

# National Joint Council for local government services

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**To: Chief Executives in England, Wales and N Ireland  
(copies for HR and Finance Directors)  
Members of the National Joint Council**

3 April 2020

Dear Chief Executive,

## **COVID-19: social distancing and PPE**

Please continue to visit the LGA's [Coronavirus: information for councils](#) webpage for all up to date advice.

Public Health England is continuing to publish [guidance](#) for non-clinical settings.

The government has issued [updated guidance on PPE](#).

All information contained in this circular is correct at time of publication but all links to external websites should be checked regularly as official advice is likely to be updated as the situation continues to develop.

Our [circular dated 27 March](#) referred to the increasing challenge of ensuring the safety of refuse (and other) crews whose roles usually require them to share a confined space in the cabs of refuse wagons. Whilst there are many examples of good practice by employers who have put in place measures to ensure [social distancing](#) is maintained, we are aware of other critical situations where urgent action is needed and where risk assessments must be undertaken so that social distancing rules are followed and maintained in all council vehicles whilst always ensuring that the relevant health & safety requirements are adhered to.

We understand the practical challenges that this issue is throwing up but as an urgent priority, if not already happening, employers should be undertaking risk assessments and taking appropriate action.

We are clear that social distancing in enclosed work environments is a key element of the national effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and, as many local government workers cannot work from home, employers have a responsibility to ensure that social distancing

rules are adhered to. Where this is not possible it is likely that risk assessments may demonstrate that some employees, particularly those who are [vulnerable](#), will need to remain at home or, where agreeable, be redeployed elsewhere. Managers will also need to make every effort to understand how the family circumstances of employees may involve other vulnerable people and be flexible in their approach.

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) has produced updated [guidance](#) with practical suggestions of how the issue of social distancing can be addressed.

The Waste Industry Safety & Health Forum (WISH) has issued [updated guidance](#).

Finally, we remind you again of the Department for Education's [guidance for schools and other educational settings](#).

Similar challenges are arising in other workplace settings that include, but are not limited to, catering, cleaning, highways maintenance, pupil transport, first aid and administration of medication in schools and Craftworker roles such as gas engineers, plumbers and electricians who may need to carry out work in private or commercial premises.

Employers must make every effort to ensure social distancing measures are observed and that where a need is identified through risk assessments, [appropriate PPE](#), including masks, gloves, eyewear and sanitiser and cleaning materials that can be stored, cleaned and disposed of safely, are provided. Where appropriate, washing and changing facilities should be provided.

We do of course understand the ongoing difficulties with supply and demand and the LGA and the unions are continuing to lobby government for urgent provision of PPE. However, in the absence of such, we expect employers to ensure that employees are not being placed at risk of harm and we expect local parties to work together to resolve issues that arise.

Yours sincerely,

*Naomi  
Cooke*

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