

2 December 2020

This is the regular bulletin MHCLG sends out, updating you on the latest government guidance, advice, communications products and other useful information about coronavirus (COVID-19), EU transition and other topics of interest for local government.

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Coronavirus updates

Government authorises first vaccine

The Health Secretary made a statement today (2 December) in the House of Commons on the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine and provided an update on vaccines and indoor visits to care homes.

The first coronavirus vaccine for the UK, developed by Pfizer/BioNTech, has today been given approval for use following a thorough review carried out by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The vaccine will be made available across the UK from next week.

Statement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/an-update-on-the-coronavirus-vaccine-2-december-2020>

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-medicines-regulator-gives-approval-for-first-uk-covid-19-vaccine>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-authorises-pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine>

New guidance on visiting care home residents

Yesterday (1 December), the Government published guidance on allowing indoor visits to care homes across England, with visits to begin in the first homes today (2 December).

Over a million tests are to be sent out to providers over the next month to ensure care home residents in all tiers will be able to see their families at Christmas.

The Government also published guidance yesterday setting out how care homes can support residents of working age on visits outside of the care homes.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/care-home-residents-to-be-reunited-with-families-by-christmas>

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home>

Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable

The Government has today (2 December) updated guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from coronavirus, to bring it in line with the local restriction tier system that comes into force today in England.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Responsibility for Autumn exams

Yesterday (1 December), the Department for Education (DfE) updated the guidance on responsibility for autumn exams to include information about the support available for functional skills qualifications (FSQs).

The guidance provides information on the responsibilities of schools, colleges and apprenticeship providers that offer FSQ exams; which FSQs are in scope; funding eligibility and booking alternative sites or invigilators.

The booking service for FSQ exams is available until 31 December.

Guidance: <https://bit.ly/3ohVZXm>

Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms

Yesterday (1 December), the Government updated the guidance for owners and operators of playgrounds and outdoor gyms to enable their use while minimising the transmission risk of coronavirus, in line with the local restriction tier system that comes into force today.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms>

£1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs'

Yesterday (1 December), the Prime Minister announced an additional £1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs' in tiers two and three.

Wet-led pubs, that predominantly serve alcohol rather than provide food, will be eligible for a £1,000 grant. The payment will be a one-off for December and will be paid on top on the existing £3,000 monthly cash grants for businesses. This will cover those in tiers two and three forced to reduce their operations as a result of the local restriction tier system put in place to contain the transmission of the virus.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-announces-1000-christmas-grant-for-wet-led-pubs>

Making a childcare bubble with another household

From today (2 December), childcare bubbles are allowed in all tiers. A childcare bubble is where one household links with one other household to provide informal childcare to a child or children under 14. All adults in both households must agree to this arrangement.

From 2 December you may change your childcare bubble provided that:

- at least one person in the proposed new childcare bubble is under the age of 14
- neither household is part of a separate childcare bubble which they intend to remain a part of

If you decide to change your childcare bubble, you should treat your previous bubble as a separate household for 14 days before forming a new bubble. This means following the rules on meeting people from other households in the tier you are in.

The Government has also updated guidance on how you can make a support bubble with another household and safely expand the group of people you have close contact with during the coronavirus pandemic. This also includes information on how to switch your support bubble.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-childcare-bubble-with-another-household>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>

NHS Test and Trace in the workplace

The Government has today (2 December) updated the guidance on what to do if you or someone you employ is contacted by NHS Test and Trace, including self-isolation and financial support, to reflect the end of the national restrictions today and the reintroduction of the local restriction tier system.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-workplace-guidance>

Safer transport guidance for operators

Today (2 December), the Government updated the guidance on safer working principles and risk assessment for transport operators and organisations, in line with the local restriction tier system that come into force today in England.

This guide will help transport organisations in England understand how to provide safer workplaces and services for themselves, their workers and passengers. It also outlines measures to assess and address the risks of coronavirus.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

Taxis and private hire vehicles

The Government has today (2 December) updated the guidance for the taxi and private hire vehicle sector to reflect the new local restriction tier system that comes into force today in England.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-taxis-and-phvs>

Travel advice

Today (2 December), the Government updated the guidance for British people travelling overseas to reflect the local restriction tier system that comes into force in England today.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is urging people to inform themselves of their local rules and the possible disruption they may face if they choose to go overseas over the festive period. Those who reside in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should consult the regulations that apply to them.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/festive-travel-tips-for-people-considering-overseas-travel>

Guidance for those leading a nomadic way of life

The Government has today (2 December) updated the guidance for those leading a nomadic way of life in line with the new local restriction tier system that comes into force in England today. This guidance covers what to do if someone develops symptoms of coronavirus when living on a traveller site, in a vehicle or on a canal boat.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-those-leading-a-nomadic-way-of-life>

Grassroots sports guidance for safe provision including team sport, contact combat sport and organised sport events

Yesterday (1 December), the Government published guidance for grassroots sport and physical activity during coronavirus restrictions including the team sport framework, contact combat sport framework, and advice on organised sport participation events.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-grassroots-sports-guidance-for-safe-provision-including-team-sport-contact-combat-sport-and-organised-sport-events>

Local government updates

Environmental health workforce survey

This week is the final opportunity to take part in the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health workforce survey which aims to find out more about the state of the environmental health workforce in councils. The survey will close at the end of this week. Any questions about the survey can be sent to policy@cieh.org.

Survey: <https://bit.ly/39AGy8k>

Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping webinar

The Local Government Association (LGA) are hosting a webinar aimed at senior homelessness officers at 12pm on 3 December. The webinar will explore the findings of a recent report 'Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic' the LGA has worked on with local partnerships.

Webinar sign up: <https://localpartnerships.org.uk/news/webinar-lessons-learnt-from-councils-response-to-rough-sleeping-and-the-pandemic/>

Report: <https://www.local.gov.uk/lessons-learnt-councils-response-rough-sleeping-during-covid-19-pandemic>

EU transition updates

Access to social housing and homelessness assistance for EEA and Swiss citizens in England

MHCLG has today (2 December) updated guidance on the rights of European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens to access social housing and homelessness assistance in England after 1 January 2021. This follows the Immigration and Social Security (EU Withdrawal) 2020 Act receiving Royal Assent. It also reflects the laying of the consequential Statutory Instrument on 18 November which includes the changes to MHCLG's housing legislation. This will come into force by 31 December.

MHCLG has also sent a letter to councils on the changes to the social housing and homelessness eligibility legislation, which you can access through the link below.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/access-to-social-housing-and-homelessness-assistance-for-eea-and-swiss-citizens-in-england>

Correspondence:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/939394/EU_Transition_-_Notification_of_change_letter_to_LAs_.pdf

Where to find the latest information and guidance

Coronavirus

- Guidance for local councils and LRFs during the coronavirus outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>

- Latest information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

- Coronavirus communication materials:

<https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/>

- FAQ from the Cabinet Office: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

- Local lockdowns guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-restrictions-areas-with-an-outbreak-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

- Coronavirus cases: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

- Previous MHCLG Coronavirus Bulletins:

<https://bit.ly/3iC2Pnz>

EU transition

- Latest information on transition: <https://www.gov.uk/transition>

- Collection of guidance for local councils:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/preparing-local-government-for-1-january-2021>

- To sign up to.GOV email updates: https://www.gov.uk/search/news-and-communications/email-signup?related_to_brexit

For information purposes, previous Local Government Bulletins are available to view and download. Please be aware that guidance is updated frequently. To view and download: <https://bit.ly/2E4wKpp>

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