Local Government Bulletin

2 February 2023

This is the regular bulletin the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) sends out, updating you on the latest government guidance, advice, communications products and other useful information about important topics such as Homes for Ukraine, public health updates (including coronavirus (COVID-19)), EU transition and other topics of interest for local government.

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Local government updates

Regulator of Social Housing publishes initial findings on damp and mould in social housing

Today (2 February) the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) published its initial findings on damp and mould in England's social housing.

Following the coroner's November 2022 report into the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, the regulator asked all larger social landlords to submit evidence about the extent of damp and mould in tenants' homes and their approach to tackling it. This covered councils and housing associations who together own and manage over four million homes in England.

The regulator's initial findings from the responses show:

- Most social landlords understand the extent of damp and mould in their tenants' homes and take action to tackle it, but

could strengthen their approach.

- The majority of people living in social housing have homes that are free from damp and mould.
- Some landlords submitted poor quality responses that lacked the detail needed for RSH to have confidence about their approach.
- While the picture is incomplete, RSH's best estimate is that less than 0.2% of social homes have the most serious damp and mould problems, 1-2% have serious damp and mould problems, and a further 3-4% have notable damp and mould.

The regulator will now follow up directly with landlords who submitted poor quality responses and those reporting high numbers of cases of damp and mould. RSH will take regulatory action where needed.

Announcement:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-of-social-housing-publishes-initial-findings-on-damp-and-mould-in-social-housing

Report:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/damp-and-mould-in-social-housing-initial-findings

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Launch of strategy and consultations to reform children's social care

The Department for Education (DfE) has today (2 February) announced a new Children's Social Care Implementation Strategy and consultation to reform the current system to focus on more early support for families, reducing the need for a crisis response at a later stage.

The 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' strategy, backed by £200 million of

government funding over the next two years, will ensure vulnerable children will be better supported to stay with their families and that children in care get the support they need to thrive.

The strategy announces a Families First for Children Pathfinder, which will implement reforms to family help, child protection and supporting family networks. This will start in up to 12 councils and is backed by £45 million of funding.

Foster carers will also be supported through a recruitment and retention programme, backed by £27 million of funding over the next two years.

Alongside the strategy, DfE is launching three consultations seeking views on:

- Proposals to reform children's social care
- The new National Framework and dashboard for children's social care
- Proposals to introduce national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in children's social care

All three consultations close on 11 May.

Announcement:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/long-term-strategy-launched-to-fix-childrens-social-care

Consultations:
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love

https://consult.education.gov.uk/children2019s-social-care-national-framework/childrens-social-care-implementation-strategy-cons/

https://consult.education.gov.uk/children2019s-social-care-national-

framework/childrens-social-care-national-framework/

https://consult.education.gov.uk/social-work-reform-unit/child-and-family-social-worker-workforce/

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love

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Tax-Free Childcare reminder for families

HM Revenue and Customs are reminding families that they can save up to £2,000 a year on childcare costs with Tax-Free Childcare.

Tax-Free Childcare can help working families pay for any approved childcare for children aged 11 or under, or 16 if the child has a disability – whether the child goes to nursery, a childminder, attends breakfast or after school club, has holiday care or goes to an out-of-school activity.

For every £8 paid into an online account, families will automatically receive an additional £2 from the government. Parents can receive up to £500 every 3 months (£2,000 a year), or £1,000 (£4,000 a year) if their child is disabled.

Opening a Tax-Free Childcare account is simple and takes around 20 minutes. Money can be deposited at any time and can be used straight away, or whenever it is needed. Unused money in the account can be withdrawn at any time.

More information about Tax-Free Childcare and how to register can be found linked below. Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Announcement:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/boost-your-childcare-budget-this-half-term

More information and registration details:
https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare

Education and Skills Funding Agency update

Today (2 February), the Education and Skills Funding Agency published their latest information and actions for councils, academies, schools, colleges and further education providers.

The update for councils includes updated guidance on opening and closing and making changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools, an update to dedicated schools grant 2022 to 2023 and information on free school meal protections extended until March 2025.

Correspondence:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-2-february-2023

Actions for councils:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-2-february-2023/esfa-update-local-authorities-2-february-2023

UK sanctions relating to Russia webinar – registration closes tomorrow at midday

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is hosting an online webinar at 11:00am on 7 February to help councils understand the recent changes to UK sanctions relating to commercial services trade with Russia.

The event will help organisations stay up to date and understand how they can comply with recent changes. The new measures expand the services export prohibitions to cover audit, architecture, engineering, advertising, and IT consultancy and design services.

The webinar will cover the following topics:

- Overview of new services trade sanctions measures: sectoral scope and activities
- Process for licensing and disclosures
- Q&A (answers will be provided to questions submitted in advance and, time permitting, a short slot may be offered to respond to questions submitted on the day via the event chat)
- Speakers will include representatives from BEIS, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Department for International Trade, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and other government departments.

Councils are encouraged to register via the form linked below by 12:00pm tomorrow, 3 February. Councils may also submit questions in advance using the second form below.

Registration and submit questions form:
https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=BXCsy8EC60O0l-ZJLRst2KZlMKq5jOxHtTcrJcIQp1ZUMkZTQTZOV1ZFV1VQRlZTNlhCMVdZRDZQNi4u

Guidance:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/russia-sanctions-guidance/russia-sanctions-guidance

Latest amendment to the Russia (Sanctions) legislation:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/1331/contents/made

LGA voter ID requirements webinar – reminder

The Local Government Association (LGA) is running a virtual (Zoom) event on the new voter ID requirements and raising awareness of them from 2:00 – 3:00pm on 9 February.

The government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at some elections.

From 4 May, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections. This will apply to:

- Local elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- UK parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions

From October 2023, it will also apply to UK general elections.

Individuals who don't have an accepted photo ID can apply for a free voter ID document, which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate.

Further information about accepted forms of photo ID, how to apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate, and what to expect on polling day can be found below.

The event will feature speakers from DLUHC and the Electoral Commission and will provide an opportunity for questions and to share ideas.

The Electoral Commission has produced partner packs for organisations in England, including councils, to help them raise awareness and support voters with applying for a Voter Authority Certificate. The packs also include information on voter registration.

The Electoral Commission has also produced resources to help those who are likely to need support with the new voter ID requirement.

Register:
https://lgaevents.local.gov.uk/lga/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=605380&eventID=1743&traceRedir=2

More information:
https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id

https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/

https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate

Forms:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-voter-authority-certificate-by-post-if-youre-living-in-the-uk

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-by-post-for-a-voter-authority-certificate-if-youre-living-abroad-in-the-armed-forces-a-crown-servant-or-a-british-council-employee

Resources:
https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/partner-charity-or-local-council/voter-id-resources

https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/welcome-your-vote/resources-educators

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Natural England publishes Green Infrastructure Framework

Natural England has today (2 February) launched a new Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF) tool aimed at planners and developers, to help towns and cities turn greener.

The government's Environmental Improvement Plan, published on 31 January, includes a commitment that the public should be able to access green space or water, such as woodlands, wetlands, parks and rivers, within a 15-minute walk from their home.

The GIF provides a structure to analyse where greenspace in urban environments is needed most. It will help local planning authorities and developers meet requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework and consider green infrastructure in local plans and in new development.

Announcement:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-england-unveils-new-green-infrastructure-framework

Green Infrastructure Framework:
https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx

Environmental Improvement Plan:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan

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Building safety directors consultation – closes soon

DLUHC published a consultation on 1 December which set out proposals on the appointment of building safety directors to support resident-led organisations with their duties under Part 4 of the Building Safety Act 2022. In Part 4, higher-risk buildings for the new occupation regime are defined as being buildings which contain at least 2 residential units and are at least 18 metres in height or at least 7 storeys (whichever is reached first).

The consultation seeks views on DLUHC's proposals for the following areas:

- the eligibility requirements for becoming a building safety director
- what leaseholder engagement should take place prior to any

such appointment

- the method of appointing and removing building safety directors
- the method of agreeing the remuneration of a building safety director

The consultation closes at 11:45pm on 7 February.

Consultation:
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-safety-directors-consultation

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Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country and local authority tier

DLUHC has today (2 February) published visa data received from the Home Office by local authority for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as of 31 January. Tables also include data relating to visas sponsored by the Scottish Government and Welsh Government.

This is an ad-hoc release of management information and does not constitute Official Statistics or a National Statistics release. It relates to the Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: visa data published by the Home Office.

Guidance:
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-for-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-and-ukraine-family-scheme-visa-data-by-age-and-sex-of-applicant

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Where to find the latest information and guidance

Ukraine

- Guidance for councils: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homes-for-ukraine-council-guides
- Guidance for sponsors: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guides
- Guidance for guests: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-guests

Coronavirus

- Guidance for 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
- COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19

- Coronavirus cases: https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/
- Previous Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) 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/local-government-and-the-eu
- To sign up to.GOV email updates: https://www.gov.uk/search/news-and-communications/email-signup?related_to_brexit

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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/3iC2Pnz

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