



By Email Only

Message from Chief Planner

19 October 2023

This Newsletter provides updates on the latest announcements from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and other government departments and agencies relating to planning practices and policy. Please see overleaf for the list of contents.

This issue highlights the recent letter from DLUHC Secretary of State on long-term plan for housing, the launch of the Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy and its relevance to planning and the latest guidance on the health risks of damp and mould in the home. It also draws your attention to Public Practice's latest recruitment round which is taking place England-wide and the opportunity to get involved in the next round of funding for the DLUHC Digital Planning Programme.

There are also new opportunities to take part in research, including on Planning issues affecting delivery of children's homes being undertaken by the Department for Education.

All previous Chief Planner Letters and Newsletters are available on GOV.UK [here](#).

Kind regards,

Joanna Averley
Chief Planner



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Policy and Delivery Updates

Letter from DLUHC Secretary of State on long-term plan for housing

In July 2023, the Secretary of State set out the Government's [long-term plan for housing](#). Local government plays a key role in delivering this plan and building more homes in the right places. To highlight the principal elements of the long-term plan that relate to local government, the Secretary of State sent a letter to all council leaders, chief executives and other local planning authorities in England on 8 September 2023. This letter can now be read on gov.uk [here](#).

This letter set out how Government intends to support this ambition, by introducing reforms to make plans simpler, shorter and faster to prepare, alongside initiatives aimed at bolstering capacity and capability. The letter reiterates the critical importance of local authorities adopting their ambitious local plans in a timely manner, and outlines proposals intended to provide flexibility – including removing the requirement for planning authorities with an up-to-date plan to demonstrate continually a deliverable 5-year housing land supply.

Public Practice now recruiting England-wide

With support from DLUHC, Public Practice is now working with local authorities across England, including the South West, East and West Midlands, to recruit placemaking professionals for its next cohort starting in April 2024.

The [2023 Public Practice survey](#) showed that the biggest barrier local authorities currently face is recruitment, with almost 80% of local authority officers saying they face difficulties in attracting appropriately qualified or skilled candidates.

The not-for-profit organisation works with local authorities to identify gaps in the capacity of planning and placemaking teams, then matches skilled candidates to year-long placements supported by learning, development and knowledge sharing activity; it offers a route for local authorities to recruit placemaking professionals from a wide range of built environment backgrounds.

Public Practice's next recruitment round will open on Monday 16 October. Public sector organisations interested in hosting placements are invited to apply by **30 November 2023**. For more information visit the [Public Practice website](#).

2023 DLUHC Digital Planning Funding

The [DLUHC Digital Planning Programme's](#) next round of funding [opened on Tuesday 17 October](#). The Local Authority projects we fund will align with DLUHC's vision of enabling a modern and efficient planning system in England, shifting a documents-based system to one that is data-driven, standards-based, and powered by modern user-centred products and services.



Local Authorities will be invited to apply for funding through the:

- Digital Planning Improvement Fund (Round 2) - supporting Local Planning Authorities to start their service improvement journey with the goal of improving the data, technology and practices used for making planning decisions.
- PropTech Innovation Fund (Round 4) - supporting Local Authorities to demonstrate the benefits of using digital solutions in land assessment and digital citizen engagement.

If you are interested in these funding opportunities please check the [Digital Planning website](#) for more information about the funds, the application process and upcoming Q&A sessions for interested applicants.

Government's suicide prevention strategy and relevance to planning and design

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) published the [Suicide prevention strategy for England](#) on 11 September 2023. It's a five-year cross-sector strategy that sets out priority areas for action to reduce suicide rates. While overall, the current suicide rate is not significantly higher than in 2012 when the last suicide strategy was published, the rate is not falling.

The strategy highlights high-frequency locations in which a third of suicides happen outside the home. The strategy encourages those with a role in the planning system to consider the risks of suicide associated with buildings and public spaces and to consult the practice resource [Preventing suicides in public places](#) when creating local design policies.

Guidance on the health risks of damp and mould in the home

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), DLUHC and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) have jointly published new consolidated guidance on '[Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home](#)'. Damp and mould in the home are significant public health issues and can be fatal. However, an estimated up to 6.5 million households in England are living in a home with damp and mould, which may put their health at risk. The guidance was developed in response to the Coroner's Prevention of Future Deaths report following the death of 2-year-old Awaab Ishak from a severe respiratory condition due to prolonged exposure to mould in his home.

The guidance is aimed primarily at all social and private rented housing landlords of all types of accommodation provision in England and makes clear that tenants should not be blamed for damp and mould, which are not the result of 'lifestyle choices'; it is the responsibility of landlords to identify and address the underlying causes of the problem. Other professionals with an interest in understanding the



health risks of damp and mould and how to address them may also find the guidance helpful. Tenants and owner occupiers may also find the guidance helpful.

Updates to the Ancient Woodland Inventory

Compiled and maintained by Natural England, the [Ancient Woodland Inventory](#) in England identifies, locates, and classifies ancient woodland in the country.

In June 2021, [Natural England outlined the value of updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory and why it matters to planners](#). Work is continuing to update the original Ancient Woodland Inventory, making use of up-to-date GIS technologies to enable ancient woodland sites down to 0.25ha to be captured, whilst also mapping ancient woodland pasture parkland sites.

Local Environment Record Centres are carrying out this work at a county level which means that local knowledge and expertise are feeding into the inventory. The first phase of the project which generates a map showing woodland that is present on both EPOCH 1 historic maps and modern day maps is completed for over half the counties. Natural England are also beginning to receive the first complete datasets for some counties, with more counties submitting data over the coming months. You can engage with your Local Environment Record Centres to find out how the mapping in your area is progressing.

Visit the [Magic Maps website](#) to find out which ancient woodlands are in your area. Natural England will announce further Ancient Woodland Inventory updates when they are published in the coming months. You can read Natural England and the Forestry Commission's standing advice on ancient woodland when deciding on a planning application [here](#).

Research & Events

Planning issues affecting delivery of children's homes

On 23 May 2023, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning published a [Written Ministerial Statement](#), reinforcing the Government's commitment to support the development of accommodation for looked after children, and its delivery through the planning system. This followed a report by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) on children's social care, which found that the planning process is a significant challenge for children's home providers seeking to create new supply in the placements market.

The Department for Education (DfE) would like to gather more evidence from local planning authorities and children's social care teams to gain a greater understanding of planning considerations that may be affecting delivery of children's homes.



DfE has produced a short [survey](#) and would be grateful for responses by 10 November 2023. The survey findings will support further in-depth discussions with local authorities and inform the next steps for Government policy development in this area.

Any enquiries regarding the survey and research into children's home delivery should be sent to Care.STANDARDSREVIEW@education.gov.uk

Call for Participation: Authority Wide Design Codes Survey

DLUHC would like to invite local authorities to take part in a **short survey** relating to the requirement proposed in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill for local authorities to prepare an **authority wide design code**.

Please complete the survey here: <https://forms.office.com/e/tS8ShFuYeX>

The survey will help us to understand local authorities' familiarity with the proposals, the stage local authorities are at in preparing authority wide design codes, and the challenges faced in preparing design codes at this scale.

It will also explore what further support to local authorities may be needed to produce authority wide codes and help inform updates to Part 1 of the National Model Design Code so it can better assist with the preparation of design codes.

The survey should take 5-10 minutes to complete and it will close on **31 October**. Please email DesignQuality@levellingup.gov.uk if you have any questions relating to this research.