

first

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"Give us the powers, freedoms, flexibilities and funding **and we will deliver great communities**"

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman

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Tackling abuse and intimidation of councillors



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Conference report



Thank you to everyone who made me feel so welcome at my first LGA annual conference as chairman, and to all those who organised, attended, spoke at and exhibited in Bournemouth.

This month's **first** is full of conference news and reports (p7-9). At conference, we launched a test version of our new improvement tool, the Transformation and Innovation Exchange (p12); published the final report of our Post-Brexit England Commission (p16); and issued guidance for councillors on how to stay safe in the face of rising levels of intimidation and abuse (p15).

Elsewhere in the magazine, you can find out about the councils sharing services (p5) and our concerns about regional aid funding running out in 18 months' time (p6). The LGA continues to press for the long-delayed Adult Social Care Green Paper – a year after we published our own (p22).

We also celebrate 100 years of council housing, and have a new report out on understanding local housing markets (p20-21).

Commentary comes from the Association of Directors of Public Health on obesity (p23); The Prince's Foundation on building better homes (p26); and the Carbon Trust on what councils should do after declaring a climate emergency (p27).

Cllr James Jamieson is LGA Chairman

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Local Government Association

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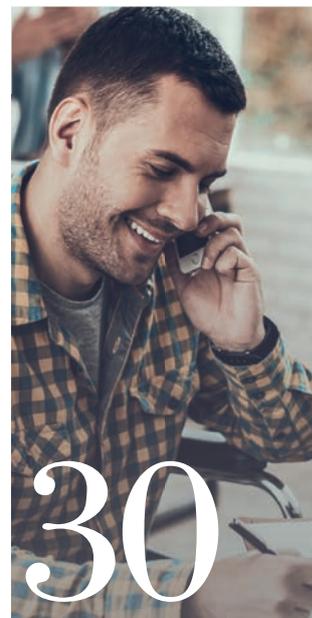


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Children's mental health cases up by over half

Councils are seeing more than 560 cases of children with mental health disorders every day – an increase of more than 50 per cent in just four years.

Latest figures show there were 205,720 cases where a child was identified as having a mental health issue in 2017/18, compared with 133,600 in 2014/15 – up 54 per cent.

The LGA is warning of a “children’s mental health crisis” as councils struggle to cope with the enormous level of demand for children with mental illness.

It is calling on the Government to use the Spending Review to inject desperately needed funding into children’s services, which face a £3.1 billion funding gap by 2025.

Early intervention services, such as children’s centres and family support services, play a vital role in supporting children before problems become more serious later on.

However, having lost 60p out of every £1 of central government funding in the past decade, many councils are having to strip back, or even end, some of these services, as a result of the high levels of demand to support

children in care. In addition, public health services, which also support a child’s early development, have seen cuts of £700 million to their budgets over five years.

The LGA says it is essential all these services are properly funded if councils are to give children the care and support they need, and prevent them from developing mental illness.

Cllr Annetoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA’s Children and Young People Board, said: “It is clear we are facing a children’s mental health crisis, and councils are struggling to provide the support young people so desperately need.

“Significant funding pressures in children’s services and public health mean many councils are being forced to cut some of the vital early intervention services that can support children with low-level mental health issues and avoid more serious problems in later life.

“It is absolutely vital that the Government adequately funds these services in this year’s Spending Review, so we can tackle this urgent crisis and make sure children get the help they need.”



‘Grant entry powers to protect home educated’

The Government’s plans to introduce a compulsory register for home-educated children risk failing to protect them unless councils are given the powers to enter premises to check on them, the LGA has warned.

The Department for Education (DfE) has rejected councils’ pleas to have greater oversight of home-schooled children, following a consultation over proposals for a register. The LGA is urging the DfE to rethink its proposals and grant councils the powers to ensure children are protected and getting a high-quality education.

There are an estimated 57,873 home-educated children in England, according to the Association of Directors of Children’s Services.

While councils fully support the rights of parents to choose to home educate their child – and recognise that most home-schooling parents are doing an excellent job – there remain concerns for a minority of children who could be at risk of neglect or poor future prospects.

Ofsted estimates at least 6,000 children who are said to be home-schooled are, in fact, attending illegal schools, which can be in dangerous settings or offer unsuitable education.

Cllr Annetoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA’s Children and Young People Board, said: “The LGA has long called for a register of children not in school, as this will help councils make sure children are getting a good education and prevent them from disappearing from the oversight of services designed to keep them safe.

“But this risks failing to protect children unless it goes further... councils [need] the powers and appropriate funding to enter homes or other premises to speak to children and check their schooling.”





news in brief

Rise in diabetes

The number of children and young people being treated for Type 2 diabetes – which is often linked to obesity – has gone up by nearly 50 per cent in just five years, according to the latest figures. Almost 750 under-25s received care for the condition from paediatric diabetes units in 2017/18. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Councils, with their public health responsibilities, are on the frontline fighting obesity, but for this to work effectively they need to be properly resourced. This is why the Government should use the upcoming Spending Review to reverse its £700 million cuts to councils' public health budgets, to help our children live healthy and fulfilling lives."

'Sharing services saves taxpayers £1 bn'

More than £1 billion of taxpayers' money has been saved by councils sharing services, with every council in England taking part in collaborative service delivery.

The latest shared services map from the LGA shows that there are now 626 individual shared service arrangements across the country, resulting in £1.34 billion of efficiency savings.

Shared services have become business-as-usual for all councils in England, and are no longer just in the realm of the most innovative authorities. These savings demonstrate how councils are working together to share best practice to deliver efficient services for their communities.

Shared services go way beyond teams dealing with procurement, fraud or community safety initiatives, to include services such as coastal defence management and property management.

Former LGA Chairman Lord Porter said: "Councils have embraced efficiency and innovation in a way that is not seen anywhere else in the public sector and these fantastic new figures show, once again, they remain at the forefront of cost-effective service delivery.

"Councils sharing ideas and working collaboratively have contributed to more than £1 billion in efficiency savings that have helped local government in trying to protect vital local services amid ongoing funding pressures.

"Councils' commitment to improvement remains strong but, faced with an overall funding gap that will reach £8 billion by 2025, securing the financial sustainability of councils and our local services must be the top priority in the Spending Review."

● The LGA's shared services map can be accessed at www.local.gov.uk/shared-services-map

Roads funding

The Commons' Transport Committee has said that a 'front-loaded' five-year funding settlement is the only way local authorities will be able to address a deteriorating local roads network and plan ahead. A new report by the committee has called on the Department for Transport to propose a funding settlement to the Treasury as part of the forthcoming Spending Review. Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Transport Spokesman, said: "This report rightly recognises the significant funding pressures councils are under and the detrimental impact this is having on local services such as roads maintenance. Councils are fixing a pothole every 17 seconds, but need long-term government investment to address the nation's £9.3 billion roads repair backlog."

Public health approach to crime

The Home Office has announced a new legal duty on public bodies to prevent and tackle serious violence, including knife crime, by sharing data, intelligence and knowledge to understand and address its root causes.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chairman of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "We support a public health approach to tackling serious violent crime [but]... government needs to reverse funding cuts to local youth services, youth offending teams and councils' public health budgets, otherwise we will not be able to tackle serious violence in our communities."

Meanwhile, a new report from the LGA shows that health and wellbeing boards (HWBs) are helping people lead healthier and happier lives in their communities, despite rising demand and cuts to council

budgets. It highlights how HWBs are making a real difference through a wide range of initiatives, including: reducing hospital admissions and time spent in hospital; reducing demand for GP appointments; helping thousands of smokers to quit; imposing restrictions on fast food outlets near schools; and reducing unemployment, poverty and poor housing.

The report, 'What a difference a place makes: the growing impact of health and wellbeing boards', shows that HWBs are improving outcomes in health, care and wellbeing by uniting clinical, political and community leaders under a shared vision for their communities.

It warns that without the full and equal involvement of councils, plans for NHS reform will fail to realise their potential.

Children's social care

The proportion of council children's services rated good or outstanding has increased, according to children's social care data in England for 2018/19, published by inspection agency Ofsted. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said the findings were "positive". She added: "Despite this, many children's services are being pushed to the brink by unprecedented demand and increasing financial pressures, with an average of 88 children entering care every single day. If government is serious about protecting and supporting children, it needs to provide the funding needed."

news in brief

Health and safety overhaul

The Government has announced it will review and update the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System, following lobbying by the LGA. It will see the existing system overhauled and made more accessible for landlords and tenants. Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Housing Spokesman, said: "This will help improve councils' ability to uphold standards in the private rented sector. Successful regulation of the private rented sector requires an up-to-date system for assessing standards, so it is disappointing that government will not be reviewing and, where necessary, updating the statistical evidence that underpins the system, as this would better equip environmental health teams to protect tenants and support landlords."

Planning green paper

The Government's Accelerated Planning Green Paper has pledged to reduce the time it takes for planning permission to be granted, and to explore new approaches to paying for the planning service, including whether councils could recover a greater proportion of these costs. LGA Housing Spokesman Cllr Martin Tett insisted the planning system is not a barrier to house building, with councils approving nine in 10 applications. He added: "The Green Paper needs to include allowing councils to be able to set their own planning fees, with taxpayers currently having to subsidise the costs of planning applications by around £200 million a year."

Housing target in 'jeopardy'

MPs have warned that the Government's target of 300,000 new homes a year by the mid-2020s could be jeopardised by "inherent problems" at the heart of the planning system. The Public Accounts Committee also warned that local authorities are struggling to produce local plans showing how many, where and what types of new homes are needed in their areas, and fewer than half have an up-to-date local plan. Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Housing Spokesman, said: "Government needs to make it easier for councils to get up-to-date plans in place, by giving them sufficient funding and resources and scrapping the policies, including permitted development rights, which allow developers to ignore community needs and undermine local plans."

Time running out for regional aid replacement

Local areas in England risk losing out on £5.3 billion of regeneration funding if the Government does not act fast once the UK leaves the EU, the LGA has warned.

It has called on the Government to urgently begin its consultation into the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) – the UK's replacement for the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF), which comes to an end in less than 18 months' time.

ESIF is currently earmarked for local areas to create jobs, support small and medium businesses, deliver skills training, develop rural economies, invest in critical transport and digital infrastructure and boost inclusive growth across the country.

While a combination of EU rules governing ESIF and Whitehall's management of it has resulted in a complex funding process, the investment acts as match

funding to get vital local projects off the ground.

Despite announcing it would consult on the UKSPF, the replacement for ESIF, in July 2018, the Government has yet to do so.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Taskforce, said: "The clock is ticking for the Government to set out a firm plan to replace this funding into the next decade and beyond.

"Brexit cannot leave local areas facing huge financial uncertainty as a result of lost regional aid funding. With national funding for regeneration increasingly being depleted, all local areas have become increasingly reliant on EU money and local areas are desperate to get on with creating jobs, building infrastructure and boosting growth.

"The Government needs to work urgently with councils to develop a fully-funded and locally driven successor scheme."



Domestic abuse: new legal duty

New laws to protect survivors of domestic abuse in England and Wales – which the LGA has previously called for – have been introduced in Parliament.

The Domestic Abuse Bill places a legal duty on councils to offer secure homes to victims of violence and their children.

The Bill includes the first government definition of domestic abuse, which will include financial abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical behaviour, and proposals for a domestic abuse commissioner to champion survivors and hold local and national government to account on their actions.

It would also introduce domestic abuse protection notices and orders, which would allow police and courts to intervene earlier where abuse is suspected, and ban the cross-

examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said:

"The ability of councils to fund services for victims is limited by significant pressures on their budgets, with local authorities increasingly being forced to prioritise spending for those at immediate risk of harm, rather than on vital earlier support services and prevention schemes that help stop domestic abuse occurring in the first place.

"With local government facing an £8 billion funding gap by 2025, any legislative changes in this Bill must be matched with adequate resources and funding, which the new Prime Minister needs to address in the Spending Review."

conference news

Statutory services 'at risk' warn one in three councils

A third of councils fear they will run out of funding to provide statutory services – such as adult social care, protecting children and preventing homelessness – by the end of this Parliament.

This number rises to almost two-thirds by 2024/2025 or later, while 17 per cent of councils are not confident of realising all of the savings they need to make this year (2019/20), according to an LGA survey, published during its annual conference in early July.

Unprecedented rises in demand for adult social care, children's services and homelessness support mean many councils are having to spend more than they planned, forcing them to make in-year budget cuts to try to balance the books.

The LGA says securing the financial sustainability of councils must be the top priority of this year's Spending Review, and is calling on the next Prime Minister to provide certainty about future funding, business rates retention and the fair funding review.

Former LGA Chairman Lord Porter said: "Councils in England face a funding gap of more than £3 billion next year, rising to £8 billion by 2025. As this survey shows, if the Government fails to adequately fund local government there is a real risk to the future financial viability of some services and councils.

"Councils would normally have started their budget-setting planning process but remain completely in the dark about how much funding they will have next year. Communities relying on the vital local services that make a difference to their lives deserve better.

"Urgent guarantees are needed that councils will have the funding they need to ensure our vital public services survive the uncertainty ahead.

'With the right funding and powers, councils can continue to lead their local areas, improve residents' lives, reduce demand for services and save money for the taxpayer.'



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Funding certainty 'a priority'

Delivering a sustainable future for local government is an "absolute priority", according to Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary James Brokenshire.

Speaking at the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth, he acknowledged that he might not be in post much longer, with the winner of the Conservative leadership race due to be announced after **first** went to press.

But he insisted he would continue to make a powerful case for local government in the Spending Review, "to see that local government receives the support needed and gains as much certainty as we can as early as we can".

He said the next Conservative leader would "need to look afresh at the entire ecosystem underpinning local government and acknowledge that role we all have to play – to spot problems earlier, champion best practice and help each other improve".

He proposed a Green Paper on a new deal for local government, which would reset the relationship between local and central government, see the sector adapting "with ever more agility to face the future with optimism", strengthen the bond with citizens and renew democracy.

Mr Brokenshire told delegates housing would remain "our top domestic priority", saying it was another area "where local authorities need to strengthen their ability to deliver".

But he also called for a renewed troubled families programme, saying it was helping around 400,000 families facing multiple challenges to change their lives, by changing the way local services are delivered.

Up to the challenge

Kent County Council's Rob Comber has won the 10th Local Government Challenge.

Rob, pictured receiving his award from Lady Bruce-Lockhart, fought off competition from nine other candidates to win the £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart scholarship for his project, Summer Slide. This will tackle the educational impact of child poverty by delivering a summer enrichment programme for affected children.

He said: "It has been an honour to work with nine incredible people over the five local government challenges. Looking at what these individuals have achieved in the last six months, the future of local government is in the hands of some seriously talented individuals."



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Green breakthrough

Cllr Jonathan Bartley, Co-Leader of the Green Party, highlighted its success in the recent local elections – breaking through in more than 50 new councils – and called for a People’s Vote to “sort out the mess we are in” with Brexit. He said that the UK’s “conflict-driven system” had left the country “an international laughing stock”, with people giving up on politics despite caring for their communities, and a centralised state still controlling the purse strings – even in the ‘devolved’ mayoral authorities. He called for a radical shift of power: “Political decisions should be made as locally as possible by the people affected by them, and only referred upwards when absolutely necessary.”

Public finances

Bank of England Governor Mark Carney warned of the impact of a no-deal Brexit on the UK, telling the LGA’s annual conference that more spending would be needed. In response to a delegate’s question, he agreed that increased council house building could provide fiscal stimulus, saying: “In fiscal terms, if projects were ready, then the biggest bang to the pound is infrastructure spending, of which social housing is a prime example.”

Cinderella army

The leader of local government’s biggest trade union has called for more funding for the “forgotten Cinderella army” of council workers. Dave Prentis, Unison General Secretary, said austerity had led to a decline in the quality of training and development for council officers, helping fuel a recruitment and retention crisis. Unison is highlighting the work of all local government staff in its Local Service Champions campaign, with a day of action on 17 October. Mr Prentis also told the LGA’s annual conference that Northamptonshire is unlikely to be the last council to fail financially, and said part of the problem “was created in Whitehall”. He added: “The Government were very keen to say that the problems at Northamptonshire were caused by political incompetence and bad management, with no responsibility for low funding.”



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LGA declares climate emergency

The LGA’s General Assembly has joined more than 100 councils in declaring a climate emergency, and has also endorsed the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A motion in favour of the goals was amended to include the declaration, and both were passed near unanimously by delegates at the LGA’s annual conference in Bournemouth.

Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees proposed the motion, which calls for government to support domestic implementation of the goals through funded partnership roles in each local authority area.

“The goals cover a range of interdependent issues we are all grappling with, from poverty and hunger to climate change, decent work and inclusive economic growth, and the importance of global partnerships,” said Mayor Rees.

“We increasingly see that national governments working alone are unable to cope with the world’s major challenges. Local leadership, local government, place-based with the immediate connection to the

complexity of real people’s lives and its focus on delivery, are essential partners. And we need to be welcomed as equal partners in the delivery of the SDGs.”

Proposing the amendment declaring a climate emergency, Cllr Peter Box CBE, Leader of Wakefield Council, said: “The UN says we’ve got just 11 years left to limit climate change catastrophe.

“In other words, my generation, our generation, has one last chance to make amends for our collective failure to take more action than in the past.

“Climate change deniers are not only wrong, but they betray young people all over the world... Let’s show young people that their local elected representatives have their backs. Let’s show that we are listening and will do something.”

The LGA is now developing a workstream on both issues, in consultation with elected members.

● See p27, Climate emergency declarations – what next?

Rural areas could be ‘left behind’ post-Brexit

Millions of people living in rural England risk being ‘left behind’ and missing out on their fair share of future prosperity following the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, the LGA has warned.

Swathes of the country face challenges different to those of their metropolitan counterparts, from poor digital connectivity to a crumbling transport network, according to the final report of the LGA’s Post-Brexit England Commission.

The report, launched at the LGA’s annual conference, sets out a suite of changes designed to ensure rural communities and businesses can thrive – including fully devolving replacement EU structural funding to non-metropolitan areas, and government working with Ofcom to secure superfast rural broadband and launch a rural mobile roaming scheme.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chairman of

the People and Places Board that set up the commission, said: “Rural residents and businesses deserve an equal stake in the nation’s future success.

“They want the same level of digital connectivity as their urban counterparts, jobs that reward their hard work, their fair share of public investment, and are keen to take advantage of new opportunities for international trade.

“As Whitehall and Westminster have become increasingly preoccupied with delivering Brexit, local councils have got on and delivered crucial services and investment for their residents.

“Our message to government is simple: give councils the powers they need to help people get on with their lives and address a deepening divide between rural and urban areas.”

● See p16

New PM urged to publish social care reforms

The new Prime Minister must publish the Government's long-awaited Social Care Green Paper before Parliament goes into recess in September, the LGA has said.

At its recent annual conference in Bournemouth, the LGA launched a publication marking one year on from its own green paper on the future of adult social care (see p22).

Over the past 12 months, the Government has delayed its version three times, and it is now more than two-and-a-half years since it first committed to producing one.

The LGA also renewed its invitation to host cross-party talks between national politicians to finally find consensus on reforms that are desperately needed to ensure the future care needs of our ageing population are met. Adult social care faces a £3.6 billion funding gap by 2025.

Clr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Those

who rely on vital care and support cannot wait any longer.

"Our adult social care system is creaking under increasing pressure, which impacts everyone with care and support needs, preventing them from living their lives to the full. It also has consequences for all those involved in adult social care, including providers, the workforce and the NHS.

"Councils are having to make incredibly difficult decisions within tightening budgets and cannot be expected to continue relying on one-off funding injections to keep services going. What is needed is funding certainty for both the immediate and long term.

"That is why the Government needs to commit to meeting our deadline, before the party conferences start, to finally publish its much-delayed and long-awaited Green Paper, outlining what the future funding options and possible solutions to this crisis are."



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'Parliamentary logjam' delaying green paper

The Government's Social Care Green Paper has been held up by "the parliamentary logjam and a lack of cross-party consensus", Health and Care Secretary Matt Hancock told the LGA's annual conference.

However, he assured delegates of his commitment to publish the Green Paper, as "we need a sustainable long-term solution to the funding of social care".

Mr Hancock said: "Social care has for many years not received the attention and support that it deserves.

"The only way we're going to solve social care is by building a new, sustainable social care system for the long term, one that's there when you need it, and is fair across the generations."

The Secretary of State outlined his plan to do this through integrated care systems, empowered health and wellbeing boards, new technology, and £6 million for specialist training and recruitment of care workers.

He also shared his plans "to help five million more people benefit from personalised care within the next decade", by keeping people out of hospitals with more support at home.

Mr Hancock emphasised the importance of local authorities working with both the NHS and care providers, because "that's how you ensure local needs are met, and that's how we maintain democratic legitimacy".

"Good health is what makes everything else in life possible," he added.

"To give every child the best possible start in life, to ensure everyone gets the opportunity to fulfil their potential in life, we need to change the way we think about health."

Lib Dems pledge 'devolution revolution'

A Liberal Democrat government would "oversee a devolution revolution," including a replacement for the mayoral model, the LGA's annual conference was told.

Jo Swinson MP, Deputy Leader of the party, promised a new tier of democratically-elected devolved authorities across England would replace mayors – a model that "concentrates too much power in the hands of one person".

Councils would have more powers, including over education, health and social care, transport, planning, housing and the environment. In addition, there would be new parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums "where communities want them".

Ms Swinson also called for the use of the single

transferable vote in local elections, to help make councils more representative of local communities and reduce the number of uncontested seats.

She reiterated the Liberal Democrats' opposition to leaving the EU, saying Brexit was delaying the Spending Review and the Social Care Green Paper.

Ms Swinson also praised the work of councils, describing local government as "the backbone of our society".

"It's in local communities where people can come together most successfully to work for the good of society," she told delegates.

As **first** was going to press, Ms Swinson was contesting the leadership of the Liberal Democrats with Sir Ed Davey.



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features

Meet the new chairman

The LGA's new chairman admits he went into local government because he was "irritated" at some of the things he saw around him and thought they could be done better

"Naively, before you come into local government, you think the quality of people can't be that good. But you find they are very good and very committed," says Cllr James Jamieson, Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council.

"There are constraints, though. There are democratic constraints – we have to consult. But some of them are because we have too many silos across the public sector."

For his key areas of concern as a council leader – adult social care, children's services, housing and planning, regeneration, funding and, increasingly, climate change and sustainability – he gives examples of how more joined-up working locally would create benefits for residents and generate efficiencies for cash-strapped councils.

"Adult social care is clearly underfunded and we need to lobby for extra funding. But we could do an awful lot more if the public sector worked together in a holistic way," he says.

Cllr Jamieson wants to change a system in which the NHS can cure an elderly resident's kidney infection, but the prolonged stay in hospital means he loses weight, mobility and – ultimately – his independence. Intervening earlier, preventing disease and combining treatment with occupational therapy to retain mobility could address these issues.

Councils need more powers over

housing and planning, so as they can ensure sufficient suitable housing is available for older residents who want to downsize from family homes.

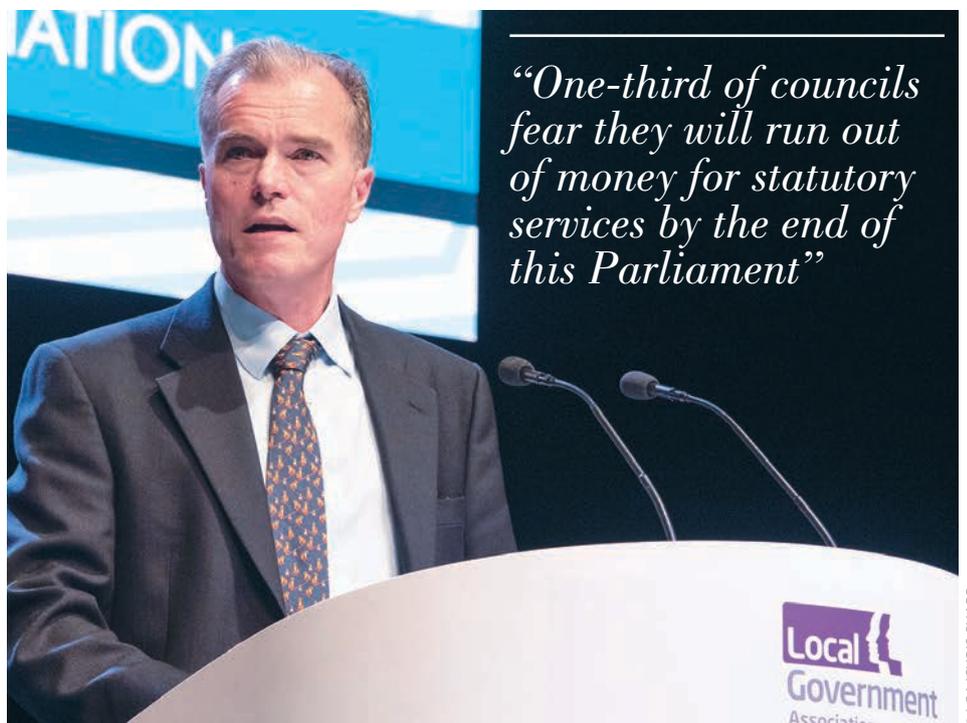
This kind of housing in town centres, along with accommodation for younger people "just starting out", could help support struggling high streets, as well as putting

residents within walking distance of shops, local buses, doctors and other public services.

And if existing residents could see a new school and GP surgery first when presented with plans for more housing, they would be more willing to accept new developments.

The key is getting more powers devolved locally so councils can get on with creating supportive communities and resilient residents, and simplifying the multiple funding streams and bidding processes they have to negotiate to finance changes.

"If you can devolve to the local level, you will get better decision making. While every council can do their best to effect change locally, it requires national policy changes to be able to do what we want to do for our residents. It is all about communities – which is why I stood for LGA chairman," says Cllr Jamieson.



Delivering even greater communities

The new Prime Minister needs to give councils the powers and funding they need and trust them to deliver

I believe passionately in local government. We have many, many good councillors and officers, who are all seeking to do the best for their communities.

I have, like all of you, seen first-hand the good that local government can do. Because who could be better at providing for their local areas than the people who live and work in them? We provide places where people can be safe and warm. We help equip them with the skills they need. We create vibrant economies. We support the most vulnerable. We collect the bins, maintain the parks, run the libraries, fix potholes and shape our communities.

We have continued to do all this during one of the most challenging times for councils. In the last decade councils have lost 60 pence out of every £1 of central government funding. Meanwhile, the number of new child protection investigations has doubled, homelessness has risen 56 per cent, over-85s have increased 31 per cent, and we are expected to deliver 300,000 new homes annually.

Our latest research shows that one-third of councils fear they will run out of money for statutory services by the end of this Parliament (assuming it lasts to 2022).

Yet councils up and down the country continue to do their best to deliver, day after day, for our residents. And this rightly makes me proud to be part of local government, and to be representing all of you who do such a fantastic job.

But councils could do much more if only the powers and funding are devolved to them. To this end, the LGA has launched our 'Councils Can' report, which sets out our key asks for the coming year. It is a call to arms aimed at delivering the very best for local government.

Because no national government can do without us. With Whitehall absorbed with Brexit, councils should be given the responsibility and funding to address long-standing challenges and maximise opportunities.

My key ask for the next government will be – give us the powers, freedoms, flexibilities and funding and we will deliver great communities.

We all agree that powers must be devolved beyond Whitehall, Cardiff Bay, Stormont and Holyrood and rest with local communities instead. That is why we are setting out a bold, positive case for a new localism settlement, underpinned by a Devolution Bill in the next Queen's Speech – a Bill to reignite devolution and empower councils to deliver for their places.

Councils also need more freedoms and flexibilities on locally-raised taxes and fees. Residents should be given the choice: if they want to pay more for extra services, why can't they? This means abolishing the council tax referendum limit, and allowing them to choose.

But it is not just about being able to set council tax rates or deliver the services we need, it is also about being able to generate locally-driven economic growth. So on business rates we want to see councils keep all of the income – not just the three-quarters planned from next year. This control over our areas' economic destinies will be a key part of our campaigning in the months ahead.

Speaking of taking back control, Brexit gives us the chance for more local democracy. It is vital that powers are repatriated to the town hall not Whitehall. Local government must have a greater say on things like state aid, procurement processes and trading standards. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund must come to local government. And as we discuss what should replace the Common Agricultural Policy, rural communities must be a part of the conversation.

These measures will help reassure and prepare for our life outside the EU, helping revitalise our democracy.

While Brexit has featured prominently over the last three years, there is much more that needs to be done. The Government needs to ensure the Spending Review closes the enormous funding gap councils face; providing financial certainty and more investment will encourage innovation.

So, the next year will once again be crucial for us. Working together – councils, their communities and central government – can achieve so much. I really do think the sky is the limit for local government.

Councils can, but will government allow us to? With the Spending Review, we have an opportunity to work with government to ensure councils are properly funded in the years ahead.

We have shown time and again that money invested by local government is well spent.

My message to the new Prime Minister and his government is – trust us to deliver, and give us certainty through the right funding and powers.

This is an edited version of LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson's speech to the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth. You can read it in full at www.local.gov.uk/about/news. The LGA's conference report 'Councils Can', setting out the case for a new localism deal for councils in England, is available at www.local.gov.uk/spending-review-2019



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TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION EXCHANGE

Transforming improvement

As part of its sector-led improvement programme, the LGA has launched a new tool for councils

Over the past year, the LGA has worked with councils and public sector partners to develop a new improvement resource for the sector.

A test ('beta') version of the Transformation and Innovation Exchange was launched at our annual conference in July. It has been developed with councils, for councils, and will create an interactive space where they can come together to share learning and support each other towards continued innovation and transformation.

Using a range of case studies, guidance, tools, performance data, training and other resources, this tool opens up the possibilities for councils to further improve their performance and their services to residents.

The resource will help authorities identify improvement opportunities and useful support, such as peer challenges or wider sector-led resources. It has a particular focus on an understanding of local place and priority setting; leadership of place; financial planning and viability; organisational leadership and governance; and capacity to deliver.

We hope it will encourage internal discussion and give councils the ability to share their experiences with colleagues and between organisations.

The exchange's resources include a self-assessment tool, which will help councils understand their current position and ambition for change by asking a series of questions. The responses will give an indication of the

strengths and areas for further improvement for the organisation as a whole.

It also supports comparisons with other similar organisations and provides suggestions on next steps to progress priority areas of transformation.

The tool is aimed at senior corporate and political leadership teams, and at prompting a discussion before agreeing a consensus response that best represents the whole organisation.

However, anyone in the organisation can complete the self-assessment. One representative should be identified as a 'super-user' who has additional rights to see everyone's contributions.

The self-assessment helps an organisation's ambition for change, whether that is by process redesign to improve delivery; customer-centric design to improve customer experience and outcomes; greater commercialisation; taking a wider community focus to issues such as prevention; or by a mix of these.

For the best results, the LGA encourages widespread take-up and use of the self-assessment tool as this will make the exchange a resource that is constantly growing and keeping pace with changing ideas and priorities.

In this first year, we are keen for councils to try out the resources and provide substantial feedback on their experience of them, which will influence our next steps and help us further improve the Transformation and Innovation Exchange.



"The improvement tool, developed by councils, for councils, is an opportunity for councils to continue on their improvement journey."

"By sharing resources and information, councils can reflect on their own performance at the same time as learning from other council experiences. This process will enable councils to prepare for potential challenges that they will face."

Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board



"Information is power, and enabling councils to better share their expertise and assess their work has the potential to bring huge benefits to the whole sector."

"This is why we've worked with the LGA and others to develop the Transformation and Innovation Exchange tool to help councils to look at what they're doing well and what could be done better."

"By encouraging more collaborative working, the exchange will help councils to deliver high quality services for local people."
Rishi Sunak, Minister for Local Government



To find out more about the Transformation and Innovation Exchange resources and try them out, please visit www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/transformation-and-innovation-exchange.

Email juliet.whitworth@local.gov.uk with your suggestions for improving the tools

In the zone

Councils shared their innovative ideas on tackling local issues at the LGA's annual conference



Councillor Peter Fleming
is Chairman of the
LGA's Improvement and
Innovation Board

Every year at the LGA's annual conference, the Innovation Zone features some of the most creative work going on in councils to improve the lives of our local communities.

'Taking the plunge' was the theme of this year's zone, with more than 40 presentations and interactive sessions from councils and other organisations that have not been afraid to try new approaches or promote brave and innovative ideas that have paid off.

Sponsored by Newton, the zone's three-day programme was packed, highlighting not only the innovations, but how councils can develop positive, proactive cultures that support and encourage ideas, testing, and learning from their experiences.

For example, Darlington City Council worked with the community interest company Blue Cabin to help Harewood Hill Lodge, a short break service for disabled children, become a creative care home - by training staff to be Arts Award advisers and act as mentors for the young people.

The children have the opportunity to develop creatively, explore the arts, share their achievements and gain a recognised qualification. This also helped the staff to improve their relationships with the young people and contributed to an improvement of their Ofsted judgement to 'outstanding'.

Elsewhere in the zone, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and partners Social Engine described how they have tried to reduce accidental house fires - using behavioural



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"Presentations were from those not afraid to try new approaches or promote brave ideas that have paid off"

insights, or 'nudge' theory. They have targeted younger people in Brighton, using humour and a light touch, to understand why people behave the way do and offering incentives to change behaviour. The latter include food takeaway vouchers to discourage young people from cooking at home after a night out.

Our guests from Zagreb, Croatia, shared the story of the The Ilica Project: Q'ART, which is breathing life into urban spaces of the city. The previously derelict high street, which faced issues of anti-social behaviour, now hosts a plethora of entertaining cultural events for locals and visitors to enjoy, ranging from music and literature to dance, film and art.

One of the most well attended sessions explored councillors' personal experiences on the topic of 'The Second Shift: women, parents and caring responsibilities in local government'. This was an honest and interactive discussion session for councillors and officers of all genders who explored the challenges of combining caring responsibilities with the pressure of life in local government. It also introduced the LGA toolkit, 'Twenty-first century councils: enabling and supporting women, parents and carers to stand and serve in local government', sparking practical ideas and actions to take back to various authorities.

And in Birmingham, the council and its partner agencies have come together to take a 'whole system' approach to reimagining and redesigning how they deliver joined-up support for older people. They want the city to be a great place in which to grow old, while

improving service quality and productivity and achieving measurable financial savings. So they are testing different combinations of operational processes and staffing structures to help older people achieve their maximum level of independence as quickly as possible.

These examples formed just part of our varied programme. Other subjects covered ranged from lessons from Leeds for recycling 'on the go', to Bracknell Forest's partnership with Dogs for Good, which is bringing animal-assisted intervention into mainstream social care provision (pictured).

The Innovation Zone was also the venue for the announcement of the winner of the 10th Local Government Challenge (see p7), and the launch of our new improvement tool for councils, the Transformation and Innovation Exchange (see p12).

I hope you found something in the zone to inspire the work you do in your local area, and look forward to finding out about your council's innovative practice at next year's annual conference in Harrogate, from 30 June to 2 July 2020.

i Presentations from the Innovation Zone are being uploaded to www.local.gov.uk/events/past-event-presentations, and the LGA's website has a whole section dedicated to council good practice case studies, see www.local.gov.uk/case-studies

Protecting local democracy

Councillors at the LGA's annual conference detailed the rising tide of online and offline abuse they face as they go about their business

From online racist and sexist abuse and death threats, to damaged cars and bullying of councillors' children at school – those holding public office are experiencing an increased level of public harassment.

That was the experience detailed by councillors and officers at a workshop on protecting local democracy held at the LGA's recent annual conference.

Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Leadership Board, who chaired the workshop, admitted she had come off Twitter because "it's so toxic".

"Everyone is agreeing with me that it's getting worse. It's affecting everyone in public life, and it will have an impact on people who may be thinking about standing for local and national government and, as a result, are changing their minds," she said.

"It's really important that we start to talk about the value of what we do and how it isn't acceptable that some people are being treated in such an abysmal way."

She and others were encouraged not to give up on online democracy by Seyi Akiwowo, Founder and Executive Director of Glitch (pictured), an advocacy group committed to ending online abuse.



(From left) Seyi Akiwowo, Executive Director of Glitch, with Cllr Dave Stewart, Cllr Ruth Dombey, Cllr Hannah Dalton and Cllr Debbie Wilcox

Ms Akiwowo, a former Newham councillor, said: "We all need to play our part in reclaiming our online spaces – in seeing online spaces like our parks, community centres and high streets – because, at the moment, they are being weaponised, hijacked. It is now a threat to our democratic engagement, our democracy, so we all have to play our part in claiming it back."

She advised delegates to find out about their rights online and learn how to stay safe, citing the example of Vicky Ford MP (Con, Chelmsford), who has 'rules of engagement' set out on her Facebook page.

"If you break one of those rules, she blocks you from her Facebook page because sending her abuse is not democracy. Sending abuse is not healthy discussion and debate."

Cllr Debbie Wilcox, Chair of the Welsh LGA and Leader of Newport Council, cited figures showing that, while more than 26 per cent of councillors in Wales had experienced abuse or harassment from the local community, nearly 20 per cent reported it within their own council and 10 per cent within their own local group or party.

"As much as we need to take a stand against harassment and intimidation from

outside, we must take a zero tolerance approach to it from within too. What behaviours, cultures and standards do we set within our own chambers and with our own political groups?" she said.

Cllr Hannah Dalton, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, also highlighted the damaging effect of "tribal" politics.

"We seem to have lost the middle ground... It's become less about debate or opinion and now is more about taking a position, holding onto it for dear life, and even when you don't have the facts you carry on," she said.

There are no simple solutions to complex problems of intimidation and social cohesion. But councils and councillors need to "set the example" and to "constantly take the time to understand our local communities and the challenges they face", she added.

Cllr Dave Stewart, a former police officer, told delegates that, when asked about making tough decisions as Leader of Isle of Wight Council, he used to say: "No-one dies in a council."

"I now question saying that because I'm seeing people who are being put in threatening situations. It's horrible."



Intimidating behaviour

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New guidance has been published to help councillors and candidates standing for election who are abused and threatened as they undertake their democratic roles

An increasing number of councillors and candidates are being subjected to abuse, threats and public intimidation, and the growth of social media has offered a largely anonymous route for individuals and groups who want to engage in such activity.

The LGA and Welsh LGA are concerned that this is undermining the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate. It is also putting people off standing as local councillors.

This is of concern to us as organisations representing local government, as we want to encourage more people to stand as councillors. We need numerous and diverse candidates and councillors to represent our numerous and diverse local communities, ensuring that local decision-making is robust and well-informed.

While debate and having different views is all part of a healthy democracy, abuse, public intimidation and threats are designed to undermine democratic decision-making by generating fear in those who represent local democracy.

As a first step in addressing these issues, the LGA and the WLGA have launched a guide for councillors on how to handle intimidation. This gives advice on the way to respond to a threat; personal safety and security; relevant legislation; managing social media; and setting personal standards of public debate.

This guide is not designed to alarm, but to suggest some steps you and your council can

take to protect you as a person in a public position, and how to respond should an incident occur.

In addition to producing this guide, the LGA and WLGA are planning further work and will continue to engage with national governments and other agencies to address the issue of public intimidation and its impact on local democracy.

This guide does not take the place of legal advice or personalised advice from the police on offences or personal security. If you are concerned about your personal safety or security as a result of abuse, harassment or intimidation, you should contact your local police force.

The guide sets out five **'SHIELD'** principles:

- **S**-afeguard – where possible, protect yourself online and in person. Set out in any online biography that abusive, threatening or intimidatory communications or actions will be reported. Use security features, take personal safety precautions and have a point of contact in the local police for any incidents.
- **H**-elp – ensure you are safe before you take further action and get help if needed. If the threat is not immediate, contact your council's member support officers or someone with that role from your political group.
- **I**-nform – you can inform the individual or group that you consider their communication or action intimidating, threatening or abusive. A growing 'digital citizenship' movement encourages the labelling of poor online conduct as a way of challenging such behaviour.
- **E**-vidence – if you consider that a communication or action is intimidatory, threatening or abusive, gather evidence such as photos, recordings, screenshots, letters, emails, and details of witnesses.
- **L**-et people know – report incidents to your social media platform, council officers, party officials, lead members and the police, depending on their nature and severity.
- **D**-ecide – determine whether you want to continue receiving communications from an individual or group and block or mute them on social media where appropriate. Decide if you want to pursue any action to inhibit the ability of an individual or group to approach you.



The LGA and Welsh LGA's **'Councillors' guide to handling intimidation'** is available free at www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-intimidation

The freedom to lead local places

The LGA's Post-Brexit England Commission has launched its final report on the issues and opportunities facing non-metropolitan areas



Councillor Mark Hawthorne is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board

As Westminster and Whitehall continue to grapple with the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the ability of our residents to get on in life will depend on tackling challenges much closer to home.

The provision of a local bus service, the sustainability of a local high street, or how easy it is to buy or rent a home close to your family and friends, are just some of the concerns facing councils and their residents in non-metropolitan areas. Challenges such as these cannot be solved from a desk in Whitehall and nor should they be.

In February 2018, with the national devolution agenda at a standstill and Westminster focused on agreeing a plan for Brexit, the LGA's People and Places Board launched the Post-Brexit England Commission to explore the issues and opportunities facing the towns, villages and communities of non-metropolitan England.

Over the past 18 months, we have hosted a series of roadshows across eight regions talking to local people and representatives of councils, businesses and industry on their future ambitions and the local policy levers needed to help them achieve them.

At each roadshow, we heard from people keen to leverage their areas' unique strengths and make the most of the opportunities of the coming decade for their communities and local economies (see case studies, right).

In the South East, participants wanted greater control over infrastructure investment to ensure efficient freight access to ports and onto the global market. In the South West, representatives highlighted the opportunity a domestic successor to the Common Agricultural Policy could present to re-thinking farming and land management in the UK's largest region. In the North East, attendees outlined how a locally designed UK Shared Prosperity Fund could help local partners better address regional inequality.

As well as evidencing these distinct perspectives across rural areas, our roadshows revealed a range of common concerns over which councils have limited or no control.

Often referenced was unreliable mobile connectivity making it difficult to access services on the go; a disjointed skills system

making it harder for businesses to fill local vacancies; and a sub-national export support system not set up to assist micro-businesses that drive rural economies.

As a consequence, many are frustrated at the top-down process of national decision-making standing in their way and limiting their ambitions to press ahead and secure a better future for their residents.

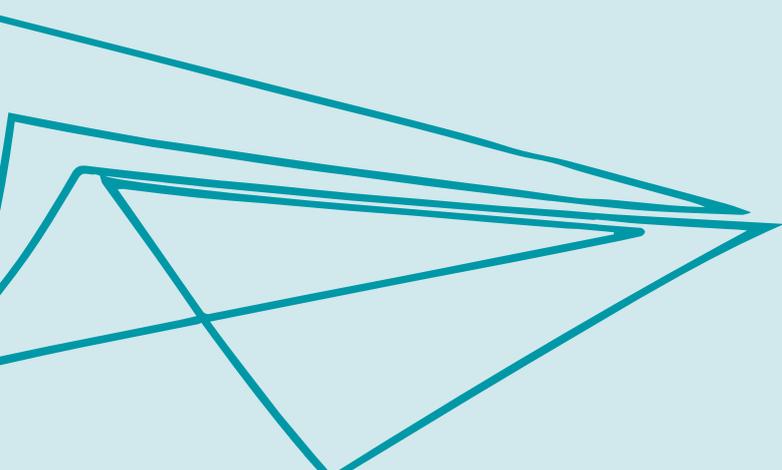
In light of our findings, the final report of the Post-Brexit England Commission calls on government to give us the freedom to lead our local areas and tackle these challenges head on.

Our recommendations set out how we can grow more productive and inclusive economies, shape future investment in rural areas to meet the needs of local people, and create better connected places. Our message is clear: if we are backed by government, councils have the potential to do even more to support their places to achieve their ambitions.

As my chairmanship of the LGA's People and Places Board comes to an end, I would like to thank my fellow members for their hard work and the dedication they have shown to fighting their residents' corner. We have been united in our determination to improve the lives of our residents and ensure the views of those outside cities are heard.

I wish them, and the new chairman of the board, every success in continuing to ensure that the voices of our great rural communities and coastal towns are heard in government and Whitehall.

i 'The future of non-metropolitan England: the freedom to lead local places', the final report of the LGA's Post-Brexit England Commission, can be downloaded for free, along with the commission's interim report, from www.local.gov.uk/devoforall



Developing a Leicestershire-China strategy

Leicestershire County Council has worked closely with Leicester City Council, local universities, colleges and other key partners to strengthen international links with China. This work builds on a historic twinning agreement between Leicestershire and Sichuan that celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2018.

The 30th anniversary also marked the launch of the Leicestershire-China Strategy, which identified four key pillars the county will use to build sustainable connections with partner regions in China. These are education, people-to-people (culture), sport and tourism.

Local leaders have established the 'Leicestershire China Forum', a network of key stakeholders from the region who come together to guide and drive the Leicestershire-China Strategy. Bringing partners together has enabled them to share knowledge and build relationships, which has helped to foster an approach to China that is producing positive outcomes for the partners involved as well as the wider region.

A key element of this work has included supporting local businesses to export to China. In response to challenges faced by local businesses, the councils secured European funding to establish a China Ambassador programme through which Chinese students based in Leicester and Leicestershire help local businesses to develop links with China. At the same time, it has presented a fantastic opportunity for Chinese students to gain first-hand work experience with local companies.

Mobile connectivity in North Yorkshire

Across North Yorkshire, residents have outlined their frustrations with the poor levels of mobile connectivity in the places they live and work. As a result, North Yorkshire County Council has taken action to improve coverage for its residents.

The council held discussions with mobile network operators (MNOs) to find out about the barriers restricting rural coverage and identified several local issues within the council's remit that it could take forward.

However, following deeper exploration, the council also found that local mobile coverage data, provided by MNOs, is unrepresentative of the realities on the ground in some areas of the county. Where coverage is supposedly of high quality, residents report being unable to make calls or establish a signal.

To gain a more accurate picture of the quality of local mobile connectivity, the council had to commission its own independent coverage survey. It revealed that while 65 per cent of areas had coverage from at least one MNO, few areas had consistent coverage from all four.

There were also several places with no coverage ('not spots') owing to challenges with local topography and rural sparsity, meaning they were not commercially viable for MNOs to cover.

Following the survey, the council explored the case for using public subsidy to build a mast in a 'not spot' area for MNOs to use. It asked all MNOs to share their future mast build plans to ensure there would be no overlap with future commercial roll-out.

Thanks to the public nature of the Government's new Emergency Services Network (ESN), built by EE and the Home Office, the council was able to establish those areas that would be covered by EE. However, other MNOs were unwilling to share their future commercial roll-out plans or even their current mast locations.

The council secured capital funding from the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership to commission the building of a mast. However, no MNO has yet come forward to use the proposed infrastructure.

“Budgets are being cut, so supporting people to live independently is getting harder.”

Chichester District Council

Jane Dodsworth
Director of Residents' Services

WE PARTNER WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO SOLVE YOUR TELECARE WORRIES.

With decreasing budgets and increasing demand we can help you get the most out of your telecare. We can remove your worries about future digital investment and give your residents the service they deserve.

Exclusive telecare provider to 



PPP Taking Care

The new risk landscape for digital telecare

With the 2020s soon upon us, caring for our elderly and vulnerable has never been more complex. If you're working in a local authority, that means big challenges ahead. How will you plan for more demand without more resources? How will you harness new technologies to help people live at home for longer? And how will you meet greater expectations from loved ones and neighbours?

The challenges will only get tougher. According to the Office for National Statistics, the number of people over 85 years old will double over the next 20 years. Four in five of them will have two or more serious health conditions.

Dealing with the wellbeing of vulnerable people, the risk of getting things wrong is high. You urgently need new solutions, to help ease the pressure and deliver the support needed. You also need partners to help you make the right technology choices in this new risk landscape. Without this, you'll fall behind.

Investing in telecare

The ever-increasing demand for care in the home (or care-home) is driving costs sky-high, and it's harder than ever to recruit into social care roles. This means that telecare has a vital role. It helps the elderly stay in their own homes – alerting emergency services if someone is injured or unwell. If it's a less serious problem, telecare can alert family and friends. Unnecessary call-outs or hospital visits can be avoided, with everyday reassurance that help is at hand.

Many local authorities still manage their own telecare operation but it's hard to make most alarm and monitoring centres efficient, because they're operating at a small scale, so they are exposed to increasing costs, changes in staff availability and any number of nasty surprises. With resources already stretched, it's also common to see

little or no investment in new technology.

That's where PPP Taking Care comes in. We are already delivering telecare to thousands of UK customers and, with the switch to digital as the UK's telecommunications is upgraded, we'll be right at the centre of this change.

Trusted by partners in the public sector

Backed by the AXA group, PPP Taking Care are trusted to provide Age UK's telecare services, nationwide. Now, we also support 21,000 local authority customers across 10 district councils in Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire – as well as many housing associations in the area.

More than 1,000 new users sign-up to PPP Taking Care each month, and last year we responded to 20,000 active calls from our home alarms.

Linking up wearable technology

We expect to see big improvements in devices like pendant alarms and fall detectors, linking them to other monitored devices. Wearable technology, such as GPS-enabled watches that track heart rate, will become common. Smart sensors will be built into the home to monitor daily routines and an individual's health, with AI used to predict problems before they occur.

It will be hard for most local authorities to deliver products and services like these, but it is easier to realise these benefits with a specialist partner like PPP Taking Care. We're a service company, not a technology company, so we're unbiased and can find the right solution for you. We're not chained to any particular manufacturer, so we can audit your equipment and advise what's needed to remain operational throughout these changes.

Transforming telecare

Done properly, the move from analogue to digital means much more than replacing old technology. We're confident that it will transform telecare. It will bring down the costs of domiciliary care and care home admissions. It will reduce the use of healthcare services, and help vulnerable people stay at home for longer.

At PPP Taking Care, digital migration is at the forefront of our plans. Let us help you with this transformation.



For more information, please visit www.ppptakingcare.co.uk/localgov or call 0800 028 0638

Celebrating 100 years of council housing

Councils can help build more homes to address the housing crisis – if they are given the powers they need to do so

It is 100 years since the Addison Act was introduced, which enabled councils to become large-scale builders of social housing.

To celebrate the anniversary, the LGA is looking at how councils built 5.5 million homes over the last century and why council building has declined over the last 20 years. We will also be looking to the future and exploring the ways councils can build many more homes again.

Council housing has been essential

in helping the most vulnerable in society gain access to a home and has helped to prevent homelessness. In the 1950s, at the height of council building, local authorities built on average around 147,000 homes a year.

Today, that figure is down to 1,400 social homes a year, because of a number of challenging circumstances, while homelessness is rising. Currently, councils are housing more than 200,000 homeless people in temporary accommodation with many



more people living on the streets. There are 1.2 million households on the social housing waiting list.

The country needs a renaissance in council house building to boost supply, help families struggling to meet housing costs, provide good quality homes to rent, reduce



New homes in Cardiff

In the centenary year of the Addison Act, Cardiff Council has outlined an ambitious £280 million plan to deliver 2,000 new council homes. It is also prioritising building housing for older people, to provide flexible accommodation that allows residents to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible, and to encourage older residents to downsize.

Cardiff Council has identified a number of routes for delivering new homes. These include working in partnership with developers; using open market buy-backs; working in partnership with housing associations to push developer package deals; converting council-owned buildings into homes; and using innovative approaches such as refurbishing shipping containers for temporary accommodation.

Its 'new build' programme predominantly builds new homes on council-owned brownfield sites and will help in the regeneration of already established housing estates.



Why council housing is important

Debra Thomas (pictured, above, with her son James) has three children, one of whom is severely autistic.

The family recently moved into one of Selby District Council's new social homes in Byram. The development is part of a long-term £22 million investment in new affordable homes across the area by the council.

"This has been absolutely life changing for us as a family," she said.

"We've been living in the village for nearly 20 years so to get a four-bedroom house in the local area was amazing.

"It's especially important for our youngest son, James. Because of his autism, James really needs support when dealing with change. Moving to a new home so close by has meant that we've been able to remain really settled."



homelessness and tackle the waiting lists many councils have.

Almost every council in the country is involved in building homes through many different routes (see Cardiff case study, below left), and many have ambitions to build at scale again, but

much more can be done to support them.

After years of campaigning, the Government announced the removal of the housing revenue account borrowing cap last year. Scrapping it delivers a game-changing opportunity for many councils to deliver much needed homes.

“The country needs a renaissance in council house building to boost supply”

We want the Government to go further, and work with councils on an ambition to build 100,000 council homes a year. This would include a call for the devolution of Right to Buy to allow councils to set discounts and keep 100 per cent of sales receipts.

On 31 July, the LGA will be celebrating 100 years of council housing on social media. We want as many of you to get involved as possible and share what you are doing to celebrate council housing in your area.

To get involved use **#CouncilHousing100** on Twitter. We will be sharing your posts. To see more about our celebrations, visit www.local.gov.uk/council-housing-100

Understanding local housing markets

A new report commissioned by the LGA provides councils with useful advice and data to help inform local housing policies

Councils have a range of duties and wider interests in respect of ensuring that their local housing markets function effectively.

This includes making sure there is affordable, appropriate, good-quality housing for everyone in the community within successful and sustainable places.

‘Understanding local housing markets’, commissioned by the LGA from Residential Analysts, aims to give councils a better understanding of their local housing market and to help them make better policy decisions.

The report is timely as more local authorities are looking at directly delivering new homes, alone or in partnership; or embedding housing in wider strategies for the health and wellbeing of individuals and places.

The main report is accompanied by individual reports and maps for every local authority in England, as well as comparisons with national data. The intention is for these to help diagnose and explain some of the issues contributing to housing challenges in local areas.

There is no simple, single housing market. As the report shows, there are multiple markets defined by location, property type, tenure and price. Housing need and demand within these markets is perhaps even more varied, driven by factors including demographics, wealth, employment and migration.

To illustrate, 5.2 per cent of residential properties in Cornwall were registered as second homes in 2018 – significantly higher than the England average. In Canterbury, the population grew 21.2 per cent between 2001 and 2017, compared with 12.5 per cent nationally, with 20-year-olds making the largest single contribution to that growth. And in Harrogate, the median ratio of house prices to local earnings is 8.9, compared with the English average of 8.0 – suggesting

high house prices are likely to be an issue.

The exact mix of housing issues will vary across every local authority with each one facing its own unique challenges. Councils are best placed to know and understand their local circumstances and identify any actions required to resolve them. Therefore, rather than seeking to diagnose the challenges from afar, the report aims to help guide councils in determining the issues and challenges facing their local area.

In addition to the tailored reports and maps for individual local authorities, the main report covers affordability, availability and suitability of housing, and drills down into various issues within these – such as high house prices, lack of new supply, and weak demographic demand.

The report also points out the dangers of misdiagnosing problems through the use of data, by highlighting situations where this might occur. It recognises that councils may need to gather additional local data in specific circumstances.

● ‘Understanding local housing markets’ is available to download for free at www.local.gov.uk/publications

Care in crisis

Brexit is no excuse for the continuing and lengthy delay to publication of the Government's Green Paper on adult social care, the LGA has warned



Councillor Ian Hudspeth is Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board



“Reshaping care and support to be the best it can be is in everybody's interests”

It is now approaching two and a half years since the Government first committed to publishing a Green Paper on the future of adult social care, in the 2017 Spring Budget.

We have, of course, been through a unique period politically, with Brexit taking up a considerable amount of time. But that is no excuse for such inaction in the face of the growing crisis impacting upon everyone with care and support needs.

Our adult social care system faces a £3.6 billion funding gap by 2025 and is creaking under further, unsustainable pressure, preventing many people from living their lives to the full. One-off injections of funding over the past year, while helpful, will only continue the short-term approach of incremental handouts that do little to help efforts to plan for the medium to long term.

Following yet another delay to the Green Paper 12 months ago, the LGA decided to produce its own version – ‘The lives we want to lead’ – drawing on the work that it and many others had already conducted.

This was written in only five weeks, with its launch kick-starting a two-month consultation period involving five focus groups across the country, more than 1,700 members of the public polled on key questions, and more than

540 individuals and organisations submitting their responses.

We published our follow-up report, setting out our findings and key recommendations, two months later. Our new publication, launched at the LGA's annual conference in early July, reflects on another year of inertia and inaction from government.

‘One year on: the LGA green paper for adult social care and wellbeing’ gives perspectives on two broad issues from people who use services and those close to the system; what life is like for people who experience care and support, and on the debate about the future of adult social care and where that might go next.

They provide a stark reminder of why reshaping care and support to be the best it can be is in everybody's interests, why further delays to the Government's Green Paper cannot continue, and why we are calling for it to be published before Parliament rises in September for the party conferences.

The Green Paper should include a proper consultation on funding options and be accompanied by a government-led and sector-wide campaign to raise awareness of what adult social care and support is, why it matters in its own right and what it could and should be with the right funding and investment.

We have also reiterated our offer to write to relevant politicians, inviting them to take part in cross-party talks hosted by us to find the right way forward on this issue, at a time when cooperation is needed now more than ever.

Finally, and as an absolute minimum, the Government should use the forthcoming Spending Review to close the projected £3.6 billion social care funding gap, to meet both immediate and future core pressures.

The increase in funding needed to achieve this is similar to the 3.4 per cent annual real terms increase given to the NHS, although the total actual amount would be much less. For comparison, the extra £20.5 billion a year by 2023/24 for the NHS is more than the entire annual net spend on adult social care, which was £15.33 billion in 2017/18.

The LGA, like many others, stands ready to work with the Government to help continue the much-needed debate about the future of this vital public service.



You can download ‘**One year on: the LGA green paper for adult social care and wellbeing**’ at www.local.gov.uk/publications

comment

Tackling the root causes of obesity



Professor Jim McManus (left) is Vice-President of the Association of Directors of Public Health and **Jamie Blackshaw** is Obesity and Health Weight Team Leader at Public Health England



This set of tools, delivered and researched by Leeds Beckett University, is the product of a number of local authorities piloting and testing it across the country, and was discussed at the LGA's 'Healthy weight, healthy future: making child obesity

everybody's business' conference in July.

The tools include a practical 'how to' guide, which enables local councils to start creating their own local whole-systems approaches to promoting healthy weight, aligning with a 'health in all policies' approach.

The guide is designed to support councils and their local systems partners, including NHS, business, communities and the voluntary sector. It translates aspects of systems science and learning from national and international experience. It can help councils, whatever their starting point, to think about and deliver

action to promote a healthier community.

But there's a second, equally important story here – of co-production. Local authorities were pivotal in developing and testing the whole approach. Four original pilot councils – a county, a unitary, a London borough and a shire district – co-developed the guide.

Seven further councils tested it and many others reviewed it and gave feedback. An advisory group provided expert support throughout the programme. Our thanks go to all these partners for their invaluable time and expertise.

This is a new way of working for some places and it requires commitment, drive and, importantly, local political buy-in. Complex issues, like obesity, require sustained and systemic action from systems leaders. This is essential to support implementation and enable councils to work differently and test new approaches that work for local people.

There are different interpretations of what systems thinking is and different approaches to doing it. This is just the start of the journey and together, we need to continue to test, learn, adapt and evaluate the approach.

When we think about helping people achieve a healthy weight, it's vital to understand that there is no one single or simple approach.

Helping people achieve or maintain a healthier weight is complex. Most of the adult population in England is overweight or obese and, while the majority of the younger generation remain a healthy weight, it is not the case for every child – particularly those living in our more deprived areas.

Individuals and families are the heartbeats of local communities and this gives local government an important role. We can only tackle obesity if it becomes everybody's business and is prioritised and embedded in everything we do.

The root causes of obesity exist all around us – where we live, work and play, and where the food available and the built environment often make it difficult to make healthier lifestyle choices.

A growing body of evidence shows the need for a 'whole systems' approach to these issues. Obesity is a complex and multifaceted challenge, which is why we need to create environments and places that promote healthier lives. But how do councils put whole-systems working into practice?

The focal point of the latest edition of Public Health England's (PHE) professional digital resource, *Health Matters*, is a newly published guide on taking a whole systems approach to obesity. This guide is the culmination of four years of co-development work with local authorities, PHE, the Association of Directors of Public Health, and the LGA.



The latest edition of PHE's *Health Matters* was due to be published on 25 July and focuses on taking a whole systems approach to obesity, see www.gov.uk

Councils need pounds, not plasters

“The greatest challenge to local government continues to be chronic underfunding”



Councillor Nick Forbes
CBE is Leader of the
LGA's Labour Group

The LGA's annual conference 2019 in Bournemouth was a great opportunity to meet Labour councillors from across England and Wales, and to discuss the challenges and opportunities they have faced over the past year.

Labour Group members were delighted to have pushed the wider LGA to declare a climate emergency, reflecting our real determination to face up to the responsibility of taking action to limit global warming before it is too late.

We also shared brilliant examples of Labour councils' fresh approaches to providing quality services (see our '100 more innovations by Labour in power', at www.local.gov.uk/lga-labour).

Everyone I spoke to agreed that the

greatest challenge to local government continues to be chronic underfunding, with 60p of every £1 the Labour Government had provided in 2010 now lost.

The brief appearance of Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt at conference (both of whom were sadly unable to visit the LGA Labour stand) was a reminder of the damage done by the Conservative Party since 2010.

Neither has made any signal that he will change course on austerity in local government or make a serious attempt to tackle poverty, even while outdoing each other to offer tax cuts for people who are already well off.

Despite our determination to deliver for residents even in the face of austerity, many councils are now at breaking point. That's why

we launched our 'Pounds Not Plasters' campaign at conference, distributing blue Tory sticking plasters to delegates with the message that local councils need sustainable funding, not more short-term 'sticking plaster' measures.

Not just a gimmick, the sticking plasters campaign highlights our real concerns about the impending cliff edge in council funding, with councils left in the dark about what their budgets will look like in 2020.

Labour leaders are united in their determination to hold the new Prime Minister to account, and are writing to him to demand that he recognises the importance of local government by providing a genuine and sustainable long-term investment. Councils need pounds, not plasters.

Chairman's comment

Preparing for the future



Councillor James Jamieson
is Chairman of the LGA

It is a great honour to be the new Chairman of the LGA, and I enjoyed meeting many of you at our annual conference in Bournemouth in early July.

I am deeply honoured that you have put your trust in me, and I commit to doing my utmost to work on your behalf for the benefit of our residents, which at the end of the day is why we are all here.

It is also an honour to be following in my predecessor's rather large footsteps. Lord Porter – Gary to most of us – has been a giant of local government for

18 years, dedicating his last four to being Chairman of the LGA.

His legacy speaks for itself. His work to ensure councils can build and provide safe homes is perhaps what will have the greatest impact on our communities. He has made a tremendous personal commitment to building safety so that a tragedy such as Grenfell can never happen again. And he campaigned long and hard for the abolition of the housing borrowing cap, so councils can now build homes again.

Gary has also been a champion of cross-party working. I truly believe that there is more that unites us than divides us, and that we are far more potent when we work together to deliver for our local communities.

It is a tumultuous time politically. The challenges facing councils are, frankly, unprecedented. Under my chairmanship, the LGA will continue to be here for all of you, supporting the brilliant work you do and working with you to prepare for the future by learning from each other, sharing best practice and – from time to time – challenging one another.

Because we all know that councils can and want to do more in the years ahead. Only councils have the local knowledge and expertise to understand the needs, the opportunities, and ambitions of their areas.

Only councils deliver results that build great communities.

“There is more that unites us than divides us – we are far more potent when we work together to deliver for our local communities”

group leaders' comments



Councillor Izzi Seccombe
OBE is Leader of the LGA's
Conservative Group

A strong voice for local government

“The group has ensured that the views of our councillors have featured prominently during the Conservative leadership election”

I am privileged to have been elected as the new LGA Conservative Group Leader. I would like to thank my predecessor, Cllr James Jamieson, the new LGA Chairman, for his hard work over the past year and wish him success in his new role.

Working with Cllr John Fuller, our Deputy Group Leader, the newly elected LGA Conservative Group Executive, and our members on the LGA's governance bodies, I will make every effort over the coming year to ensure that we provide a strong voice for Conservative local government within the LGA and regularly update you on all that is happening.

The LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth was a huge success. The highlight was undoubtedly the leadership hustings involving Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt, which included plenty of questions from those attending.

Having previously hosted a hustings for group leaders in June, the LGA Conservative Group has ensured that the views of our councillors featured prominently during this leadership election.

Other leading speakers at the conference were our Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock, and Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes. We were also delighted to welcome Housing and Homelessness Minister Heather Wheeler to our group meeting.

It was great to meet so many of you in Bournemouth and I look forward to seeing many more of you over the coming year.



Councillor Howard Sykes
MBE is Leader of the LGA's
Liberal Democrat Group

Councils 'cannot be funded on the cheap'

“Government continues to ask us to do more and more and gives us less and less to do it with”

“Councillors are the hardest-working elected representatives in our country.”

These words, from Jo Swinson MP, the Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader who addressed the LGA's annual conference in Bournemouth, were music to my ears.

It's a shame there aren't more Westminster politicians who say things like this, instead of treating our sector with such contempt.

The Government continues to ask us to do more and more and gives us less and less to do it with. The Secretary of State failed yet again to give us any idea when we will see the Spending Review.

As Jo said: “The longer we wait for the Government to get its act together on this, the harder it is for councils up and down the country to plan properly. Communities will suffer. With their indecision and delay, they're making what is already a difficult task ever more challenging.”

I couldn't agree more.

Funding for local government has become a political football. This must be the next Prime Minister's top priority.

The Liberal Democrats are clear what local government means to us. Quality public services are what the public wants – the debate needs to be about how they are paid for. The honest answer is via taxation.

All the parties across local government must stay united – urban, rural, north, south – we cannot be funded on the cheap.



Councillor Marianne Overton
MBE is Leader of the LGA's
Independent Group

Making the changes our planet needs

“The influence of our group has meant more money for our councils and policy changes to improve services”

In my first column since April, because of local, European and group elections, I start with huge congratulations to our members who did so well in May and formally welcome all of our new members to the LGA Independent Group.

I would also like to thank you for your support in our recent group elections. I am honoured to serve such a brilliant group of elected councillors.

The LGA is here to support our members to thrive, develop new skills and be the best they can be, while also influencing government with some impressive results. Our lead members, peers and group office are here to help, so do get in touch. Through the LGA you can have a huge impact – locally, nationally and across Europe.

The influence of our group has meant more money for our councils, policy changes to improve local services and influence on key agendas such as housing and infrastructure, social care and climate change. We will keep this pressure up as the new Prime Minister comes in and Brexit talks continue.

The LGA's recent support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and adding its name to the 100-plus councils that have declared a climate emergency, is very welcome. Agreeing a motion at council is one thing but we must act now if we're going to make the changes our planet urgently needs.



For more information about the LGA's political groups, see www.local.gov.uk

Building beautiful



Ben Bolgar is Senior Director at the Prince's Foundation

I've been campaigning for higher standards in housing for over 20 years. It's been a long road with a fair amount of resistance along the way, but I finally feel we may now be getting somewhere.

The Prince's Foundation recently published 'Housing Britain: a call to action'. Based on the overwhelmingly positive reception it has received, it is clear that we are not alone in our desire to see more thought and care taken when building new homes.

Our President, HRH The Prince of Wales, wrote his 'Vision for Britain: a personal view on architecture' 30 years ago and many of its principles still hold true. For example, the idea that if you try to fit in with your local surroundings and complement what is already there, using the same local styles and materials, then the local community will be more amenable and positive about the new development on their doorstep.

Planners need to include local communities right at the start through proper consultation, rather than just lip service after land has been allocated. In fact, last year's Policy Exchange report, 'Building more, building beautiful', found that 85 per cent of those surveyed wanted new homes that either fit with their traditional surroundings or are identical to the homes already there.

In the past 30 years, so many successful projects have sprung up triumphantly across the UK. Inspirational pioneers have managed to create homes that are well-served, part of



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“Even an old BP oil refinery site can be developed into beautiful homes, successful businesses and a state-of-the-art university campus”

walkable, mixed-use communities and are beautiful and ecologically sound.

Just one example of this is at Poundbury in Dorset, where landowners have worked seamlessly with planning departments and developers to create a long-term and self-sustaining community that now ploughs £100 million back into the local economy through goods and services every year.

Elsewhere, Neath Port Talbot Council, property developer St Modwen, The Prince's Foundation and Swansea University have proven that even an old BP oil refinery site can be developed into beautiful homes (pictured), successful businesses and a state-of-the-art university campus. The business district at Coed Darcy now provides 1,500 jobs, and the university has secured 183 contracts so far. This type of investment is incredible.

These projects have been developed with an understanding that comes not only from

years of learned experience, but also from bravery to bring creative solutions and a willingness often to take on a level of financial burden at the beginning before house prices rise as the area becomes more desirable.

If more landowners could take this approach, we might just find the wider market takes our lead and the face of UK housing is changed for the better. Our 14-point call to action in 'Housing Britain' is a very clear list of standards that has been honed through the years to yield results. With this, we intend to provide a common language with which to approach new projects.

What I am getting at is that this effective reference guide can be used by anyone in the industry. In the long term, it will result in better buildings, thriving communities and healthier lives. I hope this has inspired those all-important planning departments to take a harder look at the proposals landing on their desks.



The Prince's Foundation is a charity that supports people to make the most of their community. For more information, and to view 'Housing Britain: a call to action' in full, please visit www.princes-foundation.org

Climate emergency declarations – what next?



Richard Rugg is Managing Director, Programmes and Innovation, at the Carbon Trust

We are facing a climate emergency. More than 100 local authorities in the UK alone have already made this declaration, many assigning ambitious new targets. The UK Government recognises the need for greater climate action, with a 2050 net zero target now enshrined in law.

Scottish and Welsh governments have also adopted higher levels of ambition.

Having declared a climate emergency, what now? While agreeing there is an urgent challenge, many local authorities lack the technical resources, practical skills and, crucially, the appropriate financing to act.

They want to take a lead and to transform – some even setting local net zero goals – yet lack capacity to deliver this change.

In the early 2000s, the Carbon Trust, supported by the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments, helped public bodies to develop carbon management plans, setting ambitious yet achievable carbon reduction targets for their own estates and operational activities, underpinned by investment and delivery plans.

“Councils want to take a lead and to transform – some even setting local net zero goals – yet lack capacity to deliver this change”

Over a 10-year period, we worked with hundreds of public bodies, developing structured plans to drive emissions reductions, simultaneously achieving significant operational cost savings.

Alongside several other mechanisms and policies, this drove a tangible reduction in public sector carbon emissions, contributing important progress towards the UK's world-leading carbon targets. This was also particularly successful in getting climate

change onto senior management agendas, rather than leaving it solely as a focus for energy and environment teams.

Following the financial crisis and stringent austerity measures, however, the public sector was forced to narrow its focus on delivering core services. Many staff who had responsibility for energy efficiency and sustainability have been lost.

Momentum is now building again under the climate emergency banner; to consolidate this, local authorities will need help to translate words into action. For example, a reporting framework, or at least a degree of standardisation, is needed to focus efforts with coherence across the UK.

We also need mandatory carbon reduction targets for the UK public sector aligned with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit to global heating. This would facilitate allocation of funding to ensure local plans receive the resourcing needed.

Support and direction is overdue, given the increasing recognition in the UK and internationally that local government is a pivotal player in the transition to low carbon. Carbon reduction strategies now need to

reach beyond the boundaries of organisations' own estates and operations; the climate emergency requires targets and pathways that drive change on a district, city-wide and regional level.

Although challenging, this is undoubtedly crucial to achieve change at scale, capitalising on the convening powers of local authorities and leveraging stakeholder engagement, support and investment.

In the Leeds City Region, for example, the Carbon Trust helped West Yorkshire Combined Authority to set science-based targets for decarbonising the local energy system and to create a pipeline of transformational 'green growth' interventions, including multiple heat network schemes, to help meet those targets.

With the UK's new legally binding net zero target, local authorities have an opportunity to take the lead on carbon emissions reduction. They can only do this by treating it as an urgent strategic priority – in turn empowering access to required resources – with measurable actions reported within clear frameworks.

Without this, all we have are words and good intentions: declarations of climate emergencies without tangible and practical emergency response.



See www.carbontrust.com for more information. The LGA has declared a climate emergency, see p8



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The essential guide to your area

The LG Inform Plus service, developed together with local authorities for over a decade, is your essential tool for shaping and running local services. Designed to run in tandem with LG Inform, it gives subscribers the power to drill down to the finer detail.

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parliament

A year in Westminster



Our work with MPs and Peers is one of the key pillars that ensures the LGA continues to be the national voice of local government. It is a hugely important part of what we do for our member councils, and the results of our annual membership survey back this up.

The LGA's reputation in Westminster is strong, as demonstrated by our regular polling of parliamentarians that shows our work is valued by them.

This is a testament to the hard work of local government and all those who represent the LGA. We use this influence to good effect to shape legislation and policy through parliamentary processes.

Our approach has seen us improve the various pieces of legislation that make their way through Parliament before becoming law. We've engaged with proposals around mental health, banning excessive letting fees, tackling knife crime and supporting early intervention to deal with domestic abuse. This

will help councils in their work supporting their local communities.

We also continue to enjoy great success in our engagement with select committees and all-party parliamentary groups on a wide variety of issues on behalf of members. These sessions give a chance to share ideas and build consensus for local government's policy recommendations.

This year, we were pleased to hear from the House of Commons that we are the top organisation in the country for providing written evidence to select committees. In the past year, we have submitted evidence to a range of inquiries, including those on: special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); housing; the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy; the operation of the

Homelessness Reduction Act; the NHS Long Term Plan; Brexit; future international trade policy; and domestic abuse.

In the past year, the LGA was mentioned in Parliament 957 times. Since June 2018, we have produced more than 125 parliamentary briefings highlighting the priorities in our campaigns and helping to illustrate the effects of national policy changes on local communities. Through this work, we are able to ensure central government recognises and understands the challenges councils face in delivering for their residents, and that steps are taken to address any issues as a matter of urgency.

By engaging with Westminster, we've helped achieve some notable successes for local government, including: extra funding to help children with SEND; the lifting of the housing borrowing cap that will enable councils to build more new homes each year; and a commitment to working with councils to explore new ways of paying for local infrastructure, services and homes.

As we look to the new parliamentary session, we will continue to lobby proactively on your behalf as we help communicate local priorities in our national Parliament.

Our exit from the EU will remain high on parliamentarians' minds and dominate the political agenda. But for us, funding remains the top priority. With the Spending Review ongoing, we are already making the case for a sustainable funding settlement for local government and the devolution of powers to local areas. It's also an exciting time to be promoting the work of councils and leading the conversation on their role in civic life. We are continually inspired by the work being done at all levels of local government and the strong and ambitious leadership that drives our economic prosperity and resilience. Through our #CouncilsCan campaign, we will be continuing in our role to ensure the important voice of local government continues to feature in the national conversation.



You can download **'The LGA in Parliament 2018/19' report** at www.local.gov.uk/parliament. See www.local.gov.uk/councils-can for our Spending Review campaign

councillor

Enabling everyone to campaign



Anna Denham is the Project Manager for the EnAble Fund for Elected Office at Disability Rights UK

Around one in five of the UK population are disabled people, who remain insufficiently represented in our Parliaments, Assemblies and councils.

Disabled people are likely to face greater costs when seeking elected office because of their disability. The EnAble Fund, provided by the Government Equalities Office and administered by Disability Rights UK and the LGA, aims to level the playing field by providing grants for reasonable adjustments. This could include items such as British Sign Language interpreters, assistive technology, a personal assistant to help with specific tasks, mobility scooter hire or taxi fares, and paid leaflet distribution.

The fund was designed to help more disabled people stand for elected office in this May's local elections. Early results show that a promising number of candidates were able to access funds to assist with canvassing and campaigning – with many successfully elected, representing four political parties and Independents.



To apply to the EnAble Fund for help standing in the 2020 police and crime commissioner elections, or to find out more about the fund, please contact Disability Rights UK (DRUK) by phoning **0330 995 0400** and selecting option 1 or emailing **enablefund@disabilityrightsuk.org**.

Users of British Sign Language can use the text-to-talk service through the **ngts.org.uk** app or by dialling **18001** followed by **0330 995 0400** (option 1) and the handler will relay between the caller and DRUK



The fund will also be available to offer similar support for disabled candidates in next year's police and crime commissioner (PCC) elections, and the application process will be similar. Candidates apply via Disability Rights UK and undertake an informal interview with a specialist team who help work out what reasonable adjustments can be requested.

An independent panel of disabled people anonymously assesses applications. Disability Rights UK's recommendations and quotes for the goods or services requested are then presented to the relevant LGA political group to consider and to give final sign-off.

For the 2019 local elections, the fund received applications from across England – including Devon, Hampshire, Essex, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Durham, North Yorkshire, West Midlands, East Midlands, Lancashire, and many counties in between.

Several applicants said they found the informal interview aspect of the process to be helpful, as they knew what barriers they faced but could not think of ways to overcome them. In addition to the expert advice that Disability Rights UK could offer, a suggestion based on what other applicants had requested also helped generate creative new solutions.

For example, some applicants had tried

door-to-door canvassing but, as wheelchair users, often found this type of activity difficult.

Applications to overcome this included requesting funds to hire a local hall to do indoor 'static' canvassing, or to buy fold-up tables and parasols to enable outdoor static canvassing at community events.

This suggestion gave another applicant the idea of asking the fund to help purchase a customised pop-up banner. As the candidate lived near a railway station, they could catch the daily commuters rather than attempt door-to-door canvassing. This candidate reported that the banner was a real asset, and being able to canvass residents at the local station was a good alternative to door-knocking.

Several applicants reported that support from the EnAble Fund gave them peace of mind that, regardless of whether or not they were elected, they could participate equally with their fellow candidates – something which both they and Disability Rights UK view as a success.

Looking ahead, it is essential that support for disabled candidates seeking elected office continues in an effective and long-term way. The Government Equalities Office is currently working with political parties to support their efforts to put in place sustainable long-term plans for supporting their disabled candidates.

local by-elections

Chorley, Ecclestone and Mawdesley

CON HELD

26.7% over Lab

Turnout 33.2%

East Riding of Yorkshire, Bridlington North

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

16.1% over Con

Turnout 26.5%

Herefordshire, Whitecross

IT'S OUR COUNTY HELD

32.5% over LIB DEM

Turnout 19%

Isle of Wight, Whippingham and Osborne

CON GAIN FROM IND

15.3% over Lib Dem

Turnout 25.3%

Mansfield, Sandhurst

MANSFIELD IND FORUM GAIN FROM LAB

9.4% over Lab

Turnout 24.6%

Merton, Cannon Hill

LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB

6.1% over Lab

Turnout 41.8%

Middlesbrough, Park End and Beckfield

IND HELD

21.6% over Ind

Turnout 17%

Neath Port Talbot, Pelenna

IND HELD

25% over Plaid Cymru

Turnout 57.4%

North Kesteven, Billingham, Martin and North Kyme

CON GAIN FROM LINC IND

24.2% over Linc Ind

Turnout 16%

Rhondda Cynon Taf, Rhondda

PLAID CYMRU GAIN FROM LAB

14.4% over Lab

Turnout 28.1%

Wandsworth, Furzedown

LAB HELD

25% over Lib Dem

Turnout 33.6%

Wiltshire, Trowbridge Drynham

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

11.1% over Con

Turnout 33%

elections

Parlous state of party politics



Professors Colin Rallings (right) and Michael Thrasher are Associate Members, Nuffield College, Oxford



So far, local government has avoided most of the extremes of turbulence that seem to characterise current national politics.

The Brexit Party has yet to field a council candidate, the Liberal Democrats continue to mix some spectacular peaks with occasional embarrassing troughs, and the pattern of Green Party contestation is patchy at best. But that is not to say that all is quiet at local authority level.

The Isle of Wight provided an example of one of the potential perils of voting for an 'Independent'. In principle it sounds an ideal way to opt out of the noise of partisanship, but the underlying allegiances of the candidate may remain hidden.

The now retiring councillor in Whippingham and Osborne announced in 2018 that she had always opposed 'Conservative austerity measures' and was joining the Labour party. At the subsequent by-election, however, electors rejected both Labour and two Independent candidates and chose a Conservative councillor for the first time in a decade.

Elsewhere, the Mansfield Independent Forum regained a seat that had been its until

May. The background here is that the winner then – Labour's Andy Abrahams – was narrowly elected Mansfield mayor at the same time and had to resign as a councillor. It was probably name recognition associated with his mayoral candidacy that got him across the

line at ward level in the first place. His successor Labour candidate lacked that advantage.

The parlous state of traditional party politics in some parts of the country was given emphatic expression in an Independent 'hold' in Middlesbrough. The result itself was no surprise, but the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats between them attracted just 36 votes with Labour registering 12 per cent of the total cast. There may be no easy way back from that level of disaffection.

The result of the month, though, was the Liberal Democrat victory from a standing start in Bridlington North, East Riding of Yorkshire. This ward, which abuts the North Sea and includes the iconic landmark of Flamborough Head, does not look to be natural Lib Dem territory.

The party had not even fielded a candidate since 2007. In 2015, UKIP 'stole' one of the seats that the Conservatives had probably come to believe were their natural right; and the ward is likely to have decisively voted Leave at the 2016 EU Referendum. Not for the first time, the Liberal Democrats attributed their success to vigorous, locally focused campaigning.

With another gain from the Conservatives in Wiltshire and one from Labour in Remain-voting Cannon Hill, Merton, there was further evidence that the electorally dark days of the coalition may now be behind them.



For more details of these and previous local by-election results, please visit www.local.gov.uk/first



NATIONAL CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES CONFERENCE 2019

BOURNEMOUTH 20-22 NOVEMBER

Vital to councillors, directors, senior officers, directors of public health, policy makers and service managers as well as organisations with responsibilities for children and adults in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, the conference will include a mix of keynote and ministerial addresses as well as plenary sessions by expert representatives from the adult, children and education sectors.

There will also be opportunities to participate in a wide range of workshops and networking sessions. In addition, delegates will be able to visit the exhibition and speak with suppliers and providers of relevant services. **#ncasc19**

Confirmed speakers include

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Nadhim Zahawi MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

Caroline Dinenage MP

Minister of State for Care

Amanda Spielman

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted

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