

LGA/NARE: COVID-19 Workforce Update

Issue 15: 1st August 2020 – 13th 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.

Economic Impact of COVID-19

The UK economy is now officially in recession, having experienced its biggest fall on record between April and June, as a result of the strict coronavirus restrictions. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the [economy shrank 20.4 per cent compared with the first three months of the year](#). Encouragingly the data shows that the economy started to make a recovery during June, growing by 8.7 per cent as restrictions eased.

Councils know their local economies best and have always been there for businesses and those threatened with losing their jobs. The LGA's submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review will call on the Government to recognise councils' leadership role in the economic recovery and provide sustainable funding to local areas to enable them to invest in long-term infrastructure, economic growth, support for businesses and help with skills and employment. The impacts will vary locally, so councils are being encouraged to submit representations. If you do, please encourage share a copy with the LGA by emailing lgfinance@local.gov.uk.

COVID-19 Local restrictions

Over the past fortnight the Health and Social Care Secretary has confirmed that due to increase in COVID-19 cases more areas would face increased local restrictions. Preston joined parts of east Lancashire, the whole of Greater Manchester, parts of west Yorkshire and in Leicester where enhanced restrictions are in force. The full [list of individual areas covered by these further restrictions](#) are detailed on the Government's website.

Test and trace

The Government [announced that the NHS Test and Trace programme will expand its support to local authorities](#) in order to reach more people testing positive and their contacts. The announcement means local areas will have dedicated ring-fenced teams from the national service who will focus their work on specific local areas, alongside the relevant public health team.

The NHS Test and Trace will work closely with councils in ensuring models of contact tracing are well established and sustainable. With some councils now developing their own local contact tracing approaches to meet local needs, it is more important than ever that councils' capability to help test and trace operate effectively is utilised.

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) President Jeanelle De Gruchy provided a helpful presentation on the early learning on COVID-19 transmission and measures to contain it, which are emerging from areas that have experienced local outbreaks. The slides from this can be found on our [Contact Tracing, Testing and Outbreak Management Khub](#) where we will continue to share resources from these meetings. If you would like to learn more please sign up, registration with a gov.uk

The LGA is running a series of webinars to support local test and trace teams. The next session is '[Data for Local Outbreak Planning: Now and Looking Ahead](#)', and will be held on the 25 August 10.30am-12pm. This webinar focuses on data provision to local authorities and how this can support local systems in responding to local outbreaks. It will provide an overview, exploring the different sources, uses and quality of the available data.

Long-term health impacts of COVID-19

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, has launched a [comprehensive research study into the long-term health impacts of COVID-19](#). This will assess the impact on around 10,000 patients who have been hospitalised, with the study focusing on their health, recovery, possible ways to help improve their mental health and how individual characteristics influence their recovery, such as gender or ethnicity. The findings will support the development of new strategies for clinical and rehabilitation care, including personalised treatments.

Local government finances in response to COVID-19

As part of the response to the COVID-19 financial outlook, the LGA commissioned LG Futures to review the likely council tax and business rates income implications of COVID-19, including analysing the effect of possible policy measures. This work is primarily based on the monthly financial management information returns currently being collected by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), supplemented with nationally available data sets on forecast business rates and council tax income. The LGA published a [summary presentation](#) and a nontechnical [explanatory note](#) on this work. We have also shared the work with MHCLG officials.

Flu vaccine Update

Public Health England has [published a second letter setting out new groups which are eligible for the flu vaccination programme](#) this autumn and the actions that commissioners and providers of the flu vaccine programme should take to prepare.

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. 59% of councils responded to the latest survey (week ending 24th July) and the headlines are as follows:

- 30% councils reported recruiting additional staff (1,191) ○ 27% councils reported that they had furloughed staff full time (6,732) ○ 17% councils reported that they had furloughed staff part-time (2,933)
- The main reason given for furloughing staff was that the service had stopped (88%) or that funding had stopped (50%)
- 74% councils had redeployed staff (10,021)
- 86% of councils reported staff unavailable for work. (29,838 6% of the current workforce). 30% unavailable through 'self-isolation with 42% were unavailable due to 'non-COVID sickness'.
- A third of councils said they were experiencing significant difficulties recruiting for some posts, 52% councils are having difficulties recruiting Children's social workers and 42% were having difficulties recruiting Planning officers.

If you wish to compare you councils 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@locla.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.

COVID-19 LGA Recovery & Renewal Panel Offer of Support

The [LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel](#) is a focused two to three-hour remote session which creates space for councils to pause and reflect on their response to COVID-19 and facilitate an open and collaborative conversation about recovery and renewal plans, capturing and sharing learning about developing practice from across the sector. The panel will be made up of a small group of officer and member peers selected by the host council from our unique pool of peers. For more information please contact To find out more about delivering a LGA Peer Recovery and Renewal Panel please your [regional LGA Principal Adviser](#) or the National Programme Manager, Gary Hughes: gary.hughes@local.gov.uk

Vulnerable people & shielding and return to work

A [letter from the Deputy Medical Officer](#) (DMO) on 30 July and circulated to councils via MHCLG sets out the Government's position that, due to the implications for Statutory Sick Pay, the reintroduction of shielding in a local area is a decision for Ministers. However, councils can escalate requests for shielding to be reintroduced through Contain Framework processes. This can also be discussed with DHSC's Shielding Policy Team and, if urgent, the DMO's office. Directors of public health and local authorities can also continue to issue their own targeted advice to clinically extremely vulnerable groups, for example to avoid certain geographical areas or take extra care.

National Employers Circular 12/08 COVID guidance: relaxation of shielding & return to work

The latest guidance from the National Employers sets out to clarify advice regarding the relaxation of shielding and return to work. Please see the attached circular.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

[New legislation](#), came into force in the last two weeks that provides furloughed employees with the right to receive redundancy pay based on their normal wage, rather than their furlough pay. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has confirmed that the majority of businesses have already been providing their redundant employees with the full entitlement. These changes will also apply to Statutory Notice Pay and basic awards for unfair dismissal cases.

Personal protective equipment

The [guidance for health providers on how to order emergency personal protective equipment](#) has been updated to reflect that pharmacies and medium sized social care providers can order from the portal. The number of visors that can be ordered via the portal has also changed

NHS Response Update

The [NHS response and reset plans were set out last week in Sir Simon Steven's third-phase letter](#) various guidance documents will be issued imminently, including discharge guidance and continuing healthcare re-start guidance. The letter, copied to council chief executives and directors of adult social care, looked at NHS priorities from August: accelerating the return of non-COVID health services to near-normal levels, preparing for winter demand pressures, and taking account of lessons from the first COVID-19 peak.

Adult Social Care Workforce: New Support App now available

Staff who work in Adult Social care in England, can now receive the latest coronavirus information, guidance, wellbeing support and discounts direct to their smartphone or inbox. Search 'CARE Workforce' on your smartphone app store or visit workforce.adultsocialcare.uk/join

DHSC consultation on reducing bureaucracy for health & social care staff

The Department for Health and Social Care has recently [launched a consultation on 'reducing bureaucracy in the health and social care system'](#). Some of the changes made as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have reduced the amount of inefficient bureaucracy that health and care staff have to complete. DHSC is now reviewing how it can embed some of these positive changes, as well as building on previous and current work to reduce bureaucracy and encourage innovation. The survey is aimed at the health and social care workforce and the deadline is 13 September.

H&SC Peer Support Offer

A revised Peer Support Offer from NHS partners and the LGA is now available. This is a free offer of support to health and care systems that encompasses individual mentoring, bespoke workshops and peer challenge. In the light of Covid-19, it has been revised to offer the opportunity for systems to pause and reflect on their experience of the pandemic, about what worked well and where improvements could be made. The Peer Support Offer is available to set up, run and facilitate these virtually. Central to this offer is the opportunity to talk through the strengths and the challenges experienced by a system and the key players in it during Covid-19 with a small team of peers in a confidential and supportive environment. More information can be found at: <https://nhsproviders.org/peersupport> & <https://www.local.gov.uk/nhscollaborative-peer-support-offer-local-systems>.

Unison COVID-19 PPE Survey of Care Worker members

Between the 1st -15th May, Unison distributed a PPE survey to their Care Worker members who receive their weekly email bulletins. 1,019 members responded to the survey and Unison have produced the attached summary report of the findings.

Carers UK Report – unpaid carers forced to leave work

A report published this week - [Carers UK report](#) highlighted that two in three employers stated that there needs to be more practical assistance from care and support services to ensure their staff with unpaid caring responsibilities are able to stay

in work. Previous research by the charity suggests each day 600 people give up work to care for older or disabled relatives, at an enormous cost to the economy.

The [LGA response](#), said that every part of the care and support sector is under intense pressure due to the current crisis and councils are doing all they can to support carers and those they care for through this. The care system could not survive without the contribution of unpaid carers, with councils assessing and supporting hundreds of thousands of carers every year but could do even more with the right resources. The LGA reiterated the call for social care to have parity of esteem with the NHS, backed up by a genuine, long-term and sustainable funding settlement for adult social care.

COVID-19 - New Support for Opposition councillors

The LGA have [published a new workbook for councillors](#) on the role that opposition plays during the COVID-19 pandemic. The workbook is designed to prompt reflection, insight and to identify actions to improve practice and support the work of opposition councillors. You may wish to share this with your councillors in opposition.

COVID-19 & Outdoor events

There has been some uncertainty about the extent to which outdoor events, particularly large events, are currently permitted to take place, with both councils and business organisations raising this issue with the LGA. In response the LGA have [published a short guidance note](#) for councils which brings together relevant guidance on outdoor events and provides an overview of the current position.

Face coverings

[The guidance](#) on when to wear a face covering and how to make one was updated on Friday 7th August to reflect the latest government guidance.

Funding package for school transport and further support for buses and trams

The Education Secretary [announced more than £40 million of funding](#) for local transport authorities to ease pressure on public transport as students return in September. Local transport authorities will be allocated the funding to reflect the number of children and young people in the local area and how far they have to travel. This includes students travelling to education or training, as well as anyone supervising or escorting students to education provision.

DfE 'Wellbeing for Education Return' initiative – Support Grant

The Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care have written to councils about funding that will be allocated using the S31 grant for the 'wellbeing for education return' initiative. The grant aims to fund a core group of people to undertake national training to enable the delivery of local programmes to

educational settings. This will help staff to support children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing on their return to education next month.

The funding allocations have not yet been confirmed, but councils are asked, by 14 August, to [contact DfE and Department for Health and Social Care \(DHSC\) to provide contact details of the person who will lead the programme.](#)

Schools Support: National Tutoring Programme

From autumn 2020, schools will be able to access support for children and young people who have been most affected by school closures during the coronavirus outbreak through the National Tutoring Programme. Tutoring will begin from the second half of the autumn term and increase through the spring term 2021. Schools can [register their interest](#) in joining this programme below.

Guidance for school sixth forms, colleges and all other 16 to 19 providers on delivering small group tutoring activity for disadvantaged 16 to 19 students whose studies have been disrupted as a result of coronavirus will be issued shortly.

In Other News...

LGA Sector Led Improvement Review - Support for councils

The LGA has published [an independent report](#), conducted by Shared Intelligence and which analysed feedback from councils and reviewed sector-led improvement (SLI) offer over the last three years. The evidence and feedback analysed in the report clearly demonstrates the overwhelming support for SLI and the very high levels of satisfaction. The vast majority of Councils said that SLI remains the right approach and added value to the sector. Shared Intelligence have also published a [second report](#) which highlights the significant positive impact SLI has on improvement in council children's services.

Member Code of Conduct Consultation

A gentle reminder that the closing date [for the consultation](#) on the draft model member code of conduct is next Monday, 17 August. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to feedback to date.

Radical Changes to England's Planning System

The Government have [unveiled proposals to deliver new housing by overhauling England's planning system](#). The reforms proposed in the 'Planning for the future' consultation include overhauling the planning process, agreeing local housing plans in 30 months and requiring every area to have a local plan in place. A new Infrastructure Levy system would replace the system of developer contributions with the aim of delivering more affordable housing, a fast-track system for 'beautiful buildings' would be created and all new homes would be 'zero carbon ready'. The consultation explores

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the accessibility of the planning system, with the aim of ensuring the planning process engages local communities at an earlier stage. Under the plans, land will be designated into one of three categories - for growth, for renewal or for protection. Local plans would set rules, rather than policies for general development. Communities will set the agenda for their own areas, with the categories for all land across England decided through local consensus.

There are also proposals which aim to protect green spaces, allow for more building on brownfield land and trees in streets. Decisions on the Green Belt will stay with local authorities as they prepare their plans. Meanwhile, a First Homes scheme will provide newly-built homes at a 30 per cent discount for local people, key workers and first-time buyers. See LGA [response to the First Homes consultation](#) in May, and the [Government response to those submissions](#).

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