This should be developed in conjunction with the local cross-party council leadership and MPs and will be considered by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) Gold meeting, chaired by the Secretary of State with the Chief Medical Officer. The Joint Biosecurity Centre will provide the relevant data, including on the minimum local areas which must be included due to the prevalence of the virus.

Local leadership will then be expected to seek consensus between councils and local MPs and recommend the appropriate geography which fits local travel patterns, work and social behaviours for restrictions to be active in. Areas within the local authority where COVID-19 is less prevalent are expected to be exempt from any restrictions. The aim is to allow local councils to focus resources onto the wards which need more targeted intervention in order to drive infection rates down, and build consensus around new interventions. The JBC Gold meeting, will then make the final decision based on the local recommendation, or recommendations if consensus cannot be reached.

International travel – Quarantine

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), on advice of the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England, continue to update their [foreign travel advice](#). As of yesterday, 27 August, Switzerland, Jamaica and the Czech Republic are no longer on the travel advice exemptions list, following the latest assessment of COVID-19 risks. People returning from these destinations will need to self-isolate for two weeks. This follows similar announcements made on 20 August for Croatia, Austria and Trinidad and Tobago and on the 13 August for the Netherlands, Aruba, Malta, Turks and Caicos Islands, France and Monaco. The FCO now advise against all but essential travel to these countries. For the most recent update please check [the governments website](#).

On a more positive note Portugal has been added to the Government's travel corridor list following a decrease in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the country.

As you will recall [NJC guidance was issued on 5th June](#) which still applies regarding employees returning from countries removed from the travel exemptions list.

Contact tracing in health and care settings

The [guidance on the management of staff, patients and residents who have been exposed to COVID-19](#) has been updated to include guidance on when health and social care staff can be exempt from being considered a contact for the purposes of Test and Trace. This now clarifies that if health and social care staff are providing direct care to a patient or a resident with COVID-19 and are wearing the correct PPE in accordance with the current [infection prevention and control \(IPC\) guidance](#), they will not be considered as a contact for the purposes of contact tracing and isolation. They will therefore not be required to self-isolate for 14 days. The IPC guidance was also updated, to add new information on COVID-19 risk pathways to support returning services.

National testing study

The Government has [announced that the Office of National Statistics COVID-19 Infection Survey](#), which tracks the virus in the general population, will expand from regularly testing 28,000 people per fortnight in England to 150,000 by October. The survey aims to increase to 400,000 people across the entire project in England. Letters have already been sent out to tens of thousands of homes inviting new participants to take part in the survey.

Face coverings in schools

The Government has [revised rules around face coverings for staff and children](#) in year 7 or above in education settings in England. Nationally, while the Government is not recommending face coverings are necessary, schools will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas if they believe that is right in their particular circumstances. In areas of national government intervention, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils in secondary schools when moving around the school, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. It will not be necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom.

This updated advice reflects the latest advice from the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Government has confirmed that, in order to be consistent with WHO's advice, if the rate of transmission increases across the whole country it may be necessary to apply stricter guidance on face coverings in schools nationally.

The associated [updated guidance on face coverings in education settings](#) was published this week, and will come into effect from 1 September. These new rules apply to secondary schools, further education colleges and will be reflected in the guidance to universities.

#backtoschoolsafely

The Department for Education's [#backtoschool safely campaign](#) aims to help parents, carers and young people prepare for returning to school and college. Key campaign messages focus on confidence, safety and transport and the wider wellbeing benefits of returning to school. The [PHE communications resource hub](#) and [DfE Dropbox](#) hosts a series of campaign materials, including posters and social media content, to help councils with your local communications over the next couple of weeks.

Wellbeing in schools

Ahead of the full return to education in September, councils have been given [£8 million in Government](#) grant funding as part of a drive [to improve wellbeing and mental health support](#) in schools and colleges. The funding will allow councils to offer training to every school and college in England to help support pupil, teacher and parent wellbeing, resilience and recovery in the context of the pandemic and to prevent longer-term mental health problems developing.

To help councils provide emotional and practical support for teachers and staff in schools, the LGA is providing a [webinar on Friday 2 October 2020](#) from 2.00 to 3.30pm aims to offer some insights into the lessons learned so far and practical advice on promoting positive wellbeing in education.

Early years

A new [report by the Early Years Alliance](#) has found that half of parents felt that they had not received enough support with childcare since lockdown was eased. This follows a survey which found that one in 10 parents has not been able to access childcare since the Government lifted the lockdown measures. The LGA provided [a response](#), setting out how parents need access to the good quality childcare to enable them to return to work, while ensuring that children have the support they need to develop school readiness. The LGA has also called on the Government to provide additional funding at a national level to protect childcare providers.

DfE survey on COVID-19 impact on Children's Care Services

The [Department for Education has published the results of a regular survey of local authorities in England](#) conducted to help understand the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on children's social care. The analysis covers contact with children supported by the local authority children's social care department, children's social care workforce, cost pressures and system pressures. The results show that the majority of looked after children, children on a child protection plan and other children in need have had their cases reviewed in light of the pandemic.

Flu vaccinations

The LGA is supporting [PHE's campaign](#) urging all frontline health and social care workers to protect themselves and their patients or residents from the flu. All eligible groups are urged to get their free vaccine every year, however this winter with COVID-19 still in circulation, improving the uptake of the vaccine amongst our health and care colleagues is absolutely critical to protect the most vulnerable and reduce the number of people needing flu treatment from the NHS.

COVID-19 Councils Workforce Data Update

Councils continue to provide workforce data in response to COVID-19 through the [fortnightly workforce survey](#) which was agreed at NARE back in March. The latest report has shown the value of sharing data as the returns provided are actively used by the local resilience forms (LRFs) and MHCLG dashboards. Thank you to councils who continue to complete the survey. The report findings below relate to the survey sent out on 12 August 2020 for the preceding fortnight. The overall response rate was 57% (covering a third of the total workforce).

- 31% councils reported recruiting additional staff (a total 5,438)
- 28% councils reported that they had furloughed full time staff (5,944 FT staff 1%)
- 20% councils reported that they had furloughed part-time staff (2,608 PT 0.5%)
- The main reason given for furloughing staff was that the service had stopped (73%) or that funding had stopped (20%).
- 69% of councils had redeployed staff. 8,765 staff redeployed (2%)
- 84% reported that they had at least one member of staff unavailable for work. (27,429 staff unavailable for work, 5% of the current workforce) 17% of staff were unavailable through 'self-isolation (other)' and 43% were unavailable due to 'non-COVID sickness'.
- 65% of councils per cent were considering increasing flexible working options for staff and 45% were considering changing models of service delivery

If you wish to compare your council with others by region, type etc then you can run a [trend report](#) using LG Inform. If you have any queries or questions regarding this survey, please contact Roopal.shah@local.gov.uk

The fortnightly survey will continue over the summer and be reviewed in late September to see whether it is still required by councils and partners.

Public Health Heroes

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vital work of those at the frontline of public health practice. UKPHR, the registration body for non-medical public health specialists, believe it has never been more important for employers to celebrate and recognise the skills, dedication and achievements of their own practitioner workforce. The Register are [inviting employers to nominate their own 'Public Health Heroes'](#) – whether through stepping up during the current crisis, or helping make the UK a safer, healthier, better place to live through their ongoing contribution.

There's no deadline and employers can nominate as many practitioners as they like. All eligible nominations will be profiled in an online gallery, with successful nominees and their employers both receiving exclusive digital badges (for use in email signatures and online) in recognition of their status as a PH Hero or a PH Hero Employer.

A wellbeing approach to managing employee joint pain

Coronavirus changed how many people work, and this could affect the physical health of employees with existing or new health problems. We are working with NHS experts at the Health Innovation Network London on an offer to manage joint pain and musculoskeletal conditions. Find out more on the LGA workforce pages:

- [Wellbeing and managing musculoskeletal \(MSK\) conditions](#)
- [Managing your employees' joint pain - during lockdown and beyond, 22 July 2020](#)

A way to avoid recruitment costs when hiring adult social workers

The LGA are looking for councils to host short placements for adult social workers participating in the [Return to Social Work programme](#). Councils can use this opportunity to explore employment opportunities with our candidates and avoid the costs associated with recruitment and agency fees. To sign up, please [email our Returners team](#).

Hire children's social workers without the cost of agency fees

With many councils experiencing rising demands for children's social services, you may be interested in our [Social Work Together](#) campaign to help you hire experienced social workers without the cost of agency fees. This free campaign can help you find social workers living in your area. Find out more on [the LGA website](#).

Other news...

Local government pay negotiations

Pay deals have been finalised for employees covered by the [local government services](#) National Joint Council 'Green Book'; [Chief Executives](#); and [Chief Officers](#). Unfortunately, the two unions representing local authority [Craftworkers](#) (Unite and GMB) have rejected the National Employers' final offer, so their pay deal remains unresolved at this time.

Consultation on Teachers' Pay 2020

The Government accepted the STRB's recommendations for a proposed 5.5% increase for teachers' starting salary and 2.75% for all other teachers which they are now consulting on. The [online survey](#) achieved a 40% response rate from councils that will inform the NEOST (the national employers body) response back to Government.

Soulbury Pay Agreement

The National Employers and the Staff Associations on the Soulbury Committee have reached a pay agreement for a 2.75 per cent increase for Soulbury Officers for this year to be implemented on 1 September. Soulbury Officers are Education Improvement Professionals, Educational Psychologists and Young People's Community Service Managers.

Design in the Public Sector

A reminder that the LGA's [Design in the Public Sector programme](#) is still open for applications. This year's programme aims to help councils design tools and methods to help tackle climate change challenges. The deadline for applications is **4 September 2020 at 5pm**. The 18-week programme will help you tackle climate issues such as decarbonising transport, increasing uptake of active travel, and improving air quality. We will be providing four introductory webinars, open for all councils, free of charge.

Queen's Birthday Honours 2021

A reminder that nominations are currently open for the Queen's Birthday 2021 Honours List. Nominations will need to be submitted to MHCLG **by 10am on 21 September**. Further details of writing and submitting a nomination can be found on the [Honours pages](#) on our website. Please note that this year MHCLG are using an online form. No doubt that very many people in local government deserve recognition, and that starts with a nomination.

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