

LGA Refocused Sector-Led Improvement Offer: Highlights and Summary

April 2020-February 2021



Peer Support

Following the onset of COVID-19 measures, the LGA rapidly refocused its sector-led improvement offer to provide councils with a range of remote support. **235 councils** have now benefited from these offers, delivered through peer-based programmes including our Remote Peer Support offer and Rough Sleeping Peer Support (see next section).

Headlines

- Our [Remote Peer Support](#) offer includes following programmes:
 - [Recovery and Renewal Panels](#), which provide councils an opportunity to reflect on their response to COVID-19 through a **remote panel discussion**, involving an open and collaborative conversation about recovery and renewal plans, capturing and sharing learning about developing practice from across the sector.
 - [Remote Corporate Health Checks \(RCHCs\)](#), which offer a flexible framework and **process for councils to focus on key corporate issues—such as priority setting, place leadership and financial planning—over a period of days**. We have begun engaging with councils to pilot this approach. This offer was developed in response to sector identified needs and does not replace the flagship Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) programme (which will recommence when appropriate to do so, given the importance of onsite engagement).
 - [Remote Bespoke Peer Support](#), which give councils the option to **review a specific issue or set of issues in greater depth**. This process involves a more detailed series of remote interviews and discussions with the council and uses a similar approach to the traditional peer challenges, being delivered over 2-3 days.

Following the launch of the remote peer support offer in July, **39 councils** have benefited from these programmes and the feedback has been positive. There continues to be strong interest from the sector: Sessions with **36 councils** are planned over the next 4 months.

- **Bespoke Support:** Bespoke support has been provided to a large number of councils and has been a key focus for our COVID activity. Examples of the support has including extensive support to a new Leader who took on the role during the pandemic, mentoring of several leaders and cabinet members, and secondment of staff to two authorities who needed additional strategic capacity.
- **Engagement and wider support:** Principal Advisors and regional teams have continued to support councils in responding to COVID-19 through **extensive engagement in Chief Executive (CEX) meetings, one-to-one meetings and by answering queries**. We engaged or provided information to every council during the first quarter and this level of activity has been maintained in subsequent months.

Housing and Homelessness

Headlines

- **Rough Sleeping Peer Support:** MHCLG have worked jointly with the LGA to develop and facilitate a peer support offer to assist councils in the next stage of their rough sleeping response. The offer involves the delivery of a programme of dynamic and inclusive **Delivery and Impact Panels (D&IP)**, designed to provide a safe space, framework and process for council lead officers to come together, reflect on their work to date, share and challenge learning and highlight good practice across the sector. As part of the **Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)** process, MHCLG have an expectation that all successful councils will engage in a peer support process. However, this offer of peer support has been opened up to all councils to support their rough sleeping response, including those councils who are not in receipt of NSAP funding. As of week ending 19 February 2021, **192 councils have participated in a D&IP** (since the end of December 2020). The LGA will be producing a national report detailing key themes and emerging learning from the D&IP in March 2021. This final report will capture the strengths and challenges from councils' responses, identify good practice in local planning and delivery arrangements and highlight key issues and learning with the potential to inform national policy development.
- **Housing Advisers Programme:** In November, we launched the Housing Advisers Programme, which will fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils – or groups of councils – wanting to transform the delivery of homes and places, the quality and security of existing homes and/or to prevent and reduce homelessness. Funding has now been agreed for 17 projects with the involvement of 43 councils. Projects will include housing planning and delivery with a focus on carbon reduction, affordable housing, regeneration for low income households, as well as homelessness and homelessness prevention, including for 18-25 year olds. The support from the Housing Advisers will help to make a significant difference to the housing crisis and help to build capacity in councils by ensuring that great sustainability of projects in the longer term. The programme also helps to create learning about what works, so that the wider sector can benefit from that knowledge.

Other activity

- **One Public Estate (OPE):** We have supported councils and MHCLG through a range of activities activity undertaken through our OPE programme:
 - In August our regional OPE teams have **input into the moderation of bids submitted to the Future High Streets Fund**
 - In October we supported MHCLG to engage with relevant local authorities regarding the approach to **refreshing the Right to Contest**.
 - Since September we have supported MHCLG sponsorship of **OPE Phase 8 and LRF2**, involving launch of revenue and capital funding offers, alongside technical advice and practical support and brokering to all English local authorities. **OPE8 equates to £10m of revenue support** to rationalise, co-locate and repurpose surplus public land. **LRF2 is equal to £20m** of capital funding to bring surplus public land forward for housing delivery. We hope to announce awards in the near future.
 - In November we **supported MHCLG's Housing Delivery team** with project delivery intelligence from the OPE programme, and with the **design of future place-based housing delivery funds**. We are also working with new Heads of Place, sharing regional intelligence and expertise from the programme, and offering access to OPE networks.
- **Digital Housing Programme:** The digital housing programme funds councils to reuse the assets and learning from the Kent Home Choice Partnership Project to **support local government respond to the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** and scale up

across other councils the resource and assets from this project. A case study series from this work is now being finalised. This financial year, the programme has predicted projected **savings of £430,000** for four of the councils involved.

Finance and commercialisation support

Headlines

- **Support via the Finance Improvement Support Advisers (FISAs):** Finance associates (FISAs) have now **directly supported 54 councils** since the start of the financial year, with support ranging from helping to understand and monitor the impact of COVID on their finances, options for seeking in-year savings and alternative funding strategies and support for individual CFOs in undertaking their duties. FISAs have also been working to provide assurance to MHCLG on councils, which have applied for exceptional financial support in 2020/21. Feedback from councils has highlighted that this role has provided councils with critical support address significant financial and governance challenges throughout COVID-19. FISAs continue to play a critical role in supporting councils with financial planning around recovery and renewal.
- **Collaborative finance panels:** These panels bring small groups of councils together to reflect on their responses to COVID-19, presenting an opportunity for councils to compare notes and good practice and build resilience through this process. The first of these panels took place on July 15, involving several councils from the North East, East Midlands and Yorkshire & Humber. Further sessions were held in December (18), February (11, 15 and 25) and March (2). Feedback from attendees has highlighted that panels have proven both cathartic and instructive and, with high demand, further sessions are planned for spring and late autumn.
- **Income generation:** Since April, we have delivered more than 20 commercialisation events to support councils with their income generation objectives. Events have been well attended and covered topics including commercial thinking, business planning, financial health and commercial leadership and decision making.

Other activity

- **Finance Leadership Essentials:** We have delivered 3 courses – two online and one face-to-face, benefitting 20-30 elected members with financial responsibilities.
- **Webinar on Review of Local Authority Financial Reporting and Audit (Redmond Review):** In October, we ran an online webinar to cover recommendations and explore learning from the Redmond Review.
- **Finance Portfolio Holder Guidance:** Published and shared via social media, bulletins and website. The guide offers context, strategic questions and guidance to senior councillors with responsibility for council finances to help them respond effectively to the present context.
- **CEX Finance Roundtable:** In May we brought together a group of Chief Executive's from some of the most financially challenged councils to explore their issues and to share good practice.

Economic Growth and Recovery Support

Headlines

- **Economic Growth Advisors Programme:** We have launched a new programme to source **Economic Growth Advisors** on behalf of councils. Councils are supported on a targeted need basis and receive support on projects concerning economic recovery from COVID-19. An initial 10 councils have been identified for support and preliminary conversations have been arranged to take the programme forward and. Of that group, 4 councils have been

awarded funding to suppliers who will deliver their respective projects on: skills launchpads, tourism strategies, support for 18-25s and high street regeneration. An additional 3 additional councils have been granted £14k to deliver projects on economic recovery, area action plans and green jobs.

- **Economic Growth Support Hub**: The LGA has launched an Economic Growth Support Hub to provide councils with a central point for tools and resources on all aspects of their economic development plans, including employment, re-skilling, high streets, SME support, procurement and business retention. News support and resources, including case studies, publications and upcoming events will continue to be added.
- **Economic growth events**: We held our third economic growth roundtable on February 17 around remote working and the opportunities for an adaptable economy and on February 22, held our first webinar will be hosted on 22 Feb around the green economic recovery.

Other activity

- **Supporting locally led jobs and skills recovery**: We engaged with member authorities to inform views and policies relating to COVID-19, including with the Combined Authority Employment and Skills Network. We also organised a roundtable between local authorities from non-devolved areas with DfE, DWP and MHCLG officials to address challenges relating to the present environment.
- **Business Support**: We have continued to support councils in the distribution of the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLCGF) schemes, promoting the efforts of councils and raising issues relating to the schemes and interpretation of the Government guidance.
- **Town centres toolkit**: This toolkit has been updated to reflect present challenges and national guidance, including guidance to help local authorities and place partnerships to develop COVID-19 recovery planning as part of wider revitalisation.
- **Culture, Tourism and Sport (CTS)**: We have developed or contributed to a **range of COVID-19 centred publications** in this area, including **guidance on parks management** and a **joint statement on working together during COVID-19**; held and 10 **webinars** for councillors and officers on all aspects of CTS (with a further 16 planned); and contributed to DCMS working groups that are drawing up reopening guidance for libraries, museums, and leisure centre. We also carried out **interviews** with 20 councils to help gauge the **financial impact of COVID-19 on their cultural, tourism and leisure provision**. Following increased concern from councils about operating leisure facilities under restrictions, we have published a case study report entitled **Leisure under lockdown: how culture and leisure services responded to COVID-19**.
- **Local Partnerships**: Local Partnerships have also been working closely with councils to support them with their leisure providers. In addition, they worked closely with Sport England, DCMS and MHCLG to help pull together the funding bid to HMT to rescue councils and their providers.

Leadership

Headlines

- **National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)**: The NGDP recruits high calibre and diverse graduates, with the right skills to help councils recover. Following the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions in March 2020, all restrictions have taken place remotely. In January, the programme recorded more than 7400 applications for the next cohort, including a substantially more diverse pool of applicants.

- **Coaching for CEXs and senior officers:** We created a brand-new offer to provide coaching for chief executives and other senior officers in the COVID context and by July individuals from 88 councils were engaged in coaching and some councils have signed up for group coaching. As of January 2021, 465 individual coaching hours had been completed. A total of 171 officers are receiving or have received coaching (32 of which are chief executives). We have also provided 76 hours of top team coaching.
- **Coaching for councillors:** We also launched a similar programme for councillors, and for leaders in particular, specifically designed to support councillors with their leadership challenges during COVID19. In February, there were 69 signed coaching agreements with Members.
- **E-Learning Hub and resources:** We have developed a new e-learning platform in support enable councillors to deepen their knowledge of local government and develop the essential leadership skills needed to work more effectively with their communities. We have produced a range of **webinars**, **workbooks** and **e-learning modules** on COVID-19 related topics in order to build skills and capacity. These include:
 - An e-learning module on **handling intimidation**
 - A Workbook and e-learning module on **mentally healthier communities**
 - A webinar on **chairing of remote meetings**
 - A webinar series on the **role of the ward councillor in responding to COVID-19**
 - A webinar series on **effective opposition** during COVID-19
 - A webinar on **rapid innovation** to support councils working toward recovery/renewal
 - A webinar on **presentation skills** to build skills and confidence for virtual presentations
 - A webinar on **Coalition Administrations**, identifying how to ensure robust, stable coalition working during Covid-19 and beyond.

Further leadership webinars are planned for subjects including Councillor wellbeing, risk management and finance.
- **Leadership Essentials/Academy:** Due to the COVID restrictions, most Leadership Essentials programmes were adapted to be delivered virtually to ensure councillors able to carry out with their development and respond to current challenges. This includes Audit Cttee; Finance, Children, Leading Healthier Places; Scrutiny; Effective Cabinet Member; Cultural Services; Climate emergency; Communication and Media, involving 241 delegates as of February. In person Leadership Academy sessions were able to take place in October, however have since been carried out virtually following COVID-19 restrictions – 82 Members will complete the programme virtually.

Other activity

- **COVID-19 Knowledge Hub (KHub):** Councillors can access key COVID-19 documents on a newly launched KHub group and are also signposted to the full COVID-19 pages and support package for councils on the LGA's website. We have added a range of councillor workbooks including 'Changes to Local Authority Powers and Duties Resulting from the Coronavirus Act 2020', 'Protecting the Local Government Supply Chain from Fraud' and 'Tackling Domestic Abuse'.

Procurement and Commissioning Programme

Headlines

- **Informing the Green Paper on Transforming Public Procurement:** Members of NAG continued to engage with MHCLG and Cabinet Office in relation to emerging procurement reform including in the development of the **national procurement policy statement** and the

Green Paper on Transforming Public Procurement. The Green Paper was published in December and LGA is consulting widely with councils on the implications for the sector of the wide-ranging reforms set out. We engaged with MHCLG and DCMS to develop a process that will share council's position on use of VCSE's within our supply chains, particularly with a view to how we can continue to engage the VCSE sector better in the future.

- **Informing Procurement Policy Notes:** The LGA, supported by the National Advisory Group, has worked with Cabinet Office, MHCLG and others at pace, to get three **PPNs** and various additional guidance documents published (PPN deal directly with emerging procurement issues councils are continuing to face, particularly the increased flexibility afforded to councils with supplier relief) and to address emerging supply chain issues.
- **PPE procurement:** The LGA also continues to run regular **meetings on PPE procurement**, attended by councils, LG professional buying organisations, MHCLG, DHSC, CO colleagues. This meeting is open to all councils. Some attend on behalf of their region, ensuring information from these meetings is carried forward. This has helped to ensure that central government departments understand council needs, while providing a space to inform policies – they have also provided further opportunities for networking and sharing good practice between councils. We have also worked with MHCLG, Cabinet Office and others specifically to develop sustainable supplies of PPE for councils and their partners. We have also held two workshops on the increasing environmental impact of the production and use of disposable and single use face coverings since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Modern Slavery and Social Value:** Since December, we have held a series of events relating to modern slavery and social value, including a Modern Slavery in the Supply Chain webinar, attended by 250 attendees; a practical deep dive Modern Slavery in the Supply Chain, attended by 70 people; a session on modern slavery in the supply chain for the construction steering group; and a Social Value Masterclass, attended by 50. We have also launched our [social value guidance and template](#), for councils to use to set out their key messages and Social Value commitments. Since COVID-19, it has become clear that the need for social value is greater than ever – having a clear, committed Social Value Statement will help communicate this to their key stakeholders.
- **Adult Social Care and Childrens services:** We are continuing work on formulating a standard contract for foster care and in adult social care commissioning, our network continues to work with the big four providers to address SSRM related issues (one of the issues identified was the need overcome measures that prevented care homes from gaining insurance during COVID-19. The LGA has worked alongside central government to ensure that care homes can now access that insurance). We also recently set up a group to consider the market for care homes and future planning.

Other activity

- During the first lockdown, the LGA hosted a series of meetings **on home to school transport**, open to all councils and DfE, providing a forum for councils to ask questions and share concerns in order to better ensure the safe transport of children when schools returned.
- **Strategic supplier updates:** We have ensured procurement officers and commissioner remain updated on key issues via our [weekly COVID-19 Supply Chain Bulletin](#). Whilst the focus has shifted to transition and recovery a lot of councils have also had to cope with the changing restrictions of the tier system and gearing ourselves up for the second lockdown. There are more than 3,000 subscribers to this bulletin.
- **Waste management:** We have provided guidance and support for waste authorities with significant private sector partnerships that are experiencing difficulties in balancing waste

services resources as a consequence of contracting arrangements that are coming under stress because of COVID-19.

Digital Innovation and Improvement

Headlines

- **Digital Inclusion:** The Digital Inclusion Programme supports 10 councils to work with specific cohorts of residents to support those who haven't had the skills, confidence or infrastructure to go online so they can benefit from the potential for digital tools and solutions to contribute to improving life outcomes. The present round has entered the evaluation phase, with the councils involved contributing to case studies available to all councils. We also recently launched a Digital Inclusion Network, which provides participating councils an avenue to network and collaborate on digital inclusion development – and opportunity for councils to help less developed councils with their digital inclusion projects. There are currently 42 members of the network.
- **Digital training and events:** We have held three training sessions as part of our [digital and data training series](#). These sessions, covering inclusion, connectivity and smart places, were well attended – with **78 attendees** in total – and a further session, on digital political leadership, has been added due to popular demand. We also held our annual **Digital Showcase Conference** on 24 November, with over **175 attendees** registered to participate. This event offered a range of presentations, viewable on the [LGA website](#), covering a range of ways that councils have redesigned and improved their services, adjusted to and innovated new ways of working and utilised digital tools and solutions.
- **Digital Connectivity Programme:** This grant funded programme builds councils' skills and capacity to take advantage of the opportunities offered by connectivity to local place and communities. We will be running a workshop on developing broadband and mobile connectivity expertise on March 31, open to all programme applicants. This workshop is being developed (and will be delivered) in partnership with Trowers and Hamlins, the lawfirm responsible for the legal work associated with the rollout of 5G in the West Midlands.

Other activity

- **Remote meetings:** Our [Remote Council Meetings Hub](#) has helped to ensure the democratically elected voice of communities continues to be heard during this crisis, including advice, case studies and a hybrid meeting section, with guidance from partners in line with social distancing regulations. The Hub has been well utilised, **viewed 50,926 times** at last count in February. We have also launched a [Remote Council Meeting interactive map](#), to help members, officers and residents explore which video conferencing software all local authorities across England are using, how the meetings are streamed to the public and press while also collating all authority's council meeting calendars in one place for the most up to date information on local democracy around the country.

Test, Trace and Outbreak Management, Shielding and Enforcement

Headlines

- **Vaccination programme support:** The LGA has commissioned a suite of support for councils on behaviour change in collaboration with LGA's [Behavioural Insights](#) lead, specifically on vaccine uptake. This will include a think piece to support councils to use behavioural insights techniques to encourage the take up of vaccine; collation of useful resources and interviews with those using behavioural insights to encourage take up; and top tips and guidance, which was launched in February at the **Applying behavioural change techniques to COVID-19 and climate emergency responses webinar**, which

showcased behaviour change techniques relating to these two subject areas. This highly successful event was chaired by Councillor Peter Fleming and **attended by nearly 400 people**. This programme of work also involves engaging with MHCLG's National Vaccine Deployment Group, including supporting a Data Task Group and Inequalities Steering Group, led by Council Chief Executives, to ensure roll out in reaches all sections of the population and is equitable.

- **Specific support to MHCLG:** We have provided support and guidance, including leadership and administrative support to the **Nine Regional Chief Executives group** and their associated networks and groups. We have been involved in the **Stakeholder Engagement Forum**, and its sub-groups on data, local lockdowns and food supply, working with MHCLG and councils to share local learning to inform the future system. We have worked with councils, MHCLG and Defra on the delivery and development of the shielded programme, including input into the development of the Adult Social Care COVID-19 Sector Assurance Framework'. We have also supported discussions between councils and MHCLG/Government Digital Service to develop a minimum viable product for the new framework and better data flows to and from councils.
- **National Partnerships:** We have helped convene **roundtable discussions with national partners including**, ADPH, ADASS, ADCS, SOLACE and Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers (CEHO), to support councils in their work with vulnerable and shielded communities.
- **Local Outbreak Control Plans Advisory Board:** The Advisory Board has drawn together expertise from local government to support national arrangements in ways that build on local capabilities and to provide opportunities to share knowledge so that outbreaks can be managed most effectively. Case studies on one of the most recent are currently in preparation. The Advisory Board was established in May and has met 27 times at last count.
- **Cross Whitehall Working Group for Assurance of COVID Local Outbreak Management:** Participation in this forum has led to the LGA being positioned as a **key part of the regional architecture**, with the remit of sharing insights, identifying council support needs. Since December, points of focus for the group have included identification of relevant data sets to **inform risks, support and improvement** for recording and reporting.
- **Top Tips for Leaders:** We have created a [top tips document](#) based on interviews with leaders who have experienced intervention followed by negotiations to enter into 'high' or 'very high' local alert level. It is a reflection of the leaders' experiences and the advice that they would like to offer leaders.

Other activity

- **TTOM Knowledge Hub:** This network brings together a range of resources, including presentations and case studies from the Advisory Board, which help to inform local developments and insights, including support on shielded residents. There are currently **602 members**, including more than 60 are DPHs.
- **Supporting councils to support shielded groups:** We have facilitated the **sharing of learning, practice and updates on shielded groups**, with a focus food provision, through case studies, webinars, bulletins and engagement to ensure councils are well prepared to deliver local responses
- **Enforcement:** We have had regular engagement with councils and government officials to support in the development of effective policy approaches on compliance and enforcement. We also **brought together more than 30 tier 3 authorities** to help shape consistent approach to interpreting key issues in regulation and have supported ongoing discussions between Government and councils on the resources required to ensure ongoing compliance, enforcement, and bolster capacity in key professions such as environmental health.

- **TTOM, Shielded Groups and Enforcement Webinars**: Facilitated well received and attended webinars between MHCLG officials and councils to share and prepare for changes to support for the shielded group. We have hosted webinars on topics including **Food Processing** (405 attendees), **Testing Prototypes, Communications and Engagement** (147 attendees) and with the **Contain Team** (203 attendees) and further sessions on **data and enforcement** (attendee numbers not yet available).
- **TTOM Leading and Learning Together Sessions for chief executives**: These action learning sets provide a safe space for reflection, exchange of experiences, learning and a mutually supportive peer network. Feedback has been positive and Insights have been shared through a [Top tips for Chief Executives document](#) that identifies leadership challenges and learning from Chief Executives during the pandemic. This includes lessons learnt, as well as video case studies from chief executives with direct experience of tier three restrictions.

Workforce

Headlines

- **Negotiations**: We continue to work with the unions to reach **JNC agreements** on pay and allowances for the sector, the latest being the successfully concluded pay negotiations for craft workers, youth and community workers and Soulbury staff. In addition, our work for the Home Office in negotiating pay for police staff reached a pay agreement for an increase for 2020. We also worked with unions to agree working to **support shielded or clinically extremely vulnerable local government staff** and our **Fire Negotiations Team** continue to work with the unions, under the Fire Tripartate Agreement, to implement any further work activities needed in the fire service to support the response to COVID-19.
- **Direct consultancy for Local Government Employers**: We have provided direct consultancy advice to **14 local government employers** on a range of strategic and operational HR issues, including senior employee relations issues, organisational design proposals and job evaluation.
- **Support for Schools**: We developed **new advice for councils and schools recruiting overseas teachers** after the end of the transition period for leaving the EU. As part of the School Teachers Review Body, we launched the annual statutory consultation for local government on teachers' pay. We developed and launched new resources to support ongoing advice and guidance on applying pay and conditions for teaching staff.
- **Environmental Health Together**: Environmental Health Together is the dedicated solution for councils and local authorities experiencing capacity issues within their environmental health departments as they respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides a **register of professionals with relevant environmental health qualifications and experience** who have signed up to assist LAs during this crisis. We recently launched a new engagement campaign to ensure more councils are aware of and sign up to the register. At last report, this register has received 212 candidates and has 109 councils signed up.
- **Return to... programmes**: We are working with Government departments and national partners to run a series of programmes to help councils sure up resilience, fill vacancies and attract people back to the sector within **planning, ICT, social work and legal** (recently launched). At last count, planning had 48 candidates, with 25 councils engaged; ICT had 77 candidates in training, with 24 councils engaged; social work had 111 registered candidates, with 86 placements and 59 job offers; and legal had 32 candidates and 40 councils engaged.
- **Wellbeing support**: We recently launched the **annual health check for social workers** on the Employers Standards for Social Workers in local government and successfully secured a record 10,000 responses from the profession. Following this, we are developing reports and

action plans for 123 employing councils. We are also working with councils, professional partners and Government departments to provide advice, resources and other support for HR leads dealing with wellbeing and mental health issues stemming from COVID-19, including **managing front line staff during the pandemic, responding to muscular skeletal injuries** and providing employer **guidance and advice on domestic abuse**.

- **Bi-weekly surveys on sector response to COVID-19:** Surveys collect **key workforce data** –size of LA workforce, recruitment, deaths in service, furloughed staff, redeployment, unavailability, service disruption, PPE and testing with a participation rate of 60% of councils (i.e. a third of the workforce). Reports are offered to or shared with LRFs, MHCLG, DHSC and are available through LG Inform.
- **T-Level Qualification support for councils:** We **worked with DfE to launch a campaign to promote the new T-Level qualification**, which includes a 45-day industrial placement. Councils as employers will be encouraged to provide at least one placement from September 2021 and we are helping councils to work with T-Level providers (FE and 6th Form Colleges) to meet this responsibility.

Other activities

- **Regular, ongoing guidance for councils on workforce implications of COVID-19:** These resources **support councils to navigate and understand government guidance** and cover themes including the COVID-19 tier system and present nation lockdown, H&S, funding issues and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. This support includes joint guidance and engagement with employers and trade unions on extended opening of schools and COVID-secure workplaces. We also recently developed resources for the LGA's Brexit Advice Hub concerning workforce issues relating to Brexit.
- **'Social Work Together' campaign:** We have continued to support this campaign with partners: DfE, Social Work England and DHSC. The campaign has attracted **1000+ expressions of interest** from social workers. We are encouraging councils to use the talent pool to cover need to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the profession.
- **Sharing of workforce centred best practice:** Covering issues encountered by councils and facilitating planning and preparedness in the light of changed mechanisms for working and delivering services resulting from COVID-19. Topics include **skills shortages, redeployment, remote teams and more integrated ways of working**. Lessons build on agile/smart working progress that improves efficiency and capacity, workforce planning and organisational design.
- **Workforce bulletin:** Provision of **general and specific assistance to councils, schools and others on workforce issues**. Council engagement with these publications has increased significantly as a result of the demands of the COVID challenge as councils seek to manage their staff and new service delivery demands.

Communications

Headlines

- **Bulletins:** Our key messages and guidance have been promoted in email bulletins from the Chairman, Chief Executive and Director of Communications. **More than 300 bulletins have been published** during the 2020/21 financial year and feedback highlights these updates are highly valued by senior councillors and officers. The number and composition of subscribers is as follows:
 - Chief Executive's bulletin: **1,153 recipients** (Chief executives, Chief finance officers, LGA staff, Including chief executives of the four councils not in LGA membership)
 - Chairman's bulletin: **1,138 recipients** (Leader, Opposition and group leaders, All members of LGA boards including regional peers)

- Director of Communication's bulletin: **622 recipients** (Local authority communications teams, via CommsNet)

With this subscriber list, our reach is well over industry standard. Many Government departments are now using LGA bulletins to share their messages with councils and invite response. In addition to providing key information, these bulletins also provide councils, senior officers and politicians another way to engage with the LGA and central Government.

- **COVID-19 communications: Living with COVID-19:** This resource, launched in July, continues to be updated with new materials relating to **COVID-19 communications prioritisation, strategy development, insight and internal communications**. It covers practical guidance on issues affecting council communications teams, **including local outbreaks and vaccine communications**.
- **Direct support:** We have provided direct support to 15 councils, including training to Members, strategy development and crisis communications support. This feeds into the creation of [our recovery communications resource](#), which gives **practical advice/guidance on communicating the move to recovery and living with COVID-19**.
- **Communications Health Check:** We have launched a virtual health check offer to support councils to review their **recovery communications plans and learnings from the COVID-19 response**. This direct support focuses on ensuring councils have the right capacity, strategies and plans in place to engage with their communities around adhering to any new local lockdown rules and recovery from the pandemic. Since launching at the end of August, we have conducted 15 virtual communications health checks.
- **Workshops for directors of Public Health:** We have organised **media training workshops** for directors of public health in conjunction with the ADPH, to ensure they are well equipped to provide clear communication to residents during the pandemic.
- **Virtual events programme:** We have now held over 100 virtual events since the beginning of the year, with an events programme that carries a focus on COVID-19, including an event on **supporting mental health of communities during COVID-19**, which was attended by 350 attendees and another on [Asset Based Community Development and Local Area Coordination](#) during COVID-19, which **attracted 324 attendees**.

Other activity

- **Communicating improvement at the virtual LGA conference:** The conference programme included speakers from across local and central government and focused in on the local government response to COVID-19 and recovery. **The launch event alone was attended by over 600 people**. Overall, **over 5,000 attendees took part**, including in a series of improvement sessions, putting a spotlight on the fantastic work councils have been doing in response to COVID-19 and providing learning and advice to councils (See below for more information). Recordings and other resources from the conference are available on the [LGA website](#).
- **Chief Executive briefings:** These regular briefings, hosted by LGA CEO Mark Lloyd, are for council chief executives and directors of public health and have concentrated on Local Outbreak Plans and the Test and Trace service. **Numbers attending have ranged between 299-430**.
- **COVID-19 communications good practice hub:** This hub holds a range of good practice examples around the public sector in response to COVID-19 and provides key information to enable communications teams to use and adapt content for their own channels and audiences.

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

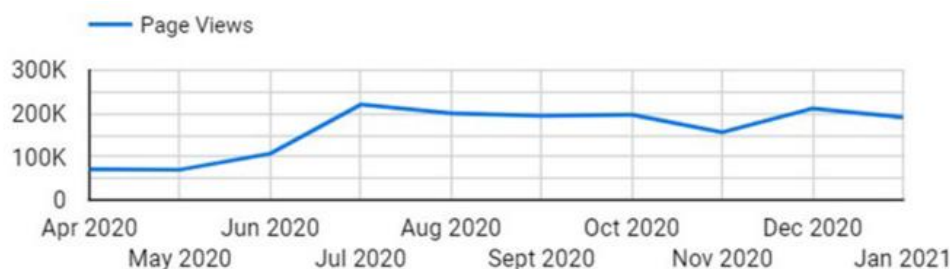
Headlines

- **Workforce Race Equality Standard:** We continue to work with Government departments and national partners on developing and implement the **Workforce Race Equality Standard for social care in local government**, with the first cohort of councils on target to commence working with the WRES in April 2021. We are also preparing a range of webinars, guidance and other materials for councils wishing to respond appropriately to workforce equality, diversity and inclusion issues for black and ethnic minority staff highlighted by COVID-19 and BLM.
- **Equalities, diversity and inclusion hub:** The LGA is developing an equalities, diversity and inclusion hub, where councils can easily navigate to the **range of EDI tools and resources available, including peer support, guidance, good practice examples** and more.
- **A short course equality, diversity and inclusion for councillors:** This package of leadership support is under development and will help councillors to gain skills to provide **more representative leadership, enhance equality and challenge discrimination**. This will include a short course will involve 4 modules and run during spring. Bookings for this course will be available soon.

Research, LG Inform and LG Inform Plus

Headlines

- **Predictive analytics:** In November, we published a [guide to using predictive analytics in local public services](#), which draws together contributions from councils and national organisations with policy and technical expertise. A new practitioners' network for local government, the **Advanced & Predictive Analytics Network (APAN) in Local Government**, was undertaken in partnership with the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) and MHCLG and launched in December. The purpose of this network is to connect information managers, analysts and invited experts to encourage the sector to share learning, opportunities and knowledge of risks in the use of algorithm-based analysis of data. At the time of writing, the APAN has 195 members, we have uploaded some 85 resource items (reports, case studies, tools, guidance) to the network pages and draft terms of reference are under review by the membership.
- **LG Inform:** As shown by the graph below, this platform is a very well used council resource. Spurred on by our **COVID-19 reports**, which provide information on the **number of cases and deaths across England and in specific contexts** (e.g. council areas, hospitals, care homes), recent reports show the current average number of page views per month is over 200,000 per month. Reports on **Financial Hardship and Economic Vulnerability** give authorities good insight into the impact of COVID-19, across a broader range of metrics and are also being well used. By January this report had more than **1,600 views**.



- **LG Inform Recovery and Renewal Panel reports:** We have produced **two LG Inform reports** to support Recovery and Renewal panels for councils. The first report provides recent **contextual information about a local area** since the first lockdown, such as COVID-

19 cases and deaths, and statistics on employment rates, unemployment benefit claimants and crime figures. The other report provides a **demographic overview of a local area**.

- **LG Inform Plus:** LG Inform Plus provides information for each ward and smaller areas of geography, so that councils can compare with wards within other regions and nationally. **Reports** published on this platform cover topics including changes resulting from the **Coronavirus Act; school admissions changes; fostering, adoption and care; Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; and planning and road traffic orders**. There have been over 5,600 downloads of LG Inform Plus reports between April and January. We have recently relaunched LG Inform Plus with a redesigned platform that is more accessible and user-friendly.

Other activity

- **Find My Area Tool:** This tool allows councils to **link locations with parliamentary constituencies, local authorities, wards and more**. Launched at the same time as the newly designed LG Inform Plus site, this tool is designed to help with requests like “In what parliamentary constituencies are businesses affected by a government scheme?”

Climate Change and Environment

Headlines

- **Carbon accounting tool:** With support from Local Partnerships, we launched our tool to baseline carbon emissions for councils in September. The tool collates data to consistently measure greenhouse gas emissions across the country, in order to measure and compare impacts in a standardised way. The tool has since been **endorsed by the Committee for Climate Change**. Latest figures show **183 councils have downloaded the tool** and there have been more than **335 downloads in total**.
- **Net Zero Innovation and Design in the Public Sector (DiPS):** The new DiPs programme was launched on 10 August for councils to gain skills in design to tackle local climate change challenges. The Net Zero Innovation Network was launched in September and is delivered through a collaboration between the LGA and University College London (UCL). It brings together local authorities, universities and other stakeholders to address climate challenges at the local level and seek routes to achieve council’s net zero commitments. Partnerships, funding support and a ‘train the trainer’ model are all key parts of this programme. There were 96 applications for these two programmes, which are now fully underway to support councils in reaching their local climate action plans.
- **Green webinars series:** We have delivered a series of webinars including **renewable energy, decarbonisation of transport, green reset, scrutinising climate action** and **locking in green behaviours** from the pandemic. The most recent webinar, examined the **case for planting trees** in terms of finance and carbon and the challenges this presents for local authorities. This webinar was chaired by Councillor Mike Haines, Leader of the Independent Group at Teignbridge District Council, and **attended by 170 people**. As mentioned in the *Test, Trace and Outbreak Management, Shielding and Enforcement* section, we also held a webinar, **attended by new 400 people**, on how **behavioural change techniques** can be used to tackle climate change (and COVID-19).
- **Climate Change Web Hub:** This web hub features a range of climate change tools and resources and is regularly updated with new offers of support and good practice. In the past year, the Hub has received 21,977 views.

Other activity

- **Action Learning Sets:** The LGA is delivering action learning sets for both officers and Members off the back of the LGA green jobs report. This is helping local authorities to work through the issues of **green economic recovery** and to create **local green jobs**. The learnings will be made available to all councils.
- **Green finance:** The LGA is working with Local Partnerships to develop **support for councils on green finance** as part of their green economic recovery. The support offer will provide innovative approaches to accessing green finance and practical guidance, by looking at domestic and international best practice.
- **Publications:** We have developed a [renewable energy good practice guide](#), which considers the risks and opportunities for councils in developing **large scale wind and solar energy generation projects**. We are also developing a Sustainable procurement guide, to provide guidance for councils on how to procure sustainably. Our [Climate change ebulletin](#) continues to provide councils with regular news, support offers and good practice.

Service Specific Support and Other Developments

Headlines

- **Resident Satisfaction Polling Survey:** We have been tracking people's perceptions of their local council every 3-4 months since 2012. Our June saw **record levels of satisfaction** after the response of local government to the pandemic. The results from the [October \(2020\) survey](#) were also encouraging as they sat above the average recorded over the last eight years. During February, the LGA ran its 28th round of public polling to measure residents' views of their local council. The findings of this report are available on [the LGA website](#).
- **Collection and sharing of COVID-19 related good practice:** We have shared 150+ examples covering nearly 20 themes on our COVID-19 good council practice webpage, which had received **48, 917 views** at last count in February. **Topics include:** communications; adult social care; children, young people and education; culture, entertainment and other activities; cyber and digital solutions; deaths management; emergency food provision; finances and economy; governance; health and wellbeing; personal protective equipment (PPE); procurement; unlocking; supporting vulnerable residents; waste and recycling.
- **Coronavirus enquires helpline and issues log:** Established to provide an online enquiries helpline with national coverage to receive, categorise, consider and answer issues and ideas relating to pandemic support in local government. Between March and June, the enquiries and issues log **managed 2,500 complex cases** involving **over 15,000 email communications**.
- **Frequently Asked Questions hub:** At the beginning of the outbreak we launched a FAQ hub to help provide councils with the most up to date responses to their enquiries on an ongoing basis. The hub currently contains over 150 answers to questions on 22 different topics, ranging from Business rate relief and support for business to Waste and Recycling.
- **COVID-19 role-specific support:** We have developed a web hub containing **guidance, training and tools for councillors and officers**, including on **workforce and HR, leadership, virtual meetings, communications**, and more, to ensure councils are well equipped to respond to existing and emerging challenges relating to COVID-19, including guidance on [Very High Alert Level Regulations](#).

COVID-19 Related Publications and Guidance on the LGA Website

- [Councillor workbook on creating mentally healthy places](#)
- [Changes to local authority powers and duties: Adoption, fostering and care planning and health protection resulting from Coronavirus Regulations 2020](#)
- [Changes to local authority powers and duties resulting from Coronavirus Regulations 2020: school admissions](#)
- [Changes to local authority powers and duties resulting from the Coronavirus Act](#)
- [COVID-19: a leadership workbook for cabinet members](#)
- [Councillor guidance on emergency response structures](#)
- [Key questions and issues for finance portfolio holders during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Councillor guidance: COVID-19 outbreak](#)
- [Protecting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)
- [Tackling domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [A councillor's workbook on effective opposition during COVID-19, reset and recovery](#)
- [The impact of COVID-19 on culture, leisure tourism and sport](#)
- [Fiscal devolution: adopting an international approach](#)
- [Changes to local authority powers and duties covering special educational needs, planning and road traffic orders resulting from Coronavirus Regulations 2020](#)
- [Councillor guidance: COVID-19 reset and recovery](#)
- [Councillor workbook on creating mentally healthy places](#)
- [Managing the wellbeing of furloughed staff during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Loneliness, social isolation and COVID-19: practical advice](#)
- [Changes to local authority powers and duties resulting from the Coronavirus Act](#)
- [Approaches to managing licensing and related issues during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Councillor workbook: Health in All Policies and COVID-19](#)
- [Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Leisure under lockdown: how culture and leisure services responded to COVID-19](#)
- [React, Respond, Renew – Workforce COVID-19 response](#)
- [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(All Tiers\) Regulations 2020: Enforcement advice for local authorities](#)
- [Changes to local authority powers and duties Health protection and business COVID security resulting from Coronavirus Regulations 2020](#)
- [Loneliness, Social Isolation and COVID-19](#)