COVID-19 Workforce Survey

Research Report

02 June 2020

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Background

This is 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 20 May. The overall response rate was 59 per cent, and covered around a third of the total workforce.

Key findings

- Some 25 per cent of councils reported recruiting additional staff (of any type including casual, agency, contingent, etc) in the week ending 15 May 2020. In total 988 additional staff had been recruited: the median number of staff per authority was four and the mean was 21.
- A third of councils (73) recorded deaths in service since lockdown. A total of 114 deaths were reported (cause not specified).
- Twenty-one per cent of councils reported that they had furloughed at least one member of staff. In total there were 5,328 staff furloughed in the week ending 15 May 2020, which was one per cent of the current workforce. Of those councils that had furloughed staff, the median number furloughed was 45 and the mean was 116 but this varied considerably across different types of authority. The main reason given was that the service had stopped (58 per cent) or that funding had stopped (34 per cent).
- Some 86 per cent of councils had redeployed at least one member of staff. In total there were 16,425 staff redeployed in the week ending 15 May 2020, which was 3 per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff redeployed was 50 and the mean was 82.
- More than nine out of ten councils (91 per cent) reported that they had at least one member of staff unavailable for work. In total there were 41,484 staff unavailable for work in the week ending 15 May 2020, 8 per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff unavailable for work was 42 and the mean was 198.
- Nearly two-fifths (39 per cent) of staff were unavailable through 'self-isolation' and 30 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 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 two-fifths and a third of councils respectively reporting moderate or severe disruption.
- When asked to assess the council overall, in terms of whether there are enough staff to run services normally or not, 23 per cent of councils report moderate or severe disruption.
- Finally, councils were asked about the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 testing for staff. Eighty-five per cent reported they had about the right amount of PPE they needed; while 11 per cent had less than they needed. Seventy-seven per cent said all the staff who need testing can access it; three 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 20 May, 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 220 councils responded, which is a response rate of 59 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.

Table 1: Response rate by type of authority			
Type of authority	**Total number**	**Number of responses**	**Response rate %**
District	188	116	62
County	25	14	56
London borough	33	20	60
Metropolitan district	36	19	53
Unitary	57	40	70
Welsh unitary	22	10	45
Local government districts (NI)	11	1	9

Table 2: Response rate by region			
Region	Total number	Number of responses	Response rate %
Eastern	50	35	70
East Midlands	45	27	60
London	33	20	61
North East	12	10	83
North West	41	26	63
South East	70	39	56
South West	33	19	58
Wales	22	10	46
West Midlands	33	11	33
Yorkshire and Humber	22	22	100
Northern Ireland	11	1	9

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 15 May 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 519,376 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 104 councils that responded to the survey and had responsibility for schools, 19 (18 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 15 May 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 15 May 2020.

Of the councils that responded 56 (25 per cent) reported recruiting additional staff, in total 988 additional staff were recruited during the week ending 15 May 2020. The median number of staff per council was 4 and the mean was 21.

Table 3: Has the council recruited additional staff (of any type including casual, agency, contingent, etc during week ending 15 May 2020)?					
	No	**%**	**Total**	**Median**	**Mean**
County	6	43	429	9	72
District	14	12	95	3	7
Local government district (Northern Ireland)	0	0	0	-	-
London borough	11	55	96	6	9
Metropolitan borough	6	32	6	1	2
Unitary	16	40	324	2	27
Welsh unitary	3	30	38	8	13
English single tier	33	42	426	3	16
All councils	56	25	988	4	21

Base: all respondents (220 councils – 14 counties, 116 districts, 1 local government districts, 20 London boroughs, 19 metropolitan boroughs, 40 unitary, 10 Welsh unitary, 79 English single tier)

Current headcount as at 15 May 2020

Total headcount for those councils that responded has increased by 0.2 per cent since the 1 March 2020 and now stands at 519,376 on the 15 May 2020.

Table 4: Change in headcount from 1 March – 1 May 2020			
	At 1 March	**At 1 May**	**% change**
County	98071	98500	0.4
District	53038	53133	0.2
Local government district (Northern Ireland)	882	882	0.0
London borough	60178	60274	0.2
Metropolitan borough	106437	106443	0.0
Unitary	130239	130563	0.2
Welsh unitary	69543	69581	0.1
English single tier	296854	297280	0.1
All councils	518388	519376	0.2

Base: all respondents (220 councils – 14 counties, 116 districts, 1 local government districts, 20 London boroughs, 19 metropolitan boroughs, 40 unitary, 10 Welsh unitary, 79 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 219 councils that answered this question 73 (33 per cent) recorded a total of 114 deaths in service as of 15 May 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	14	10
District	12	10
Local government district	0	0
London borough	21	13
Metropolitan borough	26	13
Unitary	31	21
Welsh unitary	10	6
English single tier	78	47
All councils	114	73

Base: all responding to question (219 councils – 14 counties, 116 districts, 1 local government districts, 20 London boroughs, 19 metropolitan boroughs, 39 unitary, 10 Welsh unitary, 78 English single tier)

Furloughed staff

Councils were asked to provide details of staff that were furloughed in the week ending 15 May 2020. Of councils that answered the question 46 (21 per cent) reported that they had furloughed at least one member of staff.

In total there were 5,328 staff furloughed in responding councils in the week ending 15 May, 1 per cent of their current workforce. Of those councils that had furloughed staff the median number was 45 and the mean was 116 but this varied considerably across different types of authority.

Table 6: No. of staff furloughed (week ending Friday)				Of those councils with furloughed staff	
	No. of councils	% of councils	Total no. staff	Median	Mean
County	3	21	1160	270	387
District	27	23	1976	43	73
Local government district	1	100	124	124	124
London borough	4	20	122	19.5	31
Metropolitan borough	3	16	79	19	26
Unitary	7	18	1854	245	265
Welsh unitary	1	11	13	13	13
English single tier	14	18	2055	46	147
All councils	46	21	5328	45	116

Base: all responding to question (219 councils – 14 counties, 116 districts, 1 Local Government Districts, 20 London Boroughs, 19 Metropolitan Boroughs, 40 Unitary, 9 Welsh Unitary, 79 English single tier)

Reason staff were furloughed

The 46 councils that had furloughed staff in the week ending 15 May 2020 were subsequently asked to indicate the reason the member of staff had been furloughed, 45 were able to provide the reason or reasons.

In the week ending 15 May 2020, 58 per cent of staff were furloughed as the 'Service had been stopped' and 34 per cent of staff furloughed as 'Funding had stopped'. The pattern varied across authority types, in Districts 86 per cent of staff were furloughed due to 'services had been stopped' in Metropolitan Boroughs this figure was 24 per cent.

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	77	0	0	23	0
District	2	5	1	86	6
Local Government District	0	53	8	39	0
London borough	73	0	0	27	0
Metropolitan borough	76	0	0	24	0
Unitary	46	2	0	51	1
Welsh unitary	50	0	0	50	0
English single tier	49	2	0	48	1
All councils	34	4	0	58	3

Base: all responding to question (45 councils – 3 counties, 27 districts, 1 Local Government Districts, 3 London Boroughs, 3 Metropolitan Boroughs, 7 Unitary, 1 Welsh Unitary, 13 English single tier)

Redeployed staff

Councils were asked to indicate the number of staff that had been redeployed in the week ending 15 May 2020. Of councils that answered the question 173 (86 per cent) reported that they had redeployed at least one member of staff.

In total there were 16,425 staff redeployed in the week ending 15 May, 3 per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff redeployed was 50 and the mean was 82.

Table 8: No. of staff redeployed (week ending 15 May)					
	No. of councils	% of councils	Total no. staff	Median	Mean
County	13	93	2079	150	160
District	91	83	4083	20	37
Local government district	1	100	52	52	52
London borough	17	94	2229	118	124
Metropolitan borough	14	88	2623	157	164
Unitary	29	83	3693	68	106
Welsh unitary	8	89	1666	185	185
English single tier	60	87	8545	100	124
All councils	173	86	16425	50	82

Base: all responding to question (202 councils – 14 counties, 109 districts, 1 local government districts, 18 London boroughs, 16 metropolitan boroughs, 35 unitary, 9 Welsh unitary, 69 English single tier)

Unavailable for work

Councils were asked to indicate the number of staff that were unavailable for work in the week ending 15 May 2020. Of councils that answered the question 192 (91 per cent) reported that they had at least one member of staff unavailable.

In total there were 41,484 staff unavailable for work in responding authorities in the week ending 15 May, 8 per cent of the current workforce. The median number of staff unavailable for work was 42 and the mean was 198.

Table 9: No. of staff unavailable for work (week ending 15 May)					
	No. of councils	**% of councils**	**Total no. staff**	**Median**	**Mean**
County	14	100	6390	359	456
District	96	87	3022	16	27
Local government district	1	100	3	3	3
London borough	17	89	3017	155	159
Metropolitan borough	19	100	12449	590	655
Unitary	36	95	10356	214	273
Welsh unitary	9	100	6247	810	694
English single tier	72	95	25822	242	340
All councils	192	91	41484	42	198

Base: all responding to question (210 councils – 14 counties, 110 districts, 1 local government districts, 19 London boroughs, 19 metropolitan boroughs, 38 unitary, 9 Welsh unitary, 76English single tier)

Reason staff were unavailable for work

The 192 councils that reported that they had at least one or more member of staff unavailable for work in the week ending 15 May 2020 were subsequently asked to indicate the reason the for them being unavailable, 161 (84 per cent) were able to provide the reason.

In the week ending 15 May 2020, 39 per cent of staff were unavailable through 'self-isolation' and 30 per cent of were unavailable due to 'Non-COVID sickness'. Reasons for self-isolation 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 12 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	Caring for dependents/at risk relative/someone who is sick	Other reason
	% staff	% staff	% staff	% staff	% staff
County	45	12	35	2	7
District	28	3	43	7	18
Local government district	0	0	33	67	0
London borough	40	9	26	3	22
Metropolitan borough	21	5	38	5	31
Unitary	33	8	41	6	13
Welsh unitary	26	2	45	21	6
English single tier	27	7	38	5	23
All councils	30	7	39	7	18

Base: all responding to question (161 councils – 12 counties, 84 districts, 1 local government districts, 12 London boroughs, 16 metropolitan boroughs, 30 unitary, 6 Welsh unitary, 58 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 two-fifths and a third of councils respectively reporting either moderate or severe disruption.

When asked to assess the council overall, in terms of whether there are enough staff to run services normally or not, just under a quarter (23 per cent) of councils reported moderate or severe 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)	103	27	35	30	8
Bereavement services	152	57	30	11	3
Children's services	101	35	38	21	7
Environment health	192	49	34	14	4
Household waste (doorstep collection)	172	56	28	12	3
Housing and homelessness services	194	52	28	15	5
Planning	201	54	35	10	1
Public Health	123	54	30	11	5
Revenue and Benefits	188	53	27	15	4
Schools	78	19	28	24	28
Trading standards	93	48	35	13	3
Overall council	214	37	40	21	2

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

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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 196 (89 per cent) answered the question, of which over four-fifths (85 per cent) reported they had about the right amount of PPE or more than they needed; while 11 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	14	64	21	0
District	3	82	8	7
Local Government District	0	100	0	0
London borough	0	95	5	0
Metropolitan borough	6	78	17	0
Unitary	3	75	19	3
Welsh unitary	0	100	0	0
English single tier	3	81	15	1
All councils	4	81	11	4

Base: all responding to question (196 councils – 14 counties, 98 districts, 1 local government districts, 19 London boroughs, 18 metropolitan boroughs, 36 unitary, 10 Welsh unitary, 73 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 198 (87 per cent) answered the question, of which nearly nine out of ten councils (87 per cent) said all or most of the staff who need testing can access it; ten per cent said it was available to some or none 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	7	14	0	0
District	81	10	0	1	7
Local government district	-	-	-	-	-
London borough	60	40	0	0	0
Metropolitan borough	67	33	0	0	0
Unitary	76	16	8	0	0
Welsh unitary	80	10	10	0	0
English single tier	69	27	4	0	0
All councils	77	16	3	0	4

Base: all responding to question (206 councils – 14 counties, 107 districts, 0 local government districts, 20 London boroughs, 18 metropolitan boroughs, 37 unitary, 10 Welsh unitary, 75 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 15 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 15 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 <u>excluding permanent and fixed term staff</u> in the week ending 15 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 15 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 bank.

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

Q3.1 How many staff, if any, do you currently (week ending 15 May 2020) have in the categories below?

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

	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 15 May 2020. If zero please enter "0". If you do not know please leave bank.

	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 15 May 2020.

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

*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	
Caring for dependants/at-risk relative/someone who is sick	
Other	

Q6.1 Please select the status of the services to the show if there are <u>enough of the right staff</u> 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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