

LGA Hot Topics

National roadmap – We are seeking clarification over some remaining issues in relation to the 19 July reopening, some of which should be covered in the new Contain framework due for publication in the week commencing 19/7. Councils have raised concerns over mixed messaging in relation to self-isolation guidance and the NHS app with the challenges around staff capacity and high numbers of people self isolating. We are arguing that in exceptional cases and only after a risk assessment, councils need discretion on who they class as critical workers to reflect the changing staffing demands across services as they look to redeploy staff, if there is a risk to the delivery of critical local services.

Build Back Local – the LGA launched its new campaign which highlights how the right investment and powers, national and local government can work together to achieve a shared ambition; levelling up communities across all parts of the country.

Finances – The COVID-19 funding package must be kept under review to cover councils for all cost pressures and income losses. We have started work on the 2021 Spending Review, including reviewing the medium-term financial challenges facing council services and rebuilding the case for certainty and a multi-year funding settlement for local government as soon as possible.

Immediate Covid Issues:

Revised Contain Framework – DHSC are revising the Contain Framework to take account of the changes created by stage 4 of the roadmap. It should include the expected local response to outbreaks and new VOCs, including the response to a vaccine-escape VOC.

Confusion over Stage 4 messaging on facemasks – There is concern that Government messages on facemasks is causing confusion, and that this will lead to unrest, particularly as businesses (especially public transport), services like libraries and leisure centres, and individuals take different approaches. It is unclear how councils should manage their own services in this respect, and if there is a role for councils in business support and aiding compliance.

Compliance and enforcement – Virtually all business compliance requirements have been removed (with the exception of possible limited requirements around self-isolating employees). The no 3 direction powers have been extended to the end of September. Councils have fed back that without regulations to enforce, most will return to BAU activity and reactive COVID work. Councils are concerned about the inability of councils to enforce measures suggested in guidance and a lack of rapid tools for councils to address any Covid/infection control issues once we are relying on non-statutory guidance under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

NHS Covid Pass and events – Government have announced that businesses and large events will be encouraged and supported to use the NHS COVID Pass in high-risk settings. It is not yet clear what role councils will have, if any, in this encouragement and support.

Impact on the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) - Government has issued [separate guidance](#) for the CEV. There is concern that the messaging has moved from 'everyone protecting the vulnerable' to 'the vulnerable protecting themselves' and this could have a negative impact on vulnerable groups, including those people that councils supported whilst shielding and those supported by council children and adult social services. It has also led to questions from employers with regard to their duty of care to employees.

Concern about rising absences – There is concern that the rise in cases and continuing requirement for contacts to self-isolate is affecting the availability of staff across the public and private sector, impacting the economy and delivery of vital services.

Self-isolation support – There is concern about the ability of individuals in a family with young children to self-isolate, which is not covered in the draft guidance. Clarity is needed on

future financial support for self-isolation after the Test and Trace support payment ceases in September.

Schools – School bubbles will not be required, and children will not be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of a positive case from 16 August, but must have a PCR test if contacted by T&T. The role of local T&T in supporting schools needs to be unpacked further. Councils will be able reintroduce infection control measures as part of local outbreak management plans.

Quarantine Hotels – The LGA is calling for councils to have proper engagement prior to a red list quarantine hotel being commissioned in their area, which we continue to raise, despite being told of significant capacity issues. The LGA is also flagging the significant impact on councils hosting multiple hotels. We are still waiting for confirmation of the Government's position regarding unaccompanied minors and are arguing that Government should agree with the Ofsted legal advice that minors (from under 18 years) should not be staying unaccompanied in any Quarantine Hotels.

Amber travel routes – Double-vaccinated people will not be required to quarantine if travelling from an Amber country, so the questionnaire on the role of local government in providing local support has been paused. We expect more information soon.

International students - The arrival of international students from Red countries in September will put further pressure on Quarantine Hotels – when supply is reducing. We have written to MQS suggesting working with councils to identify local capacity, rather than operating centrally and landing hotels which may not be suitable, and to seek assurance on local engagement. The issue of unaccompanied minors (under 18s) needs to be resolved asap before students start arriving.

Variants of concern (VOCs) and surge testing – Government needs to develop a VOC strategy. Councils should have greater control over surge testing for VOCs so it can be more efficient and better-targeted, building on the success of the local tracing programmes. A reactive 'draw-down' fund, outside the whole-year lump-sum COMF, is needed to enable councils to deliver a VOC response.

Care homes – Government have announced their intention to make vaccination mandatory in all adult care homes; draft regulations have been laid for debate in Parliament; plan is for a 16-week grace period to allow staff to get vaccinated; new consultation to extend requirement to all CQC regulated settings, including healthcare, also announced; we are raising concerns about impacts on the sector should staff opt to leave their employment.

Remote meetings - Government failed to legislate to extend the flexibility clauses of the Coronavirus Act and the High Court recently ruled meetings must go ahead in person. The LGA continues to press the Government to legislate to allow councils the flexibility to hold meetings virtually as well as in person.

Longer term Covid planning:

Education recovery – The £1.4 billion education recovery fund announced on the 2nd June is welcome, but we are concerned that it does not go far enough, The EPI recommends that £13.5 billion is needed. Measures to support children and young people's socialisation, communication and mental health and well-being is needed. It is vital that vulnerable children, who have been disproportionately impacted, are the focus. In their role as leaders of local education systems, councils can bring together partners, joining up local efforts to promote education recovery.

Children's services – Councils report rising need for support amongst families (both below social care thresholds, and in terms of complexity of need of those with social workers). Councils must be supported to provide families with support when they need it, before problems escalate.

Adult social care - The LGA is urging government to plan ahead for continuing pressures on the sector. The pressures include an ongoing need to arrange testing, address care market strains like under-occupancy in care homes, take up of vaccinations, infection control

plans, and a sufficient workforce. The LGA is also asking that, as part of such planning, funding is allocated for these pressures well in advance and consolidated into a single fund to allow more local flexibility.

Culture, leisure & sport - We continue to call for long-term sustainable funding for sport and leisure. Sport England research pre-pandemic highlighted ageing infrastructure in need of urgent replacement which could cost approximately £1.5 billion, but offers the ability to climate proof and meet new community needs at the same time. However, there is also a revenue gap of £400-700 million. A forthcoming LGA report will outline measures needed to stabilise services and equip them for the future.

Economic vulnerability – We are calling for the restoration of local welfare funding and a stronger emphasis on financial inclusion. We are asking Government to retain the £20pw uplift in Universal Credit for as long as it is needed.

Homelessness and rough sleeping – In addition to needing local welfare funding (above), we also want to a long-term plan to help people stay in their homes, a renewed focus on prevention services and social housing.

Other issues of immediate importance for the sector:

Social Care Reform - There is an increasingly urgent need for sustainable long-term funding and a reimagining of the form and function of care and support, particularly in the context of recovering from the pandemic.

Levelling Up - One of the main lessons from the COVID-19 crisis is that councils can innovate well and help create and deliver new services from scratch and at speed. Councils had the legitimacy to bring public and private partners together to transform places and services. Following the Prime Ministers speech, we are discussing with the Government its ambition for more English Devolution.

Integrated Care System Design Framework - NHS England has published the [Integrated Care System \(ICS\) design framework](#). The LGA [supports the broad objectives of ICSs](#) and is committed to working with partners to ensure that political, professional, clinical and community leaders are supported to deliver this transformation agenda.

Health and Care Bill – The LGA has produced a [parliamentary briefing](#). We are broadly supportive that the Bill is light touch to enable local system and place leaders to develop their own arrangements to collaborate to improve health outcomes, address health inequalities and make best use of resources. We welcome the recognition that local government are crucial partners in this but have concerns about the extension of the powers of the Secretary of State and also with regard to NHS reconfigurations. We have urged the Government to work with local government to ensure that these powers are only used in exceptional circumstances and with the full involvement of local government.

Waste - The Government's reforms of the waste management system is a key element of the [Environment Bill](#), which is currently in the House of Lords. The Government has published three key consultations on key elements of the reforms: [Deposit return schemes](#), our response is [here](#). [Extended producer responsibility Scheme](#), response is [here](#) and [Consistency](#) in household and business recycling, response is [here](#). Overall, these reforms are substantial, and we are working with Government and the sector to ensure that a high degree of local determination in waste services is retained. After LGA lobbying, MHCLG has confirmed that new burdens will apply to any new costs for councils.

Climate Change – Councils share the ambition of Government for a green revolution and want to work with government and businesses to establish a national framework for addressing the climate emergency, supported with long term funding. We continue to make the case on devolving powers to local areas, highlighting the LGA's [Local green jobs report](#).

Planning Reform – The Planning Bill announced in the Queen's Speech is a key mechanism for the government to deliver its proposed planning reforms. We still await the Government's response to the White Paper consultation. This is expected in the autumn.

Equalities – The LGA is committed to addressing inequalities and is currently working to review and strengthen its equalities work, including promoting equality through our policy work, our improvement work and our leadership offer to councils. This includes specific work around tackling health inequalities and inequalities highlighted by the pandemic.

Capacity – The [LGA's Workforce Survey](#) for June found that:

- 56 per cent of all single tier councils and 89 per cent of county councils reported significant difficulties recruiting children's social workers.
- 35 per cent of councils reported recruiting additional staff (of any type including casual, agency, contingent)
- In total, respondents reported there were 20,286 staff unavailable for work in the week ending 4 June 2021, four per cent of the current workforce.

Digital – Covid-19 has brought digital inequity into stark focus. We are supporting councils to close the digital divide through digital inclusion, connectivity and transformation.

2022 celebrations – Plans for [the Platinum Jubilee](#), Commonwealth

Games, [Festival UK*2022](#), and [competition for next City of Culture](#) are all under development. The LGA is briefing organisers on the role of councils to ensure council services are engaged early in the process.

UK/EU trade – We are engaging with Whitehall on reforms of repatriated procurement and state-aid laws to ensure simplifications and flexibilities to help local economies.

LEP Review – MHCLG now reaching out to councils for their views. We are sending a letter from the People and Places, City Regions and EEHT Boards sharing LGA lines on purpose, geography, funding, accountability and fit within the growth landscape.

Civility in public life – Councillors report increasing abuse and intimidation which is affecting their ability to perform their roles and people's willingness to stand for office. The LGA is leading work with colleagues in the devolved nations to identify ways to support councillors.

UASC – Kent County Council has stopped accepting parental responsibility for UASC arriving at the port as they are unable to continue doing so safely. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) is being amended, including additional funding, but work is still needed embed this. Some young people have faced waiting at the port while homes are found. The LGA has welcomed the changes to the NTS and is encouraging all local authorities to consider whether they can help by looking after a few more of these vulnerable children.