

COVID-19 Workforce Survey

Research Report

14 July 2020



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Summary

Background

This report is part of a series of bi-weekly surveys of all councils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland collecting key workforce data on how the sector is responding to COVID-19. An online survey is emailed to heads of human resources, or a nominated contact, in councils from England, Wales and Northern Ireland on alternate Wednesdays. The data requested relates to the week ending the preceding Friday. The intention is that this collection is the single national source through which such data is gathered, and it will, as appropriate, be shared with government departments and others in addition to providing comparator information for councils.

This report relates to the survey sent out on 1 July. The overall response rate was 65 per cent and covered over a third of the total workforce.

Key findings

- Some 32 per cent of councils reported recruiting additional staff (of any type including casual, agency, contingent, etc) in the week ending 26 June 2020. In total 1622 additional staff had been recruited: the median number of staff per authority was four and the mean was 25.
- More than a third of councils (108) recorded deaths in service since lockdown. A total of 205 deaths were reported since the start of lockdown (cause not specified).
- Thirty-three per cent of councils reported that they had furloughed at least one member of staff. In total there were 13,180 staff furloughed in the week ending 26 June 2020, which was two per cent of the current workforce. Of those councils that had furloughed staff, the median number furloughed was 101 and the mean was 169 but this varied considerably across different types of authority. The main reason given was that the service had stopped (57 per cent) or that funding had stopped (36 per cent).
- Some 82 per cent of councils had redeployed staff. In total there were 15,966 staff redeployed in the week ending 26 June 2020, which was three per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff redeployed was 31 and the mean was 76.
- More than nine out of ten councils (92 per cent) reported that they had at least one member of staff unavailable for work. In total there were 33,077 staff unavailable for work in the week ending 26 June 2020, six per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff unavailable for work was 34 and the mean was 147.
- 30 per cent of staff were unavailable through 'self-isolation (other)' and 34 per cent were unavailable due to 'Non-COVID sickness'.

- When asked whether individual services had enough staff to run them normally or not, the service most badly affected during the week ending 26 June was schools: over a quarter of single tier and county councils reported they were operating with severe disruption due to staffing numbers. Also badly affected were adults and children's services, with 26 per cent and 18 per cent of councils respectively reporting moderate disruption.
- When asked to assess the council overall, in terms of whether there are enough staff to run services normally or not, 47 per cent of councils report minor disruption.
- Finally, councils were asked about the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 testing for staff. Eighty-eight per cent reported they had about the right amount of PPE they needed; while three per cent had less than they needed. Eighty-five per cent said all the staff who need testing can access it; only one per cent said it was available to some of their staff who need it.

Introduction

Councils face significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has required a joined-up approach between government departments, health agencies, local resilience fora and national agencies like the Local Government Association (LGA), all working with and trying to support councils. The LGA, National Association of Regional Employers (the collective body comprising all the regional employers organisations) and PPMA (the membership association for HR and OD professionals in the public sector) joined forces to coordinate an approach to workforce data collection in the sector.

To provide councils with the intelligence to effectively compare progress and plan locally, regionally and nationally a short workforce survey was sent out to all heads of human resources in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Findings from the survey will give councils a stronger position to build capacity in partnership with others; give the LGA and associations the evidence needed to ask government for support and resources; and help shape government thinking as we emerge from lockdown.

Methodology

On the 1 July, the LGA's Research and Information Team sent an online survey to all heads of human resources in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (a total of 372 councils). The survey was in the field for one week. A total of 242 councils responded, which is a response rate of 65 per cent.

Table 1 and **Table 2** provide a breakdown of responses by authority type and region. Whilst these results should strictly be taken as a snapshot of the views of this group of respondents, rather than representative of all heads of human resources, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the position of the sector more widely.

Type of authority	Total number	Number of responses	Response rate %
District	188	122	65
County	25	20	80
London borough	33	21	64
Metropolitan district	36	23	64
Unitary	57	45	79
Welsh unitary	22	11	50
Local government districts (NI)	11	0	0
All	372	242	65

Table 2: Response rate by region

Region	Total number	Number of responses	Response rate %
Eastern	50	38	76
East Midlands	45	31	69
London	33	21	64
North East	12	11	92
North West	41	31	76
South East	70	43	61
South West	33	22	67
Wales	22	11	50
West Midlands	33	15	45
Yorkshire and Humber	22	19	86
Northern Ireland	11	0	0

Technical notes

- Where tables and figures report the base, the description refers to the group of people who were asked the question. The number provided refers to the number of respondents who answered each question. Please note that bases vary throughout the survey.
- Throughout the report percentages in figures and tables may add to more than 100 per cent due to rounding.

COVID-19 Workforce Survey: week ending 26 June 2020

This section contains analysis of the full results from the survey.

Size of local authority workforce

Workforce as at 1 March 2020

In order to establish a baseline, councils were asked the number of staff employed by the council on the 1st March 2020, pre-lockdown. The councils that responded to the survey employed 576,348 staff or approximately a third of the total local government workforce.

184 single tier and county councils have responsibility for schools. As it is not always possible to separate out school-based staff from human resources (HR) systems, a supplementary question was asked to determine how many returns included school-based staff.

Of the 116 councils that responded to the survey and had responsibility for schools, 24 (20 per cent) reported that their return included school-based staff. For expediency this report doesn't separate those that included/excluded schools-based staff as it was felt that it would add significantly to the burden on councils returning the data and would have little effect on the overall findings.

Recruitment week ending 26 June 2020

Councils are at the forefront of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to continue to deliver vital services to their communities they have had to be flexible in how they deploy their workforce in order to increase capacity in high demand services or to fill gaps in services caused by the pandemic.

One option available to councils is the recruitment of additional staff. To understand the scale of recruitment, councils were asked whether they had recruited additional staff (of any type including casual, agency, contingent, etc) during the week 26 June 2020.

Of the councils that responded 77 (32 per cent) reported recruiting additional staff, in total 1622 additional staff were recruited during the week ending 26 June 2020. The median number of staff per council was 4 and the mean was 25.

Table 3: Has the council recruited additional staff (of any type including casual, agency, contingent, etc during week ending 26 June 2020)?

	No	%	Total	Median	Mean
County	11	55	46	4	5
District	20	16	66	3	4
London borough	10	48	908	10	62
Metropolitan borough	11	48	70	2	9
Unitary	20	44	438	3	27
Welsh unitary	5	45	94	8	19
English single tier	41	46	1416	4	43
All councils	77	32	1622	4	25

Base: all respondents (242 councils – 20 counties, 122 districts, 21 London boroughs, 23 metropolitan boroughs, 45 unitary, 11 Welsh unitary, 89 English single tier)

Current headcount as at 26 June 2020

Total headcount for those councils that responded has increased by 0.1 per cent since the 1 March 2020 and now stands at 577,021 on the 26 June 2020.

Table 4: Change in headcount from 1 March – 26 June 2020

	At 1 March	At 12 June	% change
County	131163	126791	-3.3
District	54865	54760	-0.2
London borough	67074	67960	1.3
Metropolitan borough	109670	109063	-0.6
Unitary	143985	144871	0.6
Welsh unitary	69591	73576	5.7
English single tier	320729	321894	0.4
All councils	576348	577021	0.1

Base: all respondents (242 councils – 20 counties, 122 districts, 21 London boroughs, 23 metropolitan boroughs, 45 unitary, 11 Welsh unitary, 89 English single tier)

Death in service

Councils were asked to provide details on the number of staff that have died in service since 24 March 2020 (lockdown). Of the 239 councils that answered this question 108 (45 per cent) recorded a total of 205 deaths in service as of 26 June 2020. Councils were not asked the cause of death, so this figure relates to all causes not only COVID-19 deaths.

Table 5: Since 24 March when lockdown started, how many local authority staff, if any, have died in service?

	No. deaths	No. of councils recording 1 or more deaths
County	35	15
District	27	24
London borough	28	16
Metropolitan borough	46	17
Unitary	50	29
Welsh unitary	19	7
English single tier	124	62
All councils	205	108

Base: all responding to question (239 councils – 20 counties, 121 districts, 20 London boroughs, 22 metropolitan boroughs, 45 unitary, 11 Welsh unitary, 87 English single tier)

Furloughed staff

Councils were asked to provide details of staff that were furloughed in the week ending 26 June 2020. Of councils that answered the question 78 (33 per cent) reported that they had furloughed at least one member of staff.

In total there were 13,180 staff furloughed in responding councils in the week ending 26 June, two per cent of their current workforce. Of those councils that had furloughed staff the median number was 101 and the mean was 169 but this varied considerably across different types of authority.

	No. of councils	% of councils	Total no. staff	Of those councils with furloughed staff	
				Median	Mean
County	9	47	2503	208	278
District	32	27	3205	59	100
London borough	6	30	400	63	67
Metropolitan borough	9	41	1651	140	183
Unitary	16	38	3664	214	229
Welsh unitary	6	55	1757	230	293
English single tier	31	37	5715	139	205
All councils	78	33	13180	101	169

Base: all responding to question (234 councils – 19 counties, 120 districts, 20 London Boroughs, 22 Metropolitan Boroughs, 42 Unitary, 11 Welsh Unitary, 84 English single tier)

Reason staff were furloughed

The 78 councils that had furloughed staff in the week ending 26 June 2020 were subsequently asked to indicate the reason the member of staff had been furloughed, 77 were able to provide the reason or reasons.

In the week ending 26 June 2020, 57 per cent of staff were furloughed as the 'Service had been stopped' and 36 per cent of staff furloughed as 'Funding had stopped'. The pattern varied across authority types, in Districts 83 per cent of staff were furloughed due to 'services had been stopped' in Metropolitan Boroughs 65 per cent of staff were furloughed due to 'funding has stopped'

Table 7: For those staff furloughed, what is/are the reason/s?

	Funding has stopped	Staff are shielding	Caring responsibilities	Service has been stopped	Other reasons
	% staff	% staff	% staff	% staff	% staff
County	83	0	0	12	6
District	13	3	1	83	1
London borough	71	0	0	29	0
Metropolitan borough	65	11	0	24	0
Unitary	24	3	1	67	5
Welsh unitary	0	4	0	96	0
English single tier	39	5	1	52	3
All councils	36	3	0	57	3

Base: all responding to question (77 councils –9 counties, 32 districts, 5 London Boroughs, 9 Metropolitan Boroughs, 16 Unitary, 6 Welsh Unitary, 30 English single tier)

Redeployed staff

Councils were asked to indicate the number of staff that had been redeployed in the week ending 26 June 2020. Of councils that answered the question 174 (82 per cent) reported that they had redeployed at least one member of staff.

In total there were 15,966 staff redeployed in the week ending 26 June, three per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff redeployed was 31 and the mean was 76.

	No. of councils	% of councils	Total no. staff	Median	Mean
County	13	93	2415	150	173
District	81	73	2718	12	24
London borough	17	85	1804	50	90
Metropolitan borough	18	100	2812	111	156
Unitary	34	92	3966	68	107
Welsh unitary	11	100	2251	189	205
English single tier	69	92	8582	90	114
All councils	174	82	15966	31	76

Base: all responding to question (211 councils – 14 counties, 111 districts, 20 London boroughs, 18 metropolitan boroughs, 37 unitary, 11 Welsh unitary, 75 English single tier)

Unavailable for work

Councils were asked to indicate the number of staff that were unavailable for work in the week ending 26 June 2020. Of councils that answered the question 207 (92 per cent) reported that they had at least one member of staff unavailable.

In total there were 33,077 staff unavailable for work in responding authorities in the week ending 26 June, six per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff unavailable for work was 34 and the mean was 147.

Table 9: No. of staff unavailable for work (week ending 26 June)

	No. of councils	% of councils	Total no. staff	Median	Mean
County	18	100	5805	231	323
District	104	89	2448	14	21
London borough	17	89	3280	95	173
Metropolitan borough	22	100	9904	438	450
Unitary	37	93	8186	134	205
Welsh unitary	9	100	3454	304	384
English single tier	76	94	21370	187	264
All councils	207	92	33077	34	147

Base: all responding to question (225 councils – 18 counties, 117 districts, 19 London boroughs, 22 metropolitan boroughs, 40 unitary, 9 Welsh unitary, 81 English single tier)

Reason staff were unavailable for work

The 207 councils that reported that they had at least one or more member of staff unavailable for work in the week ending 26 June 2020 were subsequently asked to indicate the reason the for them being unavailable, 205 (99 per cent) were able to provide the reason.

In the week ending 26 June 2020, 34 per cent of staff were unavailable through 'Non-COVID sickness and 30 per cent were unavailable due to 'Self-isolation (other)'. Reasons for self-isolation (other) included being in an at-risk group, because the staff member believed they were symptomatic or because the staff member shared a household with someone who was symptomatic.

The pattern varied across authority types, in Counties seven per cent of staff were unavailable due to 'confirmed/suspected COVID'.

Table 10: For those staff currently unavailable for work, what is/are the reason/s?

	Non-COVID sickness	Confirmed/Suspected COVID	Self-isolation (Track and trace)	Self-isolation (Other)	Caring for dependents/at risk relative/someone who is sick	Other reason
	% staff	% staff	% staff	% staff	% staff	% staff
County	42	7	4	35	2	10
District	34	3	0	34	6	23
London borough	34	3	9	18	1	36
Metropolitan borough	28	3	1	31	3	34
Unitary	39	3	0	31	7	20
Welsh unitary	27	2	15	24	9	23
English single tier	33	3	2	29	4	29
All councils	34	4	4	30	4	25

Base: all responding to question (205 councils – 18 counties, 102 districts, 17 London boroughs, 22 metropolitan boroughs, 37 unitary, 9 Welsh unitary, 76 English single tier)

Service disruption

When asked whether individual services had enough staff to run them normally or not, the service most badly affected was schools: over a quarter of single tier and county councils reported they were operating with severe disruption due to staffing numbers. Also badly affected were adults and children's services, with 26 per cent and 18 per cent of councils respectively reporting moderate disruption.

When asked to assess the council overall, in terms of whether there are enough staff to run services normally or not, 47 per cent of councils reported minor disruption.

Table 11: Please select the status of the services to the show if there are enough staff to run the service normally or not.

	Base	Operating normally	Operating with minor disruption	Operating with moderate disruption	Operating with severe disruption
	No. councils	% councils	% councils	% councils	% councils
Adult social care (directly employed)	115	30	40	26	3
Bereavement services	164	61	26	12	1
Children's services	115	40	37	18	4
Environment health	207	51	31	13	5
Household waste (doorstep collection)	191	61	29	7	3
Housing and homelessness services	209	56	28	12	3
Planning	224	61	30	7	2
Public Health	143	50	28	14	8
Revenue and Benefits	206	57	29	11	3
Schools	88	18	34	26	22
Trading standards	110	51	33	12	5
Overall council	231	36	47	16	1

Base: all responding to question and category applicable to the council, categories presented varied by authority type.

Availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Councils were asked to indicate whether they had enough of the correct type of PPE for those staff that needed it. A total of 220 (91 per cent) answered the question, of which 88 per cent reported they had about the right amount of PPE; while three per cent had less than they needed.

Table 12: At present, do you have enough of the correct PPE for those local authority staff who need it or not?

	More than we need	About what we need	Less than we need	We don't need it
	% councils	% councils	% councils	% councils
County	5	90	5	0
District	7	88	2	4
London borough	6	94	0	0
Metropolitan borough	9	86	5	0
Unitary	9	86	5	0
Welsh unitary	9	82	9	0
English single tier	8	88	4	0
All councils	7	88	3	2

Base: all responding to question (220 councils – 20 counties, 106 districts, 18 London boroughs, 22 metropolitan boroughs, 43 unitary, 11 Welsh unitary, 83 English single tier)

Availability of testing

Councils were also asked to indicate whether staff who needed it were able to access testing or not. A total of 231 (95 per cent) answered the question, of which 85 per cent said all the staff who need testing can access it; only one per cent said it was available to some of their staff who need it.

Table 13: And would you say that, currently, the staff who need testing are able to access it or not?

	All the staff that need testing can access it	Most of the staff that need testing can access it	Some of the staff that need testing can access it	None of the staff that need testing can access it	None of our staff need testing
	% councils	% councils	% councils	% councils	% councils
County	79	16	5	0	0
District	91	4	0	0	5
London borough	68	32	0	0	0
Metropolitan borough	82	18	0	0	0
Unitary	80	18	2	0	0
Welsh unitary	91	0	0	0	9
English single tier	78	21	1	0	0
All councils	85	11	1	0	3

Base: all responding to question (231 councils – 19 counties, 116 districts, 19 London boroughs, 22 metropolitan boroughs, 44 unitary, 11 Welsh unitary, 85 English single tier)

Annex A: Questionnaire

COVID - 19 Workforce Collection

Q1.1 Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

If you would like to see **an overview of the questions** before completing the survey online, you can access a PDF here: [Covid 19 workforce collection](#)

You can navigate through the questions using the buttons at the bottom of each page. If you stop before completing the return, you can come back to this page using the link supplied in the email and you will be able to continue where you left off.

All responses will be treated confidentially. In order that councils do not get multiple requests for such data, the Local Government Association will share the data provided by you in this survey in confidence with the following organisations:

- Other councils (including in LG Inform, via sign-in)
- Regional employers' organisations
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- Relevant government departments
- Welsh Government
- Northern Ireland Assembly
- All local resilience fora (LRFs) (through the medium of the LRF dashboard)
- Bain and Company (purely for the purpose of updating the LRF dashboard)

Any information that is published or shared outside of that arrangement will be aggregated, and no authority will be identified without your consent. The information used within the LGA will be held and processed in accordance with our [privacy statement](#); and we will not share it with the organisations listed above unless we have ensured they have the right controls in place to use your information responsibly and only for the reasons for which we have given permission. We are

undertaking this survey in line with the legitimate interests of the LGA in supporting and representing authorities. It will also:

- allow you to compare key data with other authorities
- minimise the number of data requests you respond to from other organisations
- assist in recovery planning, workforce testing and risk profiling, and
- help the LGA evidence our government asks for support and resources.

If you have any queries or problems, please contact roopal.shah@local.gov.uk.

Q2.1 How many staff did you have on 1 March 2020 (that is the usual headcount before COVID -19) and how many staff in the week ending 29 May 2020

Please enter a whole number without a comma or decimal place. Please only include permanent and fixed term staff. If you answered this question for 1 March previously, your answer is already added below.

	Number of staff (headcount)
Headcount of staff at 1 March 2020	
Headcount of staff week ending 29 May 2020	

Q2.2 Do the figures you are providing for this return include or exclude school staff?

- Include schools staff
- Exclude schools staff
- Don't know

Q2.3 Have you recruited any additional excluding permanent and fixed term staff in the week ending 29 May?

Yes

- No

Q2.4 How many additional staff have you recruited excluding permanent and fixed term staff?

Please enter a whole number. If you do not know please leave blank. If you answered this question previously, your answer is already added below.

	Number of staff (headcount)
Additional staff week ending 29 May	

Q2.5 Since 24 March when lockdown started, how many local authority staff, if any, have died in service (from all causes)?

Please enter the number of staff. If none, please enter "0". If you do not know please leave blank.

	Number of staff (headcount)
Number of staff died in service	

Q3.1 How many staff, if any, do you currently (week ending 29 May 2020) have in the categories below?

Please enter the headcount. If none, please enter zero. If you do not know please leave blank.

	Number of staff (headcount)
Number of staff furloughed	
Number of staff redeployed (both formal and informal, and either internally or externally)	
Number of staff unavailable for work	

Q4.1 For those staff furloughed, what is/are the reason/s?

Please provide the number of staff furloughed broken down by reason for week ending 29 May 2020. If zero please enter "0". If you do not know please leave blank.

	Number of staff (headcount)
Total number of staff furloughed	
Funding has stopped	
Number of staff unavailable for work	
Shielding (or relevant health reasons)	
Caring responsibilities	
Service has been stopped	
Other	

Q5.1 For those staff currently unavailable for work, what is the primary reason?

Please provide the number of staff unavailable broken down by reason for week ending 29 May 2020.

If zero please enter "0". If you do not know please leave blank.

**Self-isolating can be due to any of the following:*

Being in an at-risk group

Believe they are symptomatic

Share a household with someone who is symptomatic

	Number of staff (headcount)
Total number of staff unavailable for work	
Non-COVID sicknesses	
Confirmed / Suspected COVID	
Self-isolation (Track and trace)	
Self Isolation (Other)	
Caring for dependants/at-risk relative/someone who is sick	
Other	

Q6.1 Please select the status of the services to show if there are enough of the right staff to run the service normally or not (at the current level of demand). *This is to allow us to understand whether staff capacity (including redeployed staff) is enough to run the service. It will give us a feel of the pressure points for some of the highest profile service areas.*

	Operating normally	Minor disruption	Moderate disruption	Severe disruption	Don't know	Not applicable
Adult social care (directly employed)						
Bereavement services (cemeteries and crematoria)						
Children's services						
Environmental health						
Household waste (doorstep collection)						
Housing and homelessness services						
Planning						
Public health						
Revenue and benefits						
Schools						
Trading standards						

Q6.2 In summary, how would you assess the council overall, in terms of whether there are enough staff overall to run services normally or not?

- Operating normally
- Minor disruption
- Moderate disruption
- Severe disruption
- Don't know

Q7.1 At present, do you have enough of the correct PPE for those local authority staff who need it or not?

- More than we need
 - About what we need
 - Less than we need
 - We don't need it
 - Don't know
-

Q7.2 And would you say that, currently, the staff who need testing are able to access it or not?

- All the staff who need testing can access it
- Most of the staff who need testing can access it
- Some of the staff who need testing can access it
- None of the staff who need testing can access it
- None of our staff need testing
- Don't know

Q8.1 Please enter the details of the person nominated to provide this data for your authority or amend the details we hold below if necessary.

- Name _____
- Authority _____
- Job title _____
- Email address _____

Q9.1

Once you press the 'Submit' button below, you will have completed the survey.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey. You are in control of any personal data that you have provided to us in your response. You can contact us at all times to have the information changed or deleted. You can find our full privacy policy here: [click here to see our privacy policy](#)



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