



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**

*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and  
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To: Local authority leaders

cc: Local authority Chief Executives

18/1  
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## **OMICRON WORKFORCE PRESSURES**

Local authorities continue to play a vital role in supporting local communities in response to the Omicron variant, as they have throughout the COVID pandemic. I am enormously grateful to everyone working in local authority services for their ongoing contributions, whether employed directly or through contractors.

I recognise that local authorities now face increased short-term pressures, particularly but not exclusively in adult social care, owing to staff absences caused by the Omicron variant. I know that these absences and their impacts vary over time and by place and that you are doing everything you can to manage them. It is clear too that across the country you are working closely with other councils and public services in your area, to minimise any impact on local residents. It is right that these decisions are made locally.

Where prioritisation happens, you will need to protect statutory services including adult social care, children's social care, homelessness and waste services. You will also want to prioritise COVID-related delivery, such as the drive for vaccinations and boosters especially to the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach people, other support to the most vulnerable and support for business.

The Government understands that this prioritisation may limit the range of non-statutory elements being delivered for those services; and that you may need to draw on resources usually allocated to other non-statutory services.

On 23 December, DLUHC issued a letter to local authorities providing a renewed steer on reprioritisation of regulatory services. The Director General of Social Care and Chief Social Worker in DHSC wrote on 29 December about how local authorities can use flexibilities to assess, review and prioritise care services.

We will continue to work closely with you over the coming weeks to understand emerging pressures and provide support where needed. Government support which is already in place includes the £462.5 million extra for workforce recruitment and retention in adult social care first announced in October and topped up in December 2021.

The Government has no plans at present for any further legislative easements of the kind that were made available in adult social care services and children's social care services earlier in the pandemic. These easements were not widely used and the feedback to government on whether they are now needed has been mixed. We will keep this under review.

Thank you again for all the work that you and your staff are doing.

**With every good wish,**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mrs, Michael", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations**