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An indispensable goal for the next PM and a key to levelling up

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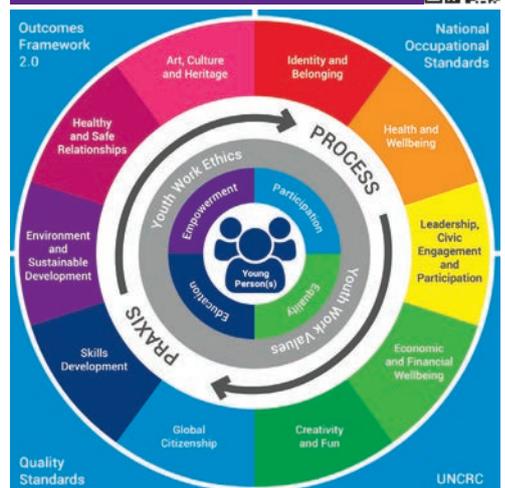


National Youth Agency



[nya@nya.org.uk](mailto:nya@nya.org.uk)

The National Youth Work Curriculum



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## Conference get-together

**M**any thanks to those of you who joined us in Harrogate for the LGA's annual conference in late June – we had an amazing three days, sharing council innovation and good practice, and hearing from great speakers.

For those of you who were unable to attend, you can find out about more about what went on in this month's edition of *first* (p8, p12-19, p26).

We have separate reports on our Debate Not Hate campaign (p14); on 'Signals of the future', our horizon-scanning publication looking at the issues local government leaders might find in their inboxes in 2027 (p19); and on our busiest conference Innovation Zone ever (p18).

Elsewhere in the magazine, we make the case for joining up jobs and skills programmes locally to help bring one million people back into work (p20); and we take a first look at some of the locally important statistics in Census 2021 (p22).

Our lead comment is from Polly Billington, Chief Executive Officer of UK100, a UK network of local government leaders focused on climate change (p25); and we also hear from Generation Rent on how it can help councils connect with and support private sector tenants (p29).

**Cllr James Jamieson**  
is LGA Chairman



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Circulation 17,300 (July 2022)  
*first* is published online at  
[www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first) at least a day  
before the magazine. To unsubscribe,  
email [first@oscar-research.co.uk](mailto:first@oscar-research.co.uk)

Photography: iStock.com and Getty  
unless otherwise stated  
Cover: LGA / Gregg Brown Photography

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Association

## Councils face extra £3.6 billion in costs

**Rising energy prices, spiralling inflation, and National Living Wage pressures are set to add £3.6 billion in unforeseen extra cost pressures onto council budgets in 2024/25, the LGA has warned.**

These extra cost pressures pose a serious risk to the future financial viability of some services and councils, it added.

The LGA said the sharp spike in inflation and energy prices is an unprecedented crisis that could not have been predicted by either central or local government when the Government finalised the local government finance settlement earlier this year and councils set their budgets in March.

Its analysis shows that inflation, energy costs and projected increases to the National Living Wage will add £2.4 billion in extra cost pressures onto council budgets this year alone, rising to £3.6 billion in 2024/25.

This is forcing councils to rip up financial plans set just three months ago, and to consider potential funding cuts to local services to meet their legal duty to balance the books. It also risks hampering council efforts to help level up communities and support residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "Soaring inflation, energy prices and National Living Wage pressures are putting

council services at risk. Budgets are having to be reset with potential cuts to the essential services people rely on, in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis.

"Inflation is not going to come down overnight. As our analysis shows, the impact on our local services could be disastrous. This will stifle our economic recovery, entrench disadvantage, and undermine government ambitions to level up the country.

"Local government remains the fabric of our country, as has been proved during the hugely challenging few years we have faced as a nation.

"Only with adequate long-term funding – to cover increased cost pressures and invest in local services – and the right powers, can councils deliver for our communities, tackle the climate emergency, and level up all parts of the country."

● See p12

## £40 million to release brownfield sites for new homes

Councils in England can bid for a share of a £180 million fund designed to transform disused urban sites into new homes and create jobs.

The Government's Brownfield Land Release Fund forms part of its plans to level up communities and turn unloved areas into new places to live and work.

An initial £40 million tranche is expected to help release council land for around 4,000 new homes and create

12,400 jobs. The remaining £140 million will be made available to councils over the next two years.

In total, the fund is expected to deliver 17,600 new homes and create around 54,000 new jobs over the next four years.

The latest funding builds on the success of the first £77 million Brownfield Land Release Fund, which saw 7,750 new homes built by councils across the country.

The Brownfield Land Release

Fund is delivered through the One Public Estate partnership between the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Office of Government Property and the LGA.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "We are delighted to be a key partner in supporting the Government's £180 million Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF2).

"Councils sit at the centre of the collective national

ambition to provide more and better housing, and this fund offers an excellent opportunity for English councils to unlock their brownfield land for new homes and deliver local housing priorities.

"With multiple application windows over the next three years and built-in support from the One Public Estate programme, councils can tackle complex and challenging brownfield sites to benefit their communities."

● To find out more about One Public Estate and apply to the Brownfield Land Release Fund (deadline 19 August), please visit [www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate](http://www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate)



# £6 billion in Right to Buy discounts 'threaten scheme'

**Almost £6 billion has been given out in discounts through the Right to Buy scheme since the size of the discount was increased in 2012, leaving councils in England struggling to rebuild homes as quickly as they are being sold.**

The size of the discounts available were increased in April 2012, and as a result the average increased by 150 per cent to more than £67,000 in 2020/21. At the same time, this has led to a quadrupling in the number of Right to Buy (RTB) sales.

Councils are also not able to keep all of the money from RTB sales, and cannot combine RTB receipts with government grant funding, such as the Affordable Homes Programme, nor transfer funding from sales to housing companies or arms-length management organisations providing housing services on behalf of local authorities.

This means that they have only been able

to replace around a third of homes sold since 2012, impacting on their ability to provide housing for homeless and vulnerable families.

The LGA says the scheme faces an uncertain future unless councils are given the flexibility to set discounts locally and retain 100 per cent of sales receipts to fund the replacement of homes sold off under the scheme.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Housing Spokesperson, said: "Councils want to urgently address the number of people on waiting lists for a council home and stuck in temporary accommodation.

"At a time of an escalating cost-of-living crisis, we urgently need to build more council homes, not have less.

"Every home sold that isn't replaced risks pushing more families into the private rented sector, driving up housing benefit spending and rents, and exacerbating our homelessness crisis."

# Women's health strategy launched

The Government has published the first ever Women's Health Strategy for England, to tackle the gender health gap.

Measures include mandatory specific teaching and assessment on women's health for all new doctors, new research on female-specific health conditions, and £10 million for 25 new mobile breast screening units.

Women live on average for longer than men but spend more of their life in poor health, often limiting their ability to work and participate in day-to-day activities.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said:

"We're pleased that this strategy is building a greater focus on women's health, including understanding and acting on persisting inequalities and women's

experiences of the health and care system.

"There are major inequalities within women's health, with women born in the least deprived areas spending almost 20 years less in good health than those in the least deprived areas."

He added: "Although, it is important that the strategy states that women should have access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health, funding for these council-commissioned services has declined significantly in recent years.

"Long-term sustainable funding and a real-terms increase in the public health budget are required to rectify past cuts and help councils and their partners deliver an integrated and comprehensive approach to improving women's sexual and reproductive health."



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## 'Extreme heat fuelled by climate change'

The importance of funding local fire and rescue services for potential risk rather than just day-to-day demand was demonstrated by July's heatwave, the LGA has said.

Temperatures reached over 40C for the first time in the UK, leading the Met Office to issue an unprecedented Red Extreme Heat Alert for 18-19 July across large parts of England and Wales.

Wildfires broke out across the capital and elsewhere, with fire and rescue services in London, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, South Yorkshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Suffolk, Nottinghamshire and Humberside among those that declared major incidents.

Councils provided additional visits to support the most vulnerable and emergency support for people sleeping rough, and deployed gritting fleets to keep roads running safely.

Cllr Ian Stephens, Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee, said the pressures fire and rescue services faced demonstrated "the importance of continuing to fund them for potential risk rather than just day-to-day demand".

LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson said councils had again shown how vital they are to keeping communities safe during emergencies.

He added: "The general consensus is that July's extreme heat was fuelled by climate change, which is making heatwaves more intense, frequent and likely.

"It is our communities that will continue to be impacted by rising temperatures. Councils' roles as place-shapers, convenors of communities and local partners, asset-owners, problem solvers and significant purchasers puts us at the forefront of delivering real, tangible changes in the transition to net zero.

"We continue to call on government to work with councils as partners in tackling climate change." ● See p26-27

## 70% of councillors 'abused and intimidated'

Seven in 10 councillors have experienced abuse and intimidation within the last 12 months, with one in 10 experiencing abuse frequently, according to the LGA's latest councillor census.

A further 88 per cent of councillors who responded to an LGA call for evidence said they had experienced abuse or intimidation directed at them personally in relation to their role, either on social media or in person, with 76 per cent saying they had witnessed abuse.

Anecdotally, the call for evidence also found that some councillors were receiving abuse because of their protected characteristics, including women, ethnic minority and LGBTQIA+ councillors.

The LGA is calling on government to work with local authorities and partners to set up a working group to develop and implement an action plan to address the issue of abuse of local politicians and their safety, as part of its Debate Not Hate campaign (p14).

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "Councillors are as much a part of the community as those they represent, and they should not expect to be subjected to any form of abuse because of their position.

"Debating and disagreeing with one another is an essential part of democracy, however abuse has no place in politics and stops residents from engaging in local government.

"We need to see concrete action to protect current councillors and ensure potential future councillors feel safe to stand for election.

"Anyone, regardless of their background or political affiliation, should feel safe and proud to represent their community."



## Leaky homes costing poorest families £250 a year

Three million 'fuel poor' households are having to pay an extra £250 a year on average on fuel bills because of poorly insulated homes, analysis by the LGA has shown.

Households are wasting £770 million a year as expensive heat leaks through walls, roofs and windows of the poorly insulated homes in England's 'fuel poor' households.

Launching the report at its annual conference in late June, the LGA called for a redoubling of efforts to insulate all fuel-poor homes by 2030, saving millions from energy bills each year.

A quarter of all families are now looking to improve energy efficiency as bills surge, but fuel poor households are least likely to afford the measures and the most likely to be impacted by rising energy prices.

The LGA's analysis shows that two million households in fuel poverty will need additional help to implement energy efficiency measures to lift their homes up to energy performance certificate (EPC) rating C by 2030.

Additional help for these homes is crucial for hitting the Government's ambition to retrofit a total of 3.1 million fuel poor homes to EPC C standard by 2030 – almost 900 homes a day.



Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Environment Spokesperson, said: "So many homes are leaking more and more money as energy prices increase.

"Investment now will save households further down the line, ease the cost-of-living crisis and mean families have added security and flexibility within their budgets.

"Ensuring homes are well insulated also means fewer people are at risk of the health risks associated with living in cold, damp conditions, and this is work we have to do as part of our drive to net zero."

## New digitalisation framework for councils

**A joint new outcomes-based framework for improving and supporting local government digitalisation programmes has been launched by the LGA, the Society for Innovation Technology and Modernisation (Socitm), and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace).**

The framework is intended to promote the use of a common language and shared strategic outcomes by local government when engaging with central government, private, voluntary, and community sectors, as well as with one another.

This will support the design and delivery of modern public services, enabling councils to operate effectively as digital organisations, and champion the digital needs of their communities.

The shared outcomes aim to create agreed understanding, increase digital awareness across stakeholders, as well as

enable easier identification and sharing of best practice.

Cllr Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said:

"We're really pleased to be working with Socitm and Solace to promote a new outcomes-based framework for improving and supporting local government digitalisation programmes.

"During the pandemic, we saw more than ever before our reliance and need to be able to access services online.

"Councils are already leading the way in providing online services and meeting the digital needs of their local communities.

"However, this partnership working together will set out a common language that will enable us to take this to the next level, better engage with local and central government, and deliver digital services more effectively for residents."

# Childhood obesity target at risk

**Around 40 per cent of 10 to 11-year-olds will be obese or overweight by 2030 if trends in childhood obesity continue at their current rate.**

LGA analysis has found that 37.5 per cent of this age group could be overweight or obese by the end of the decade, rising to 40.2 per cent by 2040.

New figures published by the National Child Measurement Programme, administered by local councils, show a decrease in children's obesity levels in England.

But according to the LGA's analysis, based on current trajectories no council will halve their childhood obesity prevalence by 2030 – the Government's target.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board said: "These new figures show there is still much to do to encourage healthier eating and habits if we are to avoid the children living with obesity today becoming the adults living with obesity tomorrow.

"Our analysis already warned the Government was set to miss its target to halve childhood obesity by 2030 without drastic action, and these new figures still show this is likely to be the case, with obesity levels still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

"Councils are working to support children and families to live healthy lives and reduce pressure on other public services, from health visitors supporting new parents to weight management services and subsidised leisure facilities, but more needs to be done, especially to reduce the gap between the most and least deprived."

The LGA is urging the Government to introduce greater powers for councils to tackle the clustering of existing takeaways and to restrict junk food advertising, to restore funding for weight management programmes and increase investment in council-run physical activity programmes, and to broaden the eligibility for free school meals.



## 'Vicious cycle' of children missing out on early support

**Investment in early intervention support by councils in England halved from £3.8 billion to £1.9 billion between 2010/11 and 2020/21, according to a new report commissioned by a coalition of charities.**

The Children's Society, Action for Children, Barnardo's, National Children's Bureau and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children are calling on the candidates to be the next Prime Minister to commit to implementing the children's social care review and to providing urgent new funding in the next Budget, so all children and families who need it get vital early support.

The research found decreasing funding for early support services, such as children's centres and youth clubs, and for targeted

support with issues like drug and alcohol misuse – which means families are missing out on getting help early to stop problems spiralling out of control.

The charities warn this has created "a vicious cycle", where councils are forced to spend more on costly crisis support, leaving more children and young people exposed to risks such as exploitation, neglect and mental ill-health.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The Government needs to move quickly to address the issues raised in the recent independent review of children's social care, and invest additional funding in the strong family help services that can prevent families from reaching crisis point."

## Sharp rise in children needing SEND support

The number of children in England approaching councils for special needs support has increased by almost a quarter in a year, with 170 young people now starting support plans each day.

These latest figures come as the Government is currently consulting over its proposed special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reforms, set out earlier this year.

The LGA says emergency action is needed now, to help meet the rising demand for SEND support.

It is calling on the Government to scrap the 'high needs' deficits councils have built up, because the spiralling costs of providing support is outstripping councils' SEND budgets.

New figures show the number of initial requests for an education, health and care plan (EHCP), which sets out SEND support for each individual, fell to 75,951 in 2020 – following four consecutive years of increases – partly due to the pandemic.

This then jumped by 23 per cent to 93,302 in 2021, with 62,180 new EHCPs made in the past year.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The fact that 170 children and young people with SEND are starting EHCPs each day demonstrates the huge pressures councils are under to ensure every child gets the very best support that meets their needs.

"While it was good the Government set out much-needed reforms to tackle where the current SEND system is not working, these will take time to be implemented.

"Action is needed now to help councils meet the rising demand and spiralling costs of providing support that they are seeing on a daily basis."



## 'You can't level up from Whitehall'

Strong local government should be at the forefront of the post-pandemic recovery and has a key role to play in helping the most vulnerable in society, Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Ed Davey told the LGA's annual conference.

He called on central government to start working efficiently with local government, by properly funding and empowering it, noting "you can't level up from Whitehall" and that "a multi-year budget does not mean two years".

Sir Ed highlighted the party's recent successes both in parliamentary and local by-elections, which he attributed to it working hard to understand local issues and then campaign on them.

"Conversations on the doorstep are not dictated by HQ," he said. "We believe local communities coming together... are best placed to make decisions about their area."

The Government's failure to tackle the challenge of insulating homes was a "disaster for climate change but also for people suffering from fuel poverty", and he called for local authorities to have the power to fine water companies that pollute rivers and lakes by dumping sewage.

## Culture 'vital' to councils

Culture is not just a 'bit of fun' but a fundamental pillar of levelling up and vital to everything from improving physical and mental health to raising educational attainment.

Speaking at the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate, crossbencher, actress and author Baroness Lola Young drew on her own experience in care to flag the importance of councils' cultural services – including the libraries that provided the books that fed her imagination.

While acknowledging that councils are still going through difficult times, she said: "It's a very good time to be talking about the arts, despite everything going on... Culture has a substantial range of benefits, which if you took them away would make [for example] the cost of social care even more expensive than it is."

Baroness Young is chairing the LGA's independent Commission on Culture and Local Government, see [www.local.gov.uk/commission-culture-and-local-government](http://www.local.gov.uk/commission-culture-and-local-government) to find out more.

# Two-year funding settlement pledge

**A plethora of former and current government ministers attended the LGA's annual conference in late June.**

The former Levelling Up Secretary, Michael Gove (pictured), confirmed a two-year funding settlement for councils from 2023/24, pledged to complete the long-running Fair Funding Review of local government finance, and to reduce the number of government funding streams.

He also announced a new 'Office for Local Government', which would bring together, analyse and publish existing data to "shine a light on how local authorities are performing and delivering".

Chancellor Nadhim Zahawi, addressing annual conference as the then Education Secretary, thanked councils for their "crucial role" in ensuring Ukrainian refugees' children are accessing high-quality education and childcare.

Recognising the need for a new partnership between local and central government, he said the Department for Education would adapt its engagement with councils through a new 'Regions Group' which would play a central role in helping develop policy to meet local needs.

Simon Clarke, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, outlined the positive impact of devolution on economic growth and reiterated the opportunity for devolution



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for all councils, calling on them to "grab this opportunity with both hands", in a session on maximising the opportunities of levelling up.

Former Local Government Minister Kemi Badenoch took part in a debate on civility and respect in public life, and helped launch the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign against abuse and intimidation of councillors (see p14).

Refugees Minister Lord Richard Harrington discussed support for Ukrainian families, and Care Minister Gillian Keegan talked about the Government's vision for care reform, including how it needed to be a joint endeavour between local and national government, the NHS, care providers and others.

# Local visions for growth

**Trust is the missing ingredient in the Government's plans for levelling up, according to Labour's Lisa Nandy.**

The Shadow Levelling Up, Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary told the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate that she wanted levelling up to succeed but that it wasn't working.

"There's something bigger than money, power and detail missing from the levelling up plan – and that's trust," she said.

"No new powers for places as promised, but instead a process that allows people to bid in for a little more – and only if they accept a mayor..."

"Hunger Games-style bidding processes that pit area against area as councils try to jump through hoops to get a part-refund on

the £15 billion that's been taken over the last decade, and with fewer and fewer staff to do it.

"And council leaders still having to go cap in hand to junior ministers to beg for small grants and powers to do the things they know will work."

Ms Nandy said that Labour's approach to local government would be to give all councils the powers to deliver their "vision for local growth – whether it's the control over buses to connect people to apprenticeships and jobs, friends and family, or powers to raise money like the tourist levy being pioneered by Manchester City Council."

She added: "We will reimagine the state, push power outwards and put power back in the hands of the people who are rebuilding Britain."

# Adult social care reforms ‘underfunded’ – survey

**Councils do not have confidence that sufficient funding has been earmarked by government for reforms of adult social care, according to an LGA survey.**

The survey, of senior councillors responsible for adult social care, found that 98 per cent of respondents felt funding was insufficient, while three-quarters were not confident they will have the required capacity among frontline staff to deliver the reforms.

Of the £36 billion the new UK-wide health and social levy will raise over the next three years, only £5.4 billion is ringfenced for social care reforms in England.

These include the introduction of a ‘fair rate of care’ that councils will pay providers, and tackling the issue of self-funders paying more for their care than those who access support at the council rate.

The underfunded reforms will exacerbate significant ongoing financial and workforce pressures, including significant vacancy rates across the sector.

These have already led to more than 500,000 people waiting for an assessment, care or care reviews – up from just under 400,000 in November.

Survey respondents also expressed concerns that other council services may be negatively impacted to make up for the shortfall.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said: “This survey lays bare the huge concerns of councils that the Government’s charging reforms are significantly underfunded.

“This has the potential to tip councils over the financial edge.

“Underfunding these reforms will only exacerbate pre-existing significant pressures, which the reforms – and the funding for them – do nothing to address.

“These include unmet and under-met need, greater strain on unpaid carers, and increased waiting times for assessments and delivery of care packages.”

## Care users ‘struggling to recruit personal assistants’

People who draw on care and support are finding it increasingly hard to recruit and retain personal assistants (PAs), a recent survey has found.

Around 70,000 people in England employ a PA, and 995 responded to an online joint survey by the LGA and the Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) partnership.

- Key findings included:
- Of those who needed to recruit a PA, 77 per cent had found it more difficult.
  - Two-thirds said people were taking jobs with better pay rather than PA jobs.
  - Nearly three in five (59 per cent) think it’s harder to find PAs with the right skills, values or training.
  - Low pay, poor terms and conditions and insufficient hours were key factors in PAs leaving.



Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board said: “It’s worrying to hear about the struggle that many who draw on care have in recruiting and retaining PAs and this highlights the continued issue all areas of social care currently have with finding and keeping staff.

“PAs are a crucial part of the social care workforce; they deliver brilliant care and support and hugely enhance the lives of the people they work for.

“The responses to this survey are stark, and clearly show how much more support is needed in this vital area of social care. Thank you to all those who took their time to respond and inform us of their concerns within this critical service.”



## PM candidates visit LGA offices

The first hustings event in the final round of the Conservative Party leadership contest and race to become the next Prime Minister took place at the LGA’s Smith Square offices last week.

With a pack of press photographers outside waiting to greet them, the former Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Foreign Secretary Liz Truss made their pitch to Conservative councillors as to why they are the best candidate to replace outgoing party leader Boris Johnson.

## New ministerial team at DLUHC

The LGA has welcomed the appointment of new Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary Greg Clark, following the sacking of his predecessor Michael Gove by outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Mr Clark and some of his new ministerial team visited the LGA’s Smith Square headquarters shortly after his appointment in July, to meet LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson and LGA Conservative Group Leader Cllr Izzi Seccombe.

Cllr Jamieson said: “I have already had an early discussion with Mr Clark to offer our congratulations and to start the discussions about the central/local relationship as he continues to drive forward the Government’s levelling up ambitions.

“The LGA and councils pay tribute to the cabinet ministers who left the Government, including former Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove; Health and Care Secretary Sajid Javid; the former Chancellor, Rishi Sunak; and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities’ (DLUHC) former ministerial team, Kemi Badenoch, Neil O’Brien and Stuart Andrew.”

Other new ministerial appointments include James Cleverley as Education Secretary, Robert Buckland as Wales Secretary, and Marcus Jones and Paul Scully as DLUHC ministers.

● See p27

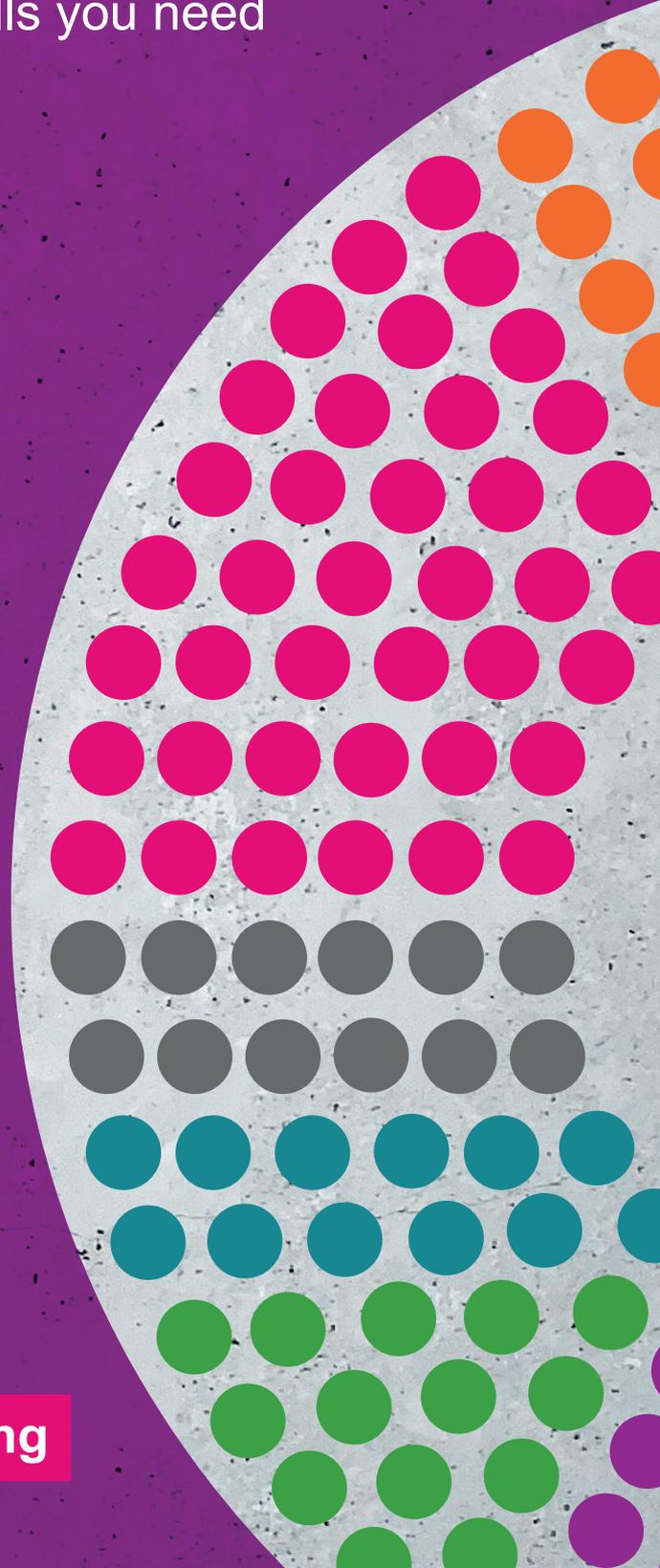
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# PARLIAMENT

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## Shaping policies and legislation

The LGA's annual parliamentary report highlights the breadth of services offered by councils

**As the voice of local government, the LGA has continued to campaign on behalf of our membership and, with the support of MPs and Peers, we have taken every opportunity to help inform the scrutiny of policy and legislation.**

Our 'LGA in Parliament 2021/22' report provides an update on our engagement with MPs and Peers. This is an overview of our lobbying on various issues impacting councils and our work in Parliament to promote the value of local leadership to create sustainable growth, improved public services and a stronger society.

We have informed a wide range of legislation as we sought to shape proposals on issues that matter to councils, such as building safety and integrating health and care.

The LGA continues to be one of the organisations that engages with parliamentary committees the most and we continue to provide 'thought' leadership on a range of issues, including on the future governance of the UK, adult social care and support, and the future funding of local government, setting out the challenges councils face and the opportunities to do things differently.

Our report highlights the breadth of services offered by councils and the depth of analysis provided by the LGA as we advocate on behalf of councils for positive change.

In the 2021/22 parliamentary session:

- The LGA briefed for 56 parliamentary debates and 39 debates on legislation, securing support from MPs and Peers for our campaigns and policy positions.
- LGA representatives appeared before 30 parliamentary inquiries, and we have produced 47 written submissions to inquiries to help inform a wide range of recommendations in parliamentary reports.
- We informed the debates on scrutiny of a wide range of primary legislation, successfully lobbying for significant reforms to the Building Safety Act



and securing a consultative role for local government in any future NHS reconfiguration through our briefings on the Health and Care Bill (now enacted).

The LGA would like to thank our vice-presidents and all the MPs and Peers who have worked to support us and local government over the past year, and we look forward to continuing to work with them and with government to shape the coming legislative agenda.

We also thank colleagues across local government who have given time from their schedules to share their experiences and insights in evidence to various parliamentary committees on behalf of the LGA, one of our special interest groups, or on behalf of their own councils.

The current parliamentary session is set to be the busiest legislative programme in more than 15 years, with a package of draft reforms comprising 38 bills, the highest number announced for a parliamentary session since 2005.

The LGA is once more seeking to influence the wide-ranging legislative agenda, working with MPs and Peers on the priorities for our membership, including the Government's proposals to level up local communities and empower local leaders to address key challenges facing their places.

We look forward to working with government and Parliament on the full range of legislation and white papers over the next year.



'LGA in Parliament 2021/22' is available in full at [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications).

Visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament) to find out more about the LGA's work in Westminster



Councillor **James Jamieson** is Chairman of the LGA

# People and places

The LGA's annual conference provided a welcome and positive opportunity to look at the challenges ahead

**A**s much as virtual working has served a purpose, you cannot beat being in a room full of people who are passionate about delivering for people and places.

So, being back at the LGA's annual conference in person for the first time in three years was fantastic – catching up with old and new colleagues, and bringing the challenges and opportunities for local government to life, alongside the 1,300-plus delegates who attended.

Among the highlights of a busy three days in Harrogate were sessions on the cost-of-living crisis; the launch of our Debate Not Hate campaign against abuse and intimidation of councillors (p14); publication of the Ipsos report we commissioned, outlining predictions for the future of local government (p19); and the very popular Innovation Zone and LGA Hub, which have evolved to become the beating heart of conference (see p18).

We heard from high-profile speakers including Shadow Levelling Up Secretary Lisa Nandy, Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Ed Davey, Olympian and businessman Kriss Akabusi, and crossbencher Baroness Lola Young.

Former government speakers to address conference included the then Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove, former Local Government Minister

Kemi Badenoch, and Nadhim Zahawi, the former Education Secretary, now Chancellor. His predecessor at the Treasury, Rishi Sunak, also visited us in Harrogate.

We were joined by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, who was re-elected as the LGA's President following a meeting of our General Assembly at conference, while our 25th anniversary provided a great opportunity to reflect on how far we have come.

Since 1997, we have been able to deliver so much for our communities, including the return of public health to local government, the removal of the housing revenue account cap, and getting a billion pounds back from the Icelandic banking crisis.

The key has been having a single, cross-party voice for local government, which puts residents first, not politics.

But we need to look forward to some of the current and coming challenges.

At our last in-person annual conference three years ago, nobody could have predicted COVID-19, Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis.

The pandemic demonstrated, yet again, just what local government can do, and as leaders of place, councils will be key to rebuilding our communities and economies.

At conference, we heard a hard-



hitting account of the impact of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine from Oleksandr Synkevych, Mayor of Mykolaiv, as well as from Refugees Minister Lord Richard Harrington.

I am amazed and heartened that thousands of people have stepped forward to support those fleeing the war. Councils have rapidly responded, developing new services and programmes of support for the newest and most vulnerable members of our society.

But those underlying issues from three years ago are still with us, if not more so: demographic pressures; a shortage of care workers; inflation and a rising cost of living; and now care reforms, which, while laudable, are placing a huge pressure on councils.

On the latter, we agree with the cap on individual care costs, that there should be a fair cost of care, and that care workers deserve a decent wage. The problem is that this has to be paid for, and implementing and monitoring the system will take additional resource – which we do not have.

Care Minister Gillian Keegan's post-conference announcement of a delay to self-funders accessing council care home rates was a welcome acknowledgement of these pressures, but more needs to be done.

The Health and Social Care Levy needs to be genuinely shared and, given the lack of capacity in an already stretched system, the Government needs to allow time to learn from the trailblazers before rolling out the charging reforms further.



## ◊ *Communities are best placed to address the issues they face* ◊

In the longer term, we need a place-based approach to health, locally led with a focus on prevention and early intervention rather than cure.

More widely, all councils play their part in improving the health of our residents, with our housing and green spaces vital to improving wellbeing and tackling social isolation.

This is why it is positive that government listened, and that the new integrated care partnerships will be locally led: we continue to push for health systems to be place-focused, not acute-focused.

Children's social care and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are increasingly becoming issues, because of expense and a dysfunctional system. It is welcome that many of our suggestions were incorporated in the recent SEND Review, schools White Paper and the independent review of children's services.

These reforms will make a difference, but only if health and schools play their part, and the LGA will continue to push

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for them to be held to account locally.

Housing is one of our big issues. It is too expensive, and all too often poor quality and unsuitable.

However, for the first time in my 13 years in local government, where every change to planning regulation seemed to make it worse, I was greatly relieved to see proposals in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill that have a genuine chance to improve the system, including a focus on a planned system and incentivising build-out of sites.

I constantly remind the Government that decision-making and funding should always be devolved down to the lowest practicable level.

Local communities are best placed to address the issues they face, led by councillors as their locally elected and accountable leaders.

But there is much detail to be fleshed out, and we all need to help free up the tentacles of Whitehall and allow services to be delivered faster, more effectively, and locally.



Please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events) for presentations from this year's LGA annual conference. Next year's event takes place in Bournemouth from 4-6 July 2023. See also p26

For instance, bidding for short-term funding through 448 different grants and funding streams is not efficient: long-term, 'single pot' funding for councils is of benefit to both central and local government, and the communities we serve.

At conference, Michael Gove committed to reducing the number of funding streams, and to a two-year local government finance settlement from 2023/24 – measures we hope to see his successor, Greg Clark, deliver on.

In respect of funding, last November we thought we had a decent settlement, albeit overly dependent on council tax rises. But with Russia's war on Ukraine, we have seen a dramatic increase in costs, way beyond that which we or government could have anticipated.

LGA analysis (see p4) shows that rising energy prices, spiralling inflation, and National Living Wage pressures are set to add £3.6 billion in unforeseen extra cost pressures on council budgets in 2024/25, compared with November.

Longer term funding, fewer burdens from government and alternative revenue streams would help. But, put simply, the numbers just do not add up. We need a local government funding version of the state pension's 'triple lock'.

We desperately need to protect budgets and services from the impact of inflation, without which there will be real service cuts to some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

The LGA will continue to work with you to get through these difficult times, both through lobbying as the single voice for local government and through our outstanding local government sector support programme (see p21).

As the nation navigates these uncertain economic headwinds, I am confident that, as local leaders, we will continue to stand strong, resolute and determined in delivering the best for our communities.

# Debate, not hate

The LGA has launched a campaign to tackle abuse and intimidation of councillors



Councillor **James Jamieson** is Chairman of the LGA

**C**ouncillors are the heart of local communities, helping residents to express what they want for their local area and highlighting their concerns.

It is a privilege to be entrusted to champion local residents' views, and councillors are proud to serve their communities in this way, usually without reservation.

However, over the past few years, councillors have raised concerns about the levels of abuse and intimidation they encounter fulfilling their role.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life shone a light on this issue with its reports on intimidation in public life and local government ethical standards, in which it commented that "the scale and intensity of intimidation is now shaping public life".

Since then, there has been evidence amassing that the abuse and intimidation of politicians is negatively impacting local democracy.

Here, it is essential to consider the difference between debate and disagreement, and abuse, intimidation, harassment and harm.

Of course, residents who are unhappy with their council have every right to express their objection; debate and constructive challenge are integral to local scrutiny processes.

However, this must be done without personalised abuse, intimidation or threats, which only serve to silence democratic voices and make politics an unwelcoming place for prospective politicians.

This is all the more important as we grapple with some of the most challenging policy questions we have ever encountered. Only together, and with the full input from our communities, can we rise to this challenge.

We are now working to build an evidence base over the long term with our LGA councillor census. This year's census of more than 5,000 councillors found that as many as seven in 10 reported experiencing abuse or intimidation in the past 12 months, with one in 10 experiencing it frequently.

To understand more about councillors' experiences of abuse and what can be done to prevent and tackle it, we launched a 'call for evidence' in October 2021.

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In the first six months, we received more than 400 responses highlighting various issues. However, some common factors and themes stood out.

The variability of support offered to councillors experiencing abuse and intimidation was a clear and consistent theme in the evidence. In some cases, the response and support available were exemplary; in others, virtually non-existent.

Respondents shared experiences of being shunted between different agencies, like the council and the police or their political party, without a clear sense of who was responsible for their safety and wellbeing.

The police response also reportedly varied from place to place. In fact, some felt that the threshold for police intervention was set higher for councillors than for members of the public or members of parliament, leaving councillors feeling vulnerable.

This was compounded by the availability of councillors' home addresses online.

"I have been abused on the street and threatened by being told, 'I know where you live'... and I've been told to watch my back," said one respondent.

Some responses indicated that councillors and candidates with

## Get involved!

We need to be united in calling for change to tackle the increasing level of abuse and intimidation aimed at local politicians.

You can help by:

- signing our public statement calling for a government-convened working group to tackle the issue, at [www.local.gov.uk/debate-not-hate](http://www.local.gov.uk/debate-not-hate)
- reading and sharing our new report and its findings
- engaging on social media using the #DebateNotHate hashtag
- encouraging other councillors and organisations to get involved
- signing up at [bit.ly/3NXChfW](http://bit.ly/3NXChfW) for regular updates on our democracy, civility and voluntary sector work
- sharing your personal experiences of abuse and/or intimidation – our call for evidence is still open at [bit.ly/3P3PaGI](http://bit.ly/3P3PaGI).



Cllr Georgia Gould, Leader of Camden Council and Chair of London Councils, was among the first of more than 300 people so far to sign the LGA's Debate Not Hate public statement

### ◊ Respondents reported feeling depression and severe anxiety ◊

protected characteristics were more likely to receive personalised abuse. Misogyny, racism and homophobia were particularly highlighted. Many said abuse was triggered by particular issues, such as planning decisions, low-traffic neighbourhoods, climate change policies, and vaccination programmes.

Others felt that abuse was not triggered by anything other than stepping forward to engage with residents in a public or online space.

Online spaces posed their own specific threats. Respondents felt online anonymity and a lack of appropriate regulation protected abusers and emboldened them to act with impunity, with one calling social media "the Wild West".

The frequency and severity of abuse aimed at councillors stood out as very concerning. Almost 89 per cent of respondents who had experienced abuse or intimidation had experienced it multiple times, and the abuse ranged from death threats to stalking.

This appears to be linked to the

normalisation of abusive behaviours, with councillors and those who support them expecting and accepting abuse by the public, which might then escalate to more serious incidents.

This normalisation could partly explain why 37 per cent of respondents chose not to seek support for abuse they had experienced.

Finally, and most disturbingly, our report – 'Debate not hate: the impact of abuse on local democracy' – draws out the impact of abuse and intimidation on individuals, their families and local democracy itself.

Respondents reported feelings of depression and severe anxiety linked to abuse they received because of their

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role. Sixty per cent said they were aware of others being unwilling to stand for election or leadership roles because of anticipated abuse.

In addition, two-thirds of respondents who said they would be unwilling to stand for re-election cited abuse and intimidation as an influencing factor.

"I could not run in another election. I would not put my family through the stress and anxiety," said one.

We are committed at the LGA to tackling these issues head on, which is why we launched our new campaign, Debate Not Hate, at our annual conference in late June, alongside the report.

The campaign is asking local government leaders, the Government and relevant partners, such as the police, political parties and social media companies, to sign up to our call to come together through a government-convened working group to produce and implement an action plan that addresses abuse and intimidation, and improves councillor safety (see panel, below left).

We also want a change in legislation to clarify that councillors should be able to keep their home addresses private.

Thank you to all those conference delegates who signed our public statement in Harrogate – you can add your name online at [www.local.gov.uk/debate-not-hate](http://www.local.gov.uk/debate-not-hate).

The report and these proposals were discussed at the conference by the then Local Government Minister Kemi Badenoch, the LGA's Cllr Marianne Overton, parish council clerk Jackie Weaver, and political organiser Cllr Liron Velleman, from Hope Not Hate.

They discussed the importance of coming together to tackle this issue, described by Ms Badenoch as "coming out of our tribes" to support one another across political divides in calling out abuse from members of the public and others.

At the session, the importance of setting a high standard of political debate was a clear theme in the discussion and I would strongly echo this.

We need to recognise that our own behaviours as politicians and how we interact with each other is paramount. Poor behaviour at any political level casts a shadow over what it means to be a politician, and we must all strive to set good examples for others to follow.

All councillors should expect to be treated with respect while fulfilling their public role, and we all have a responsibility to send a clear message that abuse, intimidation and threats have no place in politics.

# LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2022

**T**he LGA's first in-person conference in three years, held in Harrogate in late June, attracted more than 1,900 delegates, speakers, sponsors and exhibitors.

Participants were welcomed to Harrogate by Cllr Graham Swift, Deputy Leader of Harrogate Borough Council, with Mayor Cllr Victoria Oldham hosting a drinks reception on the first day.

The programme included keynote speeches, workshops, and fringe meetings on everything from the cost-of-living crisis to adult social care, supporting Ukrainian families, tackling violence against women and girls, climate change, and equalities.

The conference's Innovation Zone showcased council innovation and good practice, with standing

room only at some sessions.

The zone also brought together Torbay Leader Cllr Steve Darling's guide dog Jennie and robot dog Eric, controlled by Nottinghamshire County Council's Ceren Clulow (pictured) Eric helps monitor and assess the health and condition of Sherwood Forest, as part of the world's first '5G forest', led by the council in partnership with Birmingham City University and local technology businesses.

The LGA's political groups all hosted their own group sessions and conference dinners, and there were closed sessions too. A dinner for chief executives was also held, and the grand surroundings of Harrogate's Royal Hall was the backdrop for the LGA LGBTQ+ conference disco, featuring DJ Chris Naylor.

We look forward to seeing you again in Bournemouth, from 4-6 July 2023!



**Cllr Joe Harris takes questions for Lib Dem Leader Sir Ed Davey**



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**Harrogate mayor Cllr Victoria Oldham.**



**Baroness Young (left) and Cllr Marianne Overton**



**Motivational speaker and Olympian Kriss Akabusi**



Nottinghamshire's Ceren Clulow and 'Eric' (left), with Cllr Steve Darling and his dog Jennie



LGA President Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson



Friends and colleagues



Enjoying the drinks reception



Nadhim Zahawi MP and Cllr Izzi Seccombe



Delegates in the Hub



Tuned in at the Innovation Zone



Shadow Levelling Up Secretary Lisa Nandy with Cllr Shaun Davies

# Strength and imagination

## This year's Innovation Zone was the 'beating heart' of the LGA's annual conference



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

**T**he LGA's Innovation Zone has once again demonstrated the importance and value that councils place on learning from each other.

I'm delighted that so many councils were able to share their own innovation with such a responsive audience. Set around the theme 'Resilience and renewal', the programme featured wide-ranging presentations, offering new learning and inspirational ideas for all those attending.

I had the pleasure of delivering the opening session for this event, which launched the LGA's annual report for its sector support programme (see p21), and highlighted the strength and imagination of councils in responding to challenges in new and innovative ways.

The Innovation Zone (IZ) programme shone a light on some of that work through nearly 40 sessions on different topics.

Among the sessions taking place, delegates had the opportunity to learn about: developments in adult social care; the difference made by using wellbeing and happiness as a measure of economic success; the case for a national free bikes movement; the benefits of the circular economy approach; and technological innovations – for instance, the world's first 5G-connected forest, featuring Eric, Nottinghamshire County Council's robotic dog.

'Spotlight on...' talks – our new addition to the IZ programme – were extremely well attended, and challenged councils to engage, learn and be inspired while thinking differently about big ideas.

This series was kick-started by a presentation by Exeter City Council on partnerships and place leadership. It was followed by other talks, including on Torbay Council's children's services' improvement journey and Hull City Council's award-winning Future Work Design project, with the University of Hull, on managing stress risks in local authority settings.

With climate change at or near the top of many council agendas, the Spotlight on Climate Change panel session, facilitated by Cllr Liz Green, was the most popular IZ talk.

This discussion attracted more than 100 delegates, who heard how the Carbon Co-Op and Centre for Local Economic Strategies are practising community-led energy planning in Oldham; how the East of England LGA is improving collaboration between councils and businesses to achieve climate goals; and about the University of Exeter's local climate adaptation tool, which identifies the health implications of climate change in local areas.

The IZ also provided opportunities to

learn more about the support available to councils through the LGA. For example: the LGA's Cyber 360 offer and the difference this has made for Dorset council; the new social housing peer challenge (see **first 673**); and LG Inform, the LGA's powerful benchmarking tool, which provides councils with free access to more than 10,000 data items and more than 50 reports, to support better decision-making (see p23, p24).

For the last three sessions, running in parallel, every headset was in use and it was standing room only, with topics as diverse as drones, community planning in Wales, and adult social care. It was the perfect metaphor for a very busy three days in the IZ.

Providing a hive of ideas and activity, the Innovation Zone – dubbed the 'beating heart' of the LGA's conference by delegates – was a credit to the many councils and contributors involved (including Newton, who again sponsored the IZ this year).

My thanks go to the incredible team at the LGA who made this year's IZ possible and such a fantastic success.



**Presentations from the Innovation Zone will be available on the LGA's website** at [www.local.gov.uk/past-event-presentations](http://www.local.gov.uk/past-event-presentations). **To find out more about the LGA's sector support programme**, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/publications/sector-support-offer-2022-23](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/sector-support-offer-2022-23), or contact the principal adviser for your region – see [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers)



Cllr Fleming in the zone

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# Signals of the future

What issues might local government leaders find in their inboxes by 2027?

**F**or some years, local government has been focused on battling the acute challenges facing their communities, from COVID-19 to the cost-of-living crisis.

With councils' attention on the here and now, it can be hard for local leaders to find the time and space to consider potential solutions for tomorrow's challenges.

So, the LGA has worked with market researcher Ipsos to conduct a 'horizon scan' of what new issues might be on the local government agenda in 2027.

By offering signals of how the future might look in five years' time, our report allows leaders to consider the steps and policies needed to mitigate possible threats, and capitalise on future opportunities – helping them move towards the future they want to see.

'Signals of the future', launched at the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate by Ipsos Chief Executive Ben Page (pictured), identifies 13 'drivers of uncertainty' – key questions that will shape the future issues faced by local government.

For example, in a very tight labour market, how do councils retain and upskill their staff while competing with other sectors to recruit the tech-savvy workers needed to make councils more responsive to data?

"Most of the people you will be

✧ *We will see rising older populations in inner cities* ✧

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PHOTOGRAPHY

serving in 2027 are already here," Mr Page told conference delegates, noting that a third of current school-age children are non-white British.

Councils are among the first bodies to deal with this cohort: how can they understand the support this generation will need in education and as they enter adulthood?

And as the UK becomes an increasingly aged society, the report suggests we will see rising older populations in areas that are not traditionally associated with older people – inner cities.

Urban areas might find it easier to cater for older people as they tend to have better public transport and a greater concentration of services near populations, but they will face other challenges, such as higher levels of pensioner poverty.

Climate change is a driver of planetary change – but data

suggests a fully renewable UK power grid will require a lot more space than is currently allotted to electricity generation. As local authorities can be significant landowners and act as arbiters of how space is used, a number of tensions can be expected as they trade off more land for power generation against other uses.

How we bridge the digital divide, the future of our high streets, providing mental health support for people of all ages, and the new restrictions councils might face are among some of the other future challenges raised in the report.

While Government reforms to empower local leaders to deliver improvements in housing, planning, education, social care and tackling climate change may be on hold pending the outcome of the Conservative leadership contest, there is a real opportunity now for councils to look at what the next few years may bring.

This is the start of a conversation across local government about some of these 'big ideas', as the LGA looks to drive forward a long-term policy agenda. After all, councils and your local leadership are integral to the future.

We are inviting councils to engage with these ideas, and you can send us your proposals for change – please visit [www.local.gov.uk/signals-future](http://www.local.gov.uk/signals-future) to find out more.



'Signals of the future – horizon scanning for local government' is available in full at [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications)

# Skills for future growth

Locally run employment schemes could help bring one million people back into the jobs market



Mayor **Marvin Rees** is Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board

**C** OVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on our daily lives and the way we work, but it has also led to many people falling out of the workforce altogether, despite the easing of restrictions.

Employment figures for April 2022 show there were more than 1.2 million fewer people in the labour force than there would have been had pre-pandemic trends continued.

Nearly three-fifths of this gap – or 670,000 people – is explained by fewer people aged over 50 in the labour market, especially women, with fewer than a quarter claiming benefits.

When combined with figures also suggesting the largest annual growth in worklessness because of long-term ill health since records began in 1992, this increases the total to 2.38 million, its highest since 2004.

Lower migration is also an important contributing factor, with 94,000 more EU nationals leaving the UK than arriving in 2020. All of which adds up to the fact that addressing these shortages is key to our economic recovery.

Local government has workforce capacity issues of its own, which existed before COVID-19 but have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

In a recent LGA survey of councils, 69 per cent said that addressing the local mismatch between skills supply and demand and having sufficient skills provision for future growth sectors were critical, with shortages highlighted in

adults' social care, children's services, planning, environmental health, and waste collection.

Analysis by the Learning and Work Institute, for the LGA's refreshed Work Local programme, shows that the number of people improving their skills or finding work could increase by 15 per cent if councils and combined authorities were better able to coordinate and bring together employment and skills provision across a place.

This in turn boosts the prospects of residents and businesses, improving the health and wellbeing of local communities while reducing costs to the public purse.

It would help not just those who left the jobs market directly because of the pandemic, but also job seekers, learners, people seeking a career change and young people working out their careers path.

About £20 billion is spent by central government on at least 49 national employment and skills-related schemes or services in England, managed by nine Whitehall departments and agencies. The fragmented and disjointed nature of these schemes makes it difficult to target and join up provision.

As part of Work Local's ambitious, practical vision for devolved and integrated employment and skills provision, the LGA is calling for a single place-based fund.

This would ensure funding and powers over national employment and skills-related schemes are devolved to local leaders, which could better support unemployed people into work, improve residents' skills and match them with new and existing vacancies.

It would also make more sense than councils bidding for separate pots of

funding for different projects, which cannot be used together.

Decisions about creating jobs locally must go hand-in-hand with how to support local people to have the necessary training and skills to apply for these jobs, which is fundamental to levelling up.

Councils and combined authorities are the only constant in this continually changing employment and skills landscape, and have used their knowledge, experience and capability to make the best of the current system.

Given the right powers and resources, they can do even more.

**i** For more about the LGA's Work Local programme, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/work-local](http://www.local.gov.uk/work-local)



LGA programmes continue to deliver value and impact for councils

# Supporting council improvement



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

**A**s we come to the end of the various LGA board terms, it gives me an opportunity to reflect on the work of the Improvement and Innovation Board over the last 12 months - and what a year it's been!

We have provided more support to more councils than ever before. We have delivered innovative programmes, from climate change to economic growth and financial resilience, giving councils countless opportunities to learn from one another, improve their practice and, ultimately, deliver better services to their residents.

The launch of the 'Supporting council improvement – annual report 2021/22' marks another successful year for our sector support offer.

We developed the offer as a direct response to what councils have told us they need to ensure they are equipped to address a wide range of challenges and opportunities.

In the report, we capture stories of success across different programme areas, giving you a glimpse into the wide-ranging nature of this support and, most importantly, the broader impact and value this brings to councils.

For instance, our expert regional teams and peers worked tirelessly to address the thorniest issues and broker a range of improvement support tailored to individual councils' needs. Targeted and bespoke support, such as mentoring and top-team development, helped councils address unique challenges, including during the post-election period.

Our remote peer support and peer

challenges – across areas including governance, finance, communications, equalities, and more – helped councils understand where they can go further on their improvement journeys.

We were also thrilled to be able to restart our highly valued Corporate Peer Challenge programme. Comments from councils featured in the report underpin the value of this support, with 100 per cent of authorities saying corporate peer challenges had a positive impact.

We have continued to provide learning and development opportunities to officers and councillors across the country. More than 2,000 councillors have benefited from the LGA's leadership programmes and training, such as Leadership Academy, Leadership Essentials and Next Generation.

Thousands of **councillors** benefited from LGA support

We also supported councils in building capacity and capability through our flagship National Graduate Development Programme and our workforce programme.

This has helped councils address recruitment and retention issues, improve their take-up of apprenticeships, and provide targeted support to places facing enhanced challenges.

Finally, the report highlights the LGA's offer to improve councils' approach to the most significant problems impacting the sector.

For example, the Climate Change programme enabled more councils to work towards their targets of lowering local carbon emissions and achieving adaptation, with 98.5 per cent of councils directly engaging with the programme in 2021/22.

Similarly, of the councils that participated in the Housing Advisors programme, 97 per cent said it made a lasting positive impact on their capacity to deliver housing and homelessness services, rough sleeping provision, and place-making.

There is more to share on the impact of our sector support programme, so I would encourage all councils to read the annual report to find out more about how the LGA has helped councils to improve and deliver for communities.

It is a fantastic resource to demonstrate the opportunities for you to improve your approach.

Seeing councils using our support to improve their service delivery, and offer better outcomes for residents, illustrates the value of our sector support programme and the impact it can have.



'Supporting council improvement – annual report 2021/22' can be viewed in full at [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications). The LGA's sector support programme is funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities





Jen Woolford is Director of Health, Population and Methods Transformation at the Office for National Statistics

# Population planning

Data from Census 2021 can help us understand who is living in our districts

**A**s you will no doubt have seen in the media recently, the first results from Census 2021 are out. These estimates of population and households cover England and Wales, rounded to the nearest 100, and for each local authority district.

While most areas of the country have seen their populations grow over the decade, there are pockets that showed a decline on Census Day (21 March 2021).

What is most definitely clear is that we are an increasingly ageing population.

The census is vital for councils because it helps us understand who is living in our local areas. Take school places, as an example. The census doesn't just tell us how many babies and toddlers are living in an area, it helps us look into the future.

By knowing how many young adults or young married couples live locally, provision for school places for the decade to come can be made.

Of course, it's not just school places. Planning for hospital beds, care homes,

transport systems, playgrounds, even where to build supermarkets and what to stock on shelves, all rely on the detailed intelligence a census gives us.

I'd urge you all to familiarise yourselves with the first release of data, if you haven't already done so. Everyone can go online ([ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk)) to explore the data and find out about their local area. There's even an interactive game to guess the population.

Over the coming months, the Office for National Statistics will release more statistics and analysis about how we were living in 2021.

The final picture will include information on ethnicity, language, country of birth, religion, the labour market, education and housing.

For the first time, this will also include details about UK armed forces veterans, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

As time rolls on, the ONS will provide that data down to electoral ward level, which will be of huge interest to councillors up and down the country.

Having this information has never

*□ We have gone even further in ensuring the census statistics are of the best quality □*

been more important as we, hopefully, emerge from the pandemic.

We had a fantastic response to the census but, by engaging with local authorities we have gone even further in ensuring the census statistics are of the best quality they can be.

For the first time, we gave all local government organisations the opportunity to have early sight of the data as part of our rigorous quality assurance processes and, where there was clear evidence to do so, made changes accordingly.

Some councils may have seen an unexpected fall in their area's population. It is worth bearing in mind that, whenever you take a census, it is a snapshot in time.

This time that was during a pandemic when some of us may have been living and working somewhere different to immediately before the pandemic.

Of course, since census day the world has continued to change – and will continue to do so. People move home, change jobs, some will have left the country while others will have arrived.

We are committed to reflecting continuing changes, using a variety of data sources, to provide more frequent, timely, and inclusive statistics to allow us all to understand population change in local areas this year and beyond.

We are also continuing to work with local government across England and Wales, to ensure changes are reflected in our ongoing statistics in a timely fashion.

Census 2021 – at a glance	
Census Day	21 March 2021
Person response rate	97%
Proportion of responses online	88.9%
Usual resident population of England and Wales	59,597,300
Total households in England and Wales	24,782,800
Largest usual resident population (county council)	Kent – 1,576,100
Largest usual resident population (single tier authority)	Birmingham – 1,144,900
Largest usual resident population (district council)	Colchester – 192,700
Increase in population from 2011 to 2021	3.5 million (6.3%)
Local authority area with largest increase in population from 2011	Tower Hamlets – 22.1% increase

Pupils at St Albans C of E Primary School, Havant, unveil the England and Wales population total



This will, in turn, allow us all to understand changes in local populations and numbers and types of occupied households, and ensure population statistics meet the needs of data users on an ongoing basis.

We rely on our partnerships with local government to make the best use of your unique local insights as we transition to a system making greater use of administrative data. To that end, we will be launching a framework for receiving local insight and data relating to local populations later in the summer.

In September 2022, we will publish further information on the quality assurance work we carried out for Census 2021. This will include findings from feedback we received from organisations, as well as the analysis we undertook across England and Wales using the most comprehensive set of comparator sources available.

 Visit [www.ons.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk) to find out more about **Census 2021**

## Your council's census data in LG Inform

You may not be surprised to learn that the first results from Census 2021 were quickly added into LG Inform, the LGA's data benchmarking tool for councils.

We've created a Census 2021 report for each area to provide you with quick and easy access to the 2021 results, how this has changed since 2011, and how your council area compares to your region and the country as a whole.

If you haven't had a chance to look at the data for your area yet, our report gives you a quick and easy snapshot.

The new Census 2021 report is available at <https://bit.ly/3o8JUWp>. Simply select your council at the top of the report.

ONS will be releasing additional data at a more granular level

over the next two years. As this becomes available, we will add it to LG Inform and LG Inform Plus (our subscription tool that provides data at smaller areas) and share the reports with you.

 LG Inform is the local area benchmarking tool from the LGA, providing themed reports and comparative data sets on a variety of topics including housing, planning and building control, environment and climate change, business and the economy, children's and adults' social care, public health, deprivation and poverty, demographics and Census 2021 – see [www.local.gov.uk/lginform](https://www.local.gov.uk/lginform)

# Improving performance management



## The LGA's new performance management tools include a guide for councillors

**F**or local authorities, performance management is about using data to inform actions that will improve outcomes for residents.

Our new online tools and guidance on performance management in local government support councillors to learn more about performance management and how it can help councils to, for example, work more productively in partnerships or improve their engagement with residents.

Many local authorities are using the period of recovery and renewal after the COVID-19 pandemic to rethink their strategies. Delivering effective performance management is a key way in which local government can take responsibility for its own performance.

It also helps the public and the Government to hold local service providers to account, ensuring

that they are responding to local needs and that public money is being spent wisely.

Our performance management resources include a guide for councillors, a guide for local authority officers, and a series of performance management case studies.

The guidance for councillors is suitable for councillors in any role, and provides an overview of performance management and the role of councillors in it.

In the guidance, we suggest that it is important to ensure that councillors are equipped with the performance management skills they need to answer the question: "Are the actions of your council effective in making the progress that is important to your residents?"

Our performance management case studies, from councils across our regions, are packed full of inspiration and practical tips.

For English councils, our free data-benchmarking platform – LG Inform – presents up-to-date data about your local area and the performance of your council or fire and rescue service. New data is added quickly after publication, from its source, enabling you to review and compare data on a range of topics, between local areas. You can use LG Inform to compare your local authority with others and monitor trends in your local area.

Additionally, more than 50 themed reports on a wide range of topics enable users to focus on key statistics, such as: housing affordability; local green jobs; resident demographics; children in need and care; COVID-19 cases and deaths; special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); children's services; rates of homelessness; adult social care; health; fly-tipping; and recycling rates.

These reports are useful for:

- councillors who are portfolio-holders or cabinet leads for a service – or who sit on a service committee – so they can monitor performance
- those on a scrutiny committee who are examining a service in detail
- frontline councillors who want to understand how their council is performing against key measures and to share that knowledge with their residents.

Our paid subscription service, LG Inform Plus, offers additional reports and benefits.

**i** **The LGA's new performance management resources** are available at [local.gov.uk/our-support/performance-management](https://local.gov.uk/our-support/performance-management) **Please let us know what you think of them** by emailing [transparency@local.gov.uk](mailto:transparency@local.gov.uk) **with your suggestions and ideas – and let us know of any additional resources you might find useful.**

### Get involved:

- Join our Improvement and Performance Knowledge Hub – a community of practice where you can discuss performance management with colleagues across the local government sector and stay updated about the support we offer – at [bit.ly/3RF5bV7](https://bit.ly/3RF5bV7)

**i** **Email us at [transparency@local.gov.uk](mailto:transparency@local.gov.uk) to find out more about our performance management support and resources.**

# COMMENT



**Polly Billington**  
is Chief Executive Officer  
of UK100

## Local net zero: an indispensable goal

**As Prime Minister, Boris Johnson established net-zero carbon as the quickest route to ending our reliance on Russian oil and gas, reducing household bills, and boosting local jobs and skills across the country.**

To us at UK100, as a network of climate-ambitious local authorities, it was clear that the net-zero priorities championed by local leaders across the country were now a mainstream UK Government priority.

Now, though, the future of the recently introduced Energy Bill is unclear.

And, rather than helping accelerate progress down the road to net zero, the Climate Change Committee's recent progress report to Parliament – and our own, newly published local delivery progress report – are, instead, vital tools for ensuring an incoming prime minister isn't tempted to take a wrong turn off the road altogether.

Taken together, they assess how far we have come since the UK's 2050 net-zero target became legally binding, and how far we have yet to go, and illustrate why net zero is an indispensable goal for people and the planet.

Our report – made in consultation and collaboration with our more than 100-strong, local authority membership – shows that the Government has made laudable progress in empowering councils to take climate action. But not enough.

It finds that, too often, the ambition of councils is not captured by the Government – a failure that presents a significant risk to the 2050 deadline – and that councils need more support from,



*Too often, the ambition of councils is not captured by the Government*

and collaboration with, national government. Government can't achieve net zero without local authorities, and vice versa: we need to work together.

Not all councils are the same. District, county, unitary and combined authorities have varying powers and funding deals.

Local net zero should not be a postcode lottery dependent on the type of council you have representing you, and the level of devolution and funding they have at their disposal.

The recently established Local Net Zero Forum is a way forward, but a new prime minister needs to give the body a clear direction and the power to deliver.

It is also vital that the forum has strong local, regional, and devolved government representation and direct ministerial collaboration, and that it works with local leaders to provide clear and consistent guidance on net-zero monitoring and reporting, to track local progress.

Fundamentally, though, the most

important thing is that a new prime minister continues to recognise the importance of net zero and its reach across government departments.

If it was up to me, the next occupant of Number 10 would take a copy of Innovate UK's 'Accelerating net-zero delivery' to bed with them every night.

This key report finds local and regional leaders are best placed to reduce bills and improve lives through net zero; and that for every £1 invested in local net zero, energy costs are slashed by almost £2 and communities reap £14 of wider social benefits.

It concludes that local net-zero action "will lead not just to energy savings, but also to wider social benefits that have potential to advance the levelling-up agenda".

As UK100 has long argued, levelling up and net zero are inexorably linked – and both agendas are too precious a baton to be dropped by Boris Johnson's successor.

**i** **UK100 is a network of local government leaders focused on climate, clean energy and clean air policy.** See [www.uk100.org/publications](http://www.uk100.org/publications) for its local net-zero delivery progress report

## The benefits of sustainable clean energy



Councillor **Shaun Davies** is Leader of the LGA's Labour Group

While the country eagerly sat waiting for the heatwave to pass, what was the Government doing? Well, our Prime Minister's off flying a Typhoon fighter jet and the final two candidates to be the next Prime Minister are tearing chunks out of each other.

While there's chaos in government, councils have just got on with providing support to residents. In many councils, bin collections commenced at 6am rather than 7am to reduce the workers' exposure to the extreme weather. Each council was also able to provide the public with

information regarding how to stay safe in the hot weather.

Councils have had to battle the pressing issue of a multitude of fires in areas such as Ealing and Brent. Across the country, councils brought street sleepers in from the heat. And they are now tasked with supporting families whose homes and belongings are left in ashes.

A crucial issue the country has faced in recent months is the rise in energy bills. As these soar, people have had to choose between heating their homes or eating.

As a country, it's vital that we move towards more sustainable and cleaner sources of energy, and supercharge the retrofitting of homes to much higher standards of insulation.

The Government should be leading efforts to insulate millions of homes, starting with those properties occupied by low-income families, so that we reduce

our emissions, but crucially also reduce people's energy bills too. It would also support hundreds of thousands of good jobs, and help put the UK at the forefront of the green revolution.

With climate change more obvious than ever, the Government needs to step up and get serious. It must cooperate and work with councils – and, in fact, the world – to stop this pressing issue from growing out of hand.

By working together, councils and the Government can play a vital role in helping people, but this is only with the Government's support.

**“As energy bills soar, people have had to choose between heating their homes or eating”**



Councillor **James Jamieson** is Chairman of the LGA

## Passionate about people and places

I can't say enough how wonderful it was to be with so many of you in Harrogate for the LGA's first in-person annual conference since 2019.

For many reasons, the mood could and maybe should have been downbeat, after three years of unprecedented and unpredictable challenges.

We are still recovering from a pandemic that has blighted our communities and looks set to have a long-term impact on everything from the wealth of our high streets to the health of our residents.

The Ukrainian war is contributing to rising energy costs and a wider cost-of-living crisis that is playing havoc with council and household budgets, and a humanitarian disaster that is bringing many thousands of new arrivals to our shores. As with COVID-19, local government has, once more, stepped up to the plate to help.

Meanwhile, councillors (and officers) face unprecedented and personal levels of abuse as they go about their jobs



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trying to help and support their local communities, according to LGA research published at conference.

Yet the mood in Harrogate was overwhelmingly positive. Sessions were well attended, questions were informed and pointed, and the LGA Hub and Innovation Zone were absolutely buzzing as councils shared their good ideas and best practice for the mutual benefit of all.

Everywhere – in conference sessions and political party group meetings, at receptions and over coffee (and sometimes something stronger!) – old acquaintances were being renewed, new contacts made, and professional and personal support networks reinforced.

I want to thank all of you, our speakers, sponsors and exhibitors, and the LGA's hard-working staff, for making this one of our best ever annual conferences. It is an honour to represent people who are so passionate about the places they serve.

Post-conference, we face further (hopefully short-term) uncertainties, with a Conservative Party leadership contest under way, and national government almost 'on hold'.

But I have absolutely no doubt that local government will continue to rise to the challenges we face and be the rock that our residents can rely on in uncertain times.



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

## New ministers and membership ballots

If the old saying that a week is a long time in politics is true, then the last month feels like a lifetime, as we have seen the resignation of the Prime Minister and significant changes in the ministerial team at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

I would like to thank Michael Gove, Kemi Badenoch, Stuart Andrew and Neil O'Brien for their engagement during their time at DLHUC, and wish them all the best for the future.

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**"The voice of Conservative councillors needs to be clearly heard during the leadership contest"**

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Our new Secretary of State, Greg Clark, is a familiar figure, having previously held the role. Along with Conservative Group colleagues, it was great to meet Greg and the new members of the team – Marcus Jones (who we also know well from his previous time in the department), Paul Scully and Lia Nici – shortly after their appointments.

We also look forward to continuing to work with Eddie Hughes and Lord Harrington, the two members of the previous team who remain in post.

The voice of Conservative councillors needs to be clearly heard during the leadership contest, and the LGA's Conservative Group has produced a manifesto to highlight the most important issues for local government and our key asks of Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss, the two candidates to progress to the membership ballot.

With the contest concluding in early September, I look forward to congratulating the new Prime Minister in that month's edition of **first**. In the meantime, I hope that you are all able to enjoy some rest over the summer break.



Councillor **Joe Harris** is Leader of the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group

## Great to see you again!

Celebrating our local election successes and sharing good practice were at the centre of our offer at the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate in late June.

I was delighted to be able to welcome the Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Ed Davey MP to the conference – the only party leader who attended.

Ed used the opportunity to showcase our councils' successes up and down the country, and remind people of our three impressive by-election results, the most recent in Tiverton and Honiton, which saw Richard Foord's stunning win.

Harrogate was the largest gathering of Liberal Democrat councillors and council leaders at an LGA conference for some years.

I was pleased to welcome Cllr Bill Revans, our new Leader at Somerset County Council, to his first conference, alongside Cllr Ann-Marie Barker, the new Leader of Woking Borough Council, and celebrate our return to control in Hull with its new Leader Cllr Mike Ross.

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**"The growing cost-of-living crisis continues to dominate the agenda for a lot of councillors"**

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We also used the occasion to celebrate new Liberal Democrat-led administrations, including the new unitary authority in Westmorland and Furness, Huntingdonshire, Wokingham, West Oxfordshire, Colchester, and Powys – our first Lib Dem-led council in Wales since 2012.

The growing cost-of-living crisis continues to dominate the agenda for a lot of councillors, so we used the conference to showcase the best from our councils, led by Bedford's directly elected Mayor Dave Hodgson.

Whatever your political affiliation, everyone I spoke to was pleased to be back at an in-person event: congratulations to the LGA's events team on a great conference.



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

## Net-zero response needed to hottest day

In July, we saw the hottest day in our country's history, and there is evidence that we should be expecting many more.

While there are some who disagree with the need to take this seriously, our infrastructure and our country's ecosystem are not designed to deal with these sorts of temperatures.

In my area, all the trains were cancelled on the East Coast, we saw tarmac melting, crops perishing, waterways low, our river life dying and our wildlife silent.

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**"If we want our country to continue to be a green and pleasant land, then action is needed"**

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In London, people lost their homes to fires and there was a real threat to life.

If we want our country to continue to be a green and pleasant land, then action is needed. The High Court has ordered the Government to outline exactly how its net-zero policies will achieve its emissions targets, after a legal challenge from environmental groups.

There is a lot of rhetoric about tax cuts at the moment, and I am concerned about how the country will cope with fewer services and bigger global challenges.

I represented the LGA at a recent Council of European Municipalities and Regions' event in Bologna, on climate change, and there was a strong message that, as a sector, we can share good practice on what can be done by local government and learn from each other.

Both our group and the LGA collect and share good-practice case studies (see [www.local.gov.uk/climate-change](http://www.local.gov.uk/climate-change)), so please do share with us how you are working locally to reduce our carbon emissions.

 For more information about the LGA's political groups, see [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)



**Peter Paduh** is  
Chairman of  
SocialBox.Biz

# A stepping stone into society

**Most of us probably take for granted our ability to access council and other essential services online, yet millions of people in England and Wales still have little or no access to technology.**

The elderly, the homeless and refugees are some of the hardest hit.

According to the charity Age UK, 51 per cent of digitally excluded people are aged over 65, while homeless charity C4WS found that 90 per cent of those in shelter don't have access to IT devices.

I know first-hand the importance of technology. I came to the UK from

Bosnia as a lone child refugee in the 1990s and could hardly speak a word of English.

My life changed when I was donated an old computer to support my education and transition into British society. I never looked back, and I went on to learn English, get my A levels and go on to study computing at university.

I set up SocialBox.Biz, a non-profit community interest company, to support the most vulnerable in society through the donation of free laptops and computers.

We work with businesses and councils to upgrade their old, but still usable, technology with open-source software, and redistribute it via our local charity partners.

We do this safely and securely, offering a certificate once the old laptop or computer has been wiped, and have even provided IT classes once they have been donated.

We also offer councils a free assessment to work out what can and can't be used. Importantly, this does not



affect council's recycling contracts as items can still be sent for recycling after our assessment, and once we've removed any usable items.

Upcycling, by reusing and donating to those who cannot afford a computer, is a far more environmentally friendly solution than selling old computers for recycling to scrap companies.

Giving someone a free laptop may not seem like much, but for many people it gives them hope and is an important stepping stone into society.



**SocialBox.Biz is a community interest company improving the local community** by

providing innovative technology solutions, see [www.socialbox.biz/](http://www.socialbox.biz/) or email [gjo@socialbox.biz](mailto:gjo@socialbox.biz) for more information

# Tackling anti-social behaviour



Councillor **Steve Bowles** (Con) is  
Cabinet Member for Communities  
at Buckinghamshire Council

**Tackling anti-social behaviour can be tough, but a recent partnership in Buckinghamshire has managed to do just that successfully.**

At the end of 2021, High Wycombe's Eden Shopping Centre and town centre experienced groups of youths gathering on Friday and Saturday evenings, leading to pockets of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

More than 54 incidents were recorded in three months, including drunken behaviour, violence, criminal damage, and intimidation of shoppers.

To combat this, Buckinghamshire Council, local charity Action4Youth, our local street wardens, Thames Valley Police and Eden Shopping Centre joined forces,

reducing the incidents of ASB and disorder between April and May 2022 to zero.

This successful outcome was achieved by our community safety team funding an additional youth security worker for six months, and targeted patrols by Thames Valley Police alongside street wardens and youth workers from The Junction – a youth club operated by Action4Youth and originally part-funded by High Wycombe Community Board.



Youths causing the problems were quickly identified from CCTV and an Action4Youth outreach youth worker offered them positive alternatives to hanging around and causing a nuisance.

These included playing table tennis and participating in music and lyric-writing sessions, among other engaging activities at The Junction.

Where the offer of support was turned down, visits were made to the home addresses of these offenders to make their parents aware. Alongside this, appropriate measures were put in place to support the young people and to help divert them from causing ASB in the future.

I'm very pleased to see this successful reduction of ASB in High Wycombe.

It's a great example of how Buckinghamshire Council, Action4Youth, Thames Valley Police and other partners are working together to help turn young people away from crime and disorder – and to make our county safer for residents and visitors.

ASB blights peoples' lives, even low-level issues, so it's fantastic to have been able to find a meaningful and lasting solution that has made the environment a nicer and safer place for all.



**Alicia Kennedy**  
is Director of  
Generation Rent

# Connecting with private renters

Every day, Generation Rent hears from private renters in severe difficulty because of an eviction, sometimes illegal, or suffering because of the poor quality of their home.

They are unaware of their rights and the responsibilities of their landlord, and they don't know where to go for help.

Unlike with social tenants, it's not obvious that the council can support private tenants.

Alongside this, we speak to local authorities who take their statutory duties to protect private renters seriously. They want to support the private renters in their local area, be proactive, and not just react to problems when it's too late.

The problem is, they don't know how best to engage with private renters.

Many local authorities have landlord forums, but very few authorities have formal mechanisms to engage and consult with private renters.

With so many powers and responsibilities being passed to councils to deal with private landlords, you can see how speaking with the ever growing, disparate population of private renters is a challenge.

Generation Rent wanted to make this challenge easier for local authorities.

We wanted to end that disconnect and find out ways in which local authorities could better engage with their population of private renters, leading to informed policy making, and an increased ability to plan and take proactive action – all of which saves time and money.

In turn, private renters would learn how the council could support them, where to go for help and, in the process, become more aware of their rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

With funding from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, we were able to launch a project to explore these issues and to answer two key questions: how can



Too many renters were unaware of their rights and how the local authority can help

ALICIA KENNEDY:  
© UK PARLIAMENT

local authorities better communicate with private renters about their rights and responsibilities, and what are the best ways for local authorities to engage and communicate with private renters?

For a year, we worked with Dundee City Council, East Suffolk Council, Gedling Borough Council, the London Borough of Newham, and Newport City Council to answer these questions.

We worked with each authority and their housing teams to consult with private renters.

Using qualitative and quantitative methods, we researched how private renters currently engage with their local authority, where they go for help if they have an issue with their home, and how they would like their local authority to communicate with them.

Shockingly, too many renters were

unaware of their rights and how the local authority can help.

A staggering 80 per cent had never contacted their council with a renting issue and 75 per cent had never visited its website for renting information. Yet four out of five renters want more guidance from their local authority about their rights. This is the disconnect – the missed opportunity by local authorities to better support a growing community of private renters.

In response, Generation Rent has developed a Private Tenant Engagement Charter, a mix of communication methods that will help local authorities be more accessible to local private renters.

Generation Rent wants to help local authorities develop their own charters so that they meet the needs of their local private renters.

Help give private renters a stronger voice within your local authority by being more accessible, in tune and in touch with the renters you have a statutory duty to support.

**i** **Generation Rent is the national voice for private renters.** Its mission is to ensure every home in the private rented sector is safe, secure and affordable, see [www.generationrent.org](http://www.generationrent.org)



**Linda Briheim-Crookall** is  
Head of Policy and Practice  
at Coram Voice

# Focusing on family ties

For nearly a decade, Coram Voice has been working to bring children's voices to the heart of social work practice through the Bright Spots programme, in collaboration with the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford.

The Bright Spots programme has supported more than 60 local authorities across the country to listen to their children in care and care leavers about what matters to them most, so that their views can influence service development and lead to innovative practices that improve children's wellbeing.

One key theme to emerge centres on children's feelings about spending time with their birth families.

Our recent report, 'Staying connected', analysed the views of more than 7,500 children and young people on their contact arrangements, and found that a significant proportion were unhappy with their plans.

Up to a third of children and young people in care felt they saw their mothers, fathers and siblings too little.

One child said: "I wish I had more contact, and I would like it to be longer."

However, not all children wanted more

*Half of the young people said they did not feel involved in the decisions made about their lives*

contact with their birth families. Out of every 100 children in care, between two and three wanted contact to stop or be cut down.

As one young person said: "I'm scared of my dad, but I still have to have contact with him. I don't want to."

Children and young people also highlighted a number of other factors linked to contact arrangements that were important to them.

One young person said: "I am told the 'contact team' doesn't work at weekends. If that is their job, then they should work when I can have contact... not just business hours."

"It's stupid, stupid, stupid. My mum works and so after school contact is difficult, and only an hour!"

As well as parents and siblings, most



children in care also wanted to see extended family members, pets or other adults who were important to them.

One young person summed this up: "Why is stepfather not on this [survey]? I don't see my father, but see my stepfather."

"Families are made up of lots of people who may not be blood relatives, but you see them as your family. They should be included."

Children and young people who were happy with arrangements felt involved and listened to. It is concerning, therefore, that half of the young people we surveyed said they did not feel involved in the decisions social workers made about their lives and many commented that their wishes on contact arrangements were not listened to.

The recent independent review of children's social care (see **first 673**) underlined the importance of lifelong loving relationships for children in care and care leavers. But this can only be achieved if more is done to build, rather than break, these relationships.

Local authorities must listen to children and young people, and identify who they want to see, when and how, and seek to make this happen.

Our research shows the potential to improve young people's wellbeing by supporting and facilitating key relationships according to their wishes, but there is still more work to be done.

Alongside the research report we have produced a range of resources to help local authorities achieve this. To find out more, please go to [www.coramvoice.org.uk/staying-connected-report](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/staying-connected-report).

## Some findings from the report



**i** Coram Voice is a children's rights organisation, championing children in care and care leavers, see [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

# Surprise victories, hopeless causes



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



## For local Conservative associations fighting council by-elections, the misery continues.

The party was defending 12 seats and lost eight. The Liberal Democrats gained six, Labour three and the Greens one.

The Conservatives failed to defend Rutland's Oakham South division, having won two of the ward's three seats in May 2019 and losing one to the Liberal Democrats in an August 2021 by-election.

The failure to defend is a highly unusual occurrence for the Conservatives, with only three previous examples over the past 40 years.

Another hopeless Conservative cause featured in Waverley's Hindhead ward. In 2019, the Liberal Democrats won with 544 votes, while their second candidate tied with a Conservative on 542 votes. The Conservative took the seat by lot, but his death prompted this by-election, which the Liberal Democrats won.

It was the Green party that topped the poll in Bernwood's inaugural election to the newly established Buckinghamshire unitary authority in 2021. The other two seats went to Conservatives with the Liberal Democrats not in the running.

This time round, the Greens were favourites to win, but were beaten by the Liberal Democrats.

The 2019 election for East Riding of Yorkshire's Bridlington North ward saw the Conservatives easily win three seats, challenged only by a single Labour candidate.

Shortly afterwards, the death of a councillor caused a by-election that provided a surprise victory for the Liberal Democrats, with the death of another councillor prompting this by-election and another Liberal Democrat win.

Given the context, none of Labour's three gains from the Conservatives is surprising.

The Conservative incumbent of Harlow's Bush Fair was elected earlier this year by just four votes. He resigned amid some controversy, giving the defending party little hope.

In South Derbyshire, a split in the Conservative majority led to a group led by Cllr David Angliss sitting as Independents with Labour running a minority administration.

His resignation brought about a by-election for Midway ward that in 2019 had elected him alongside two Labour councillors. Negative publicity over

council management and a split ward are not ideal conditions for the Conservatives, and they lost.

In Breckland's Thetford Boudica ward in 2019, Labour edged the third-placed Conservative by just 15 votes, thereby taking the second seat. Labour's winning margin in this by-election three years later? Fifteen votes.

Green party gains from the Conservatives are now a regular occurrence.

Mole Valley has seen support slipping away from the Conservatives, largely to the Liberal Democrats who now control the council. However, the by-election in Charlwood saw the Greens make the gain, ahead of the Liberal Democrats, with the defeated Conservatives relegated to third place.

The Conservatives did succeed in winning a seat in Wyre Forest, albeit from the Independent Community and Health Concern, which did not contest after announcing it would no longer promote candidates.

Finally, in Camden, there was an unusual Liberal Democrat gain from Labour, when the incumbent, elected in May, resigned his seat. The Liberal Democrats chose a former councillor for the area – Linda Chung, who won easily.

## Local by-elections

### Breckland, Thetford Boudica

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
1.9% over Con      Turnout 21.7%

### Buckinghamshire, Bernwood

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
4.3% over Green      Turnout 34.7%

### Camden, Hampstead Town

LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB  
13.3% over Con      Turnout 37.9%

### Chesterfield, Hollingwood and Inkersall

LAB GAIN FROM IND  
4.6% over Ind      Turnout 26.8%

### East Riding of Yorkshire, Bridlington North

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
25.6% over Con      Turnout 30.1%

### Harlow, Bush Fair

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
8.9% over Con      Turnout 23.6%

### Middlesbrough, Berwick Hills & Pallister

LAB GAIN FROM IND  
24.7% over Ind      Turnout 11.1%

### Mole Valley, Charlwood

GREEN GAIN FROM CON  
10.9% over Lib Dem      Turnout 36.7%

### Rutland, Oakham South

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
Unopposed

### Shropshire, Highley

LIB DEM GAIN FROM IND  
30.3% over Con      Turnout 40.5%

### South Derbyshire, Midway

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
5.3% over Con      Turnout 18.3%

### Waverley, Hindhead

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
9.3% over Con      Turnout 29.8%

### Wyre Forest, Franche and Habberley North

CON GAIN FROM ICHC  
9.3% over Lab      Turnout 24.5%



**Only results where there was a change of political control are shown here.** For all the results and more detailed information, please visit [www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections](http://www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections)

## CORRECTION

In a table in 'Local elections dilemma' (first 672), we mistakenly stated that Plaid Cymru had gained nine seats and other parties had lost six seats in the Welsh local elections in May. In fact, the reverse was true. We apologise for any upset caused.

# LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition

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