

LGA Headline Issues 12th Nov

The following priority issues reflect the short term needs for councils in order to deliver the lockdown successfully, the issues that need to be resolved to transition out of lockdown and long-term issues that require clarity about their strategic direction. All these issues are underpinned by the need for a sustainable long-term financial settlement for the sector delivered by the upcoming spending review.

Immediate priority issues for the sector:

The following issues are the sectors immediate priorities. They combine questions and issues that require clarification as well as asks we have for the government.

Vaccine - What role will councils be asked to play in the distribution of a vaccine once one becomes available and how will the vaccine be made available to frontline care staff and residents in the priority cohort?

Shielding support – Will the support councils are getting for supporting shielded individuals be sufficient (£14.60 per CEV person is being made available to councils to cover the period up to 2 December) with councils asked to monitor spend. Councils also use a wider definition of vulnerable individuals they may be providing support to, whereas CEV list is based on NHS clinical decisions, although slightly expanded in the case of adults during the current restrictions. There is a need for clarity around specific issues relating to furlough for CEV public sector employees and parents of CEV children, any support councils may need and the effectiveness of data flow to and from councils.

Care homes - We need to understand how visiting will work in social care settings.

Public Services – Currently councils are continuing to deliver a wide range of services. We would like to see a system of local decision making where councils are enabled to take the lead in deciding whether any services may need to close during lockdown. We also need consideration of how capacity issues might be dealt with locally, especially if mass testing leads to larger numbers of asymptomatic carriers having to isolate and councils facing short term lack of specialist skilled officers.

Enforcement – Escalating queries and seeking rapid responses to grey areas in the new regulations councils are required to enforce.

Test and trace system – Tier 2 councils are seeking a localised system which is nationally enabled. What resources are being made available for increased localisation of the test and trace system? Councils need to be funded to build up their tracing teams to take on more cases.

Inspection – Can any inspection, monitoring and reporting regimes be suspended temporarily to boost frontline capacity?

Transition out of lockdown issues:

Mass Testing - This needs to be supported by adequate resources for councils to make sure tests are undertaken and for swift follow-up action following any positive cases. Mass testing will inevitably lead to more contact tracing. This makes it even more urgent to upscale successful local contact tracing efforts to plug gaps in the national scheme. For that

to happen, councils need timely, clearer, more precise information on who they should be trying to contact and funding to undertake the contact tracing.

Stepdown arrangements – What arrangements do we have to transition back into the tiered system as we leave lockdown. We want the government to consider the latest data to transition areas rather than returning to where areas were before the lockdown.

University terms - What role will councils be asked to play in delivering the HE return/exit window and associated testing?

Economic support – What payments is the government intending to make to areas to support business once we transition out of lockdown. Will councils be reliant on the same system of payments that was in place for the tiered system?

Long term issues that need timely consideration:

These issues are the consequences of lockdown that can be anticipated now. Timely consideration and a strategic direction from central government now will assist us in prioritising resources during the lockdown.

Exams- The Government must do everything possible to ensure that students are confident that they will be treated fairly next year and we do not believe that a single set of end of year exams will be fair to students least able to access online learning or in areas with higher rates of infection that are seeing lower attendance rates. We would like to see a more blended approach to assessment including teacher assessment and coursework. when grades are decided for all pupils.

Government reform programmes - What impact does government focus on delivering the lockdown have on long term issues like **devolution/LGR** or **planning reform**? Does Government wish to continue with the timelines we had been working toward pre-lockdown?

EU exit - Do we have the right guidance and resources to help prepare councils for the end of the transition period? For example in changes to reg services, procurement, data etc

Elections – What resources will be available for spring elections that will need to be made COVID secure and allow self-isolating and shielding individuals to vote?

Children's services – The impact of recurrent restrictions and the economic fallout of the pandemic is expected to significantly increase need for children's services and local economic safety nets. How will councils be supported to increase capacity and resources to support children and families to overcome short-term difficulties and avoid these escalating into crises?