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As this edition of **first** was going to press, the LGA was finalising its representation on behalf of councils to Chancellor Jeremy Hunt, ahead of his Autumn Statement on 22 November (p5, p24).

For the latest updates on this work, please visit www.local.gov.uk or follow us on social media at @LGACOMMS and @LGAnews.

Improving the support we provide for children in care and care leavers is one of my priorities as LGA Chair, so I'm delighted that we have launched our Step Ahead campaign for care leavers (p10).

The LGA is also reviewing its work on children's and young people's mental health, and has commissioned a series of think pieces from experts, councils, charities, and young people themselves (p13).

October is Black History Month, and we take a look at the LGA's long-running leadership support for black, Asian and ethnic minority councillors (p16).

For the first time, we held LGA events at the Green Party Autumn Conference (p25), as well as the Liberal Democrat, Conservative and Labour events (p19-21).

Elsewhere in the magazine, we hear from the Rural Services Network (p23); and from a unique partnership of English and Welsh councils working on cross-border issues (p30).

Councillor Shaun Davies
is LGA Chair



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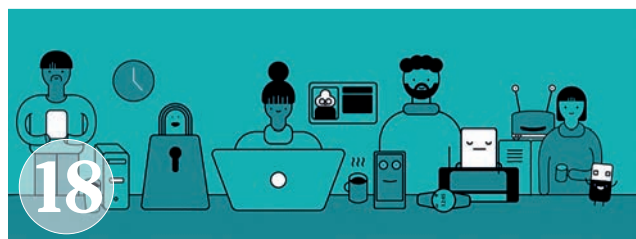
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‘Systemic’ challenges to children’s services

Children’s services are continuing to deliver improvements and sustain strong performance, according to a new report commissioned by the LGA.

Despite significant national challenges, local partnerships are doing ‘inspiring work’ which is ‘testament to how transformation can be achieved at a local level with the right enabling factors in place’.

However, the report – ‘A maturing approach to children’s services improvement: updating the key enablers of progress’ (see www.local.gov.uk/publications) – suggests that what children’s services can achieve is ‘transcended’ by bigger and wider systemic challenges.

These include policy not always being joined up at a national level, structural challenges in recruiting and retaining workforce, lack of placements for children with the most complex needs, and the need for greater investment in services.

Councils have been rising to these challenges through a ‘culture change’ in workforce and closer partnership working. The voice and lived experiences of children are at the heart of the improvement effort.

The report also reveals the ‘undeniable impact’ of COVID-19, which has brought new children and families to the attention of children’s services who may not have previously needed help, intensified calls on mental health services for children and adults, and led to far-reaching changes in how the children’s workforce operates.



Cllr Louise Gittins, Chair of the LGA’s Children and Young People Board, said: “It is very positive to see that councils are continuing to deliver improvements in children’s services, and a testament to their tireless efforts to ensure children and young people get the support they need.

“However, this report is a reminder of the much wider, systemic challenges faced by councils, including escalating funding concerns.

“While councils have responded well to these challenges, what is clear is that we need to see a national response that provides the investment and reform that children’s services desperately need.

“The Autumn Statement is an opportunity for the government to provide significant additional funding for all councils that can be wisely invested in stabilising the current system to ensure strong foundations on which to build future reform.”

£1.1 billion long-term plan for ‘overlooked’ towns

More than 50 ‘overlooked’ UK towns will each be given £20 million over a 10-year period to help regenerate high streets and tackle antisocial behaviour, the Government has announced.

Each town will have a long-term plan drawn up by a new towns board, made up of local community leaders and employers – “putting local people, not politicians, in charge

of their own town’s future”, according to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Cllr Martin Tett, Chairman of the LGA’s People and Places Board, said: “Town centres and high streets are at the heart of local communities and this funding will provide a much-needed boost to those areas set to benefit.

“It is also good this money has been allocated on the

basis of need and not via competition, which we have long called for. Being able to adapt to multiple challenges, from changes in people’s shopping habits to the rising cost of living, is common to councils across the country and we want to work with government to make this plan a success.

“Councils face a £4 billion funding gap over the next

two years just to keep services standing still.

“It is essential that they have adequate, long-term resources to meet ongoing cost and demand pressures, protect vital services that keep our high streets vibrant and can continue to work with local business and community leaders, to put sustainable plans in place to create thriving towns.”

● See p20



‘Inflationary storm’ adds to £4bn funding gap

Councils in England face a funding gap of £4 billion over the next two years – a £1 billion increase since the LGA’s initial analysis in July.

The new research also shows that by 2024/25, cost and demand pressures will have added £15 billion (almost 29 per cent) to the cost of delivering council services since 2021/22.

Some councils have warned these costs are threatening their financial sustainability, with local government having already absorbed a 27 per cent real-terms cut in core spending power since 2010/11.

Ahead of the Autumn Statement on 22 November, the LGA is clear that using financial reserves to plug funding gaps is not a solution to the long-term financial pressures councils face, and additional resources cannot come solely from hard-pressed council tax-payers.

Cllr Pete Marland, Chair of the LGA’s Economy and Resources Board, said:

“Councils remain firmly in the eye of the inflationary storm and council finances are under pressure like never before.

“None are immune to the risk of running into financial difficulty and others have already warned of being unable to meet their legal duty to set a balanced budget and are close to also having to issue Section 114 notices.

“The easy savings have long since gone. Councils are faced with hard decisions about cutting valued services, and increasing council tax and fees and charges during a cost-of-living crisis.

“We call on the Chancellor to act to address the acute financial challenges faced by councils.

“This is vital to protect the local services our communities rely on every day but also to reduce costs falling on other public services and support the delivery of key government agendas on areas such as housing, levelling up and climate change.”

● See p24

Chief executive departs LGA

LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd CBE has left the organisation after eight years in the role.

During his time at the LGA, Mr Lloyd led councils through some of the biggest challenges local government has faced, including the aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy, the implications of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rising cost of living.

He was the organisation’s second longest-serving chief, having taken on the role after a decade running two councils, Durham and Cambridgeshire County Councils.

Work has started to appoint his successor. In the meantime, Sarah Pickup CBE, LGA Deputy Chief Executive, is Acting Chief Executive, supported by Sally Burlington OBE as Deputy Chief Executive.

Cllr Shaun Davies, LGA Chair, said: “Mark has steered the LGA through some of the most difficult times and represented the whole of local government on some of the thorniest topics the country and councils have faced.

“The LGA’s group leaders and board join me in wishing him well for the future and in thanking him for his outstanding service to the LGA and local government.”

Mark Lloyd said: “It has been a brilliant eight years at the LGA.

“My enormous thanks to the excellent LGA team and all the councillors, council chief executives, partner organisations and government ministers and officials I’ve had the privilege and pleasure to work with.

“This is the best job in local government, but now is the right time for me to hand over the LGA for someone to build on the achievements we have delivered and the progress we have made.”

LG white paper – have your say

The LGA has launched a ‘call for evidence’ from councils to help inform its work on a Local Government White Paper.

As part of its Make It Local campaign, the LGA is working with the sector to present a clear vision for the future of local government, based on priorities from the public, councils and local communities.

The aim is to publish this as a White Paper ahead of the next General Election, to inform the first King’s Speech of the next government. This would provide a plan to secure a national-

local partnership – a new local deal – in which local government can work to its full potential for our people, our places and our planet.

To set out a strong case, the LGA is asking councils to submit their strongest pieces of existing evidence demonstrating how a more empowered local government could deliver the public’s priorities more effectively.

We are also interested in any proposals from across councils for local public service reform that could deliver better services for our communities.

If your council would like to submit examples or proposals for local public service reform, please email these to: LGWP@local.gov.uk by 22 December.

We will also shortly be launching a national survey of council leaders and chief executives to gather data on what key changes the sector needs for the future.

The submitted evidence from councils, survey data and commissioned research will all help create a strong case and proposal to whoever forms the next government.

In brief

Disabled councillors

The LGA is offering disabled councillors free one-to-one coaching sessions focused on leadership development. The sessions provide councillors with a safe space to examine and reflect on their leadership style, strengthen their resilience, and build confidence. This opportunity is open to all councillors and consists of monthly one-hour coaching sessions held via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. To find out more, or to book your place, email leadership@local.gov.uk. This forms part of our wider support offer to disabled councillors, see www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development

Single-use plastic

The LGA is concerned that not enough businesses and individuals are aware that the use of some single-use plastics is now banned, and that this risks creating costs for councils, which are responsible for enforcing the ban. Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Environment Spokesperson, said: "This is a valuable policy to reduce waste, but there is still more to do. We are keen the Government introduces 'extended producer responsibility' to incentivise producers to reduce waste and increase recyclable packaging, as well as enable councils to work with communities to improve recycling."

Sustainability support

The LGA, in partnership with and funded through the Crown Commercial Service, has launched a two-year sustainability programme to help councils reach their local carbon reduction and adaptation targets. The programme will support councils by building capability through learning, skills, and guidance; providing tools, such as the LGA's greenhouse gas accounting tool and waste emissions calculator; and providing networks, including an online sustainability hub. Cllr Abi Brown, Chairman of the LGA's Innovation and Improvement Board, said: "Councils are at the forefront of local sustainability action and through this programme and partnership with Crown Commercial Service, the LGA will be able to support councils with carbon reduction and adaptation measures." To find out more, please email sustainability@local.gov.uk

DIY waste ban 'could mean tip closures'

Banning councils from charging households to leave DIY waste at recycling centres could mean tip closures and reduced hours in some council areas, an LGA survey has found.

The LGA has warned that removing funding from local waste services – when the cost of providing them continues to rise – will leave some councils with little choice but to reduce services the public have come to expect and rely on.

It has urged the Government to reverse the plans, which will cost some councils upwards of £1 million.

A snapshot survey by the National Association of Waste Disposal Organisations and the LGA found that, because of the reduced income, a third of impacted councils would consider closing recycling centres, a quarter would consider reduced opening hours, and a quarter would consider reducing the types of material accepted.

Almost all councils impacted (97 per cent) do not expect the ban on charges to be offset by savings in dealing with fly-tipping or elsewhere.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Environment Spokesperson, said: "Public satisfaction with local waste services remains high, which is



something councils are proud of and work hard to maintain.

"For many councils, reducing their abilities to charge for the disposal of DIY waste will lead to funding reductions that will have to be passed on to reduced waste services popular with our residents.

"We continue to seek genuine solutions to fly-tipping and are pressing for tougher sentencing and greater use of tracking technology.

"We are urging the government to rethink this plan; it is not a good time to be reducing waste services popular with our residents."

Social care: workforce challenges remain

Around 390,000 adult social care staff left their jobs last year – with about a third of them leaving the sector altogether, according to the strategic workforce development and planning body in England.

Skills for Care's annual report shows a year of 'green shoots' and ongoing challenges as adult social care continues to struggle to recruit and retain adequate numbers of staff.

The report identifies factors that are key to retaining staff, including: being paid more than the minimum wage; not being on a zero-hours contract; being able to work full-time; being able to access training; and having a relevant qualification.

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

"While this important annual research shows some positive progress, it also makes clear that there remains much to do to secure adequate numbers of staff across social care.

"It crucially highlights the factors that enhance staff retention, many of which the LGA has requested government support for, and which many councils are acting on in their work with providers, in order to build and maintain a sustainable workforce.

"A dedicated plan to promote, protect, support and develop careers in social care, alongside parity of pay and terms and conditions with the NHS for comparable roles, both strengthen the wellbeing and recognition of those who work in this essential vocation, and benefit the people who draw on care."

'Patchwork' support no help into work

Nearly nine million people who are economically inactive risk being left out of work for even longer, because of a complex patchwork of national schemes that fail to directly address their needs, the LGA has warned.

There are at least 51 such schemes in England designed to support people back to work in various ways, but none of these join up and very few address the underlying causes, according to an LGA-commissioned report.

The number of people who are economically inactive – not in employment, not looking for a job or not able to start work – has reached a record UK high of 8.7 million, with many ineligible for support if they are not claiming out-of-work benefits.

Reasons for inactivity include physical and mental health conditions, lack of transport, and a need to upskill and earn new qualifications.

The report, by Shared Intelligence, says a more joined-up approach across government and a commitment to work through councils to design and target support is vital.

It also recommends giving councils a leading role in helping people back to work in their areas with long-term, simplified funding.



Existing programmes should also be broadened out to better reach people who are economically inactive, and any support must be linked to other frontline services such as public health, housing, adult and community learning, and the NHS.

Cllr Martin Tett, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "Economic inactivity does not have a quick fix and short-term, limited schemes will not be enough to get millions of people back into work.

"Given the right powers and funding, local government can do so much more to unlock the labour market, join up support and boost economic growth."

'Extraordinary intervention' needed on audit delays

Only five out of 467 local government bodies had published their 2022/23 accounts with an auditor's certificate or opinion by the end of September.

This adds to 456 that are outstanding from previous years, according to Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA).

Steve Freer, PSAA's Chair, said intensive work continued behind the scenes to find a solution to the backlog.

He added: "It is now very clear that an extraordinary intervention of some sort is urgently required to put the system back on track.

"An important strand of any solution must be to address the root causes of so many delayed opinions so that, following its implementation, the delivery of timely opinions is firmly and permanently re-established."

Cllr Pete Marland, Chair of the LGA's Economy and Resources Board, said: "Councils have a statutory duty to publish audited accounts and council staff work hard to prepare these.

"It is unacceptable that, because of delays in audit outside of their control, only five local authorities have been able to do so by the prescribed deadline.

"The causes of the crisis in audit are not simple. It has long been recognised that they are multi-faceted and complex and will take time to address.

"It will take a concerted response from a range of organisations, including the Government, audit firms and regulators.

"We are urging these parties to work together and for the Government to set a firm timetable by which timely audits will be restored."

Cities 'could boost growth' by £100bn a year

Bringing the economic performance of the UK's major regional cities up to that of their European peers could add £100 billion or around 5 per cent to the nation's GDP each year.

So says a new report from the UK Urban Futures Commission, which also found that unleashing cities' potential could lift 250,000 people out of unemployment, 1.2 million out of poverty and increase healthy life expectancy by up to eight years.

The commission – led by the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, in partnership with Core Cities UK, which represents cities including Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Cardiff – found there is still much to do to ensure such cities reach their full potential.

Cllr Satvir Kaur, Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board, said: "Cities have a long and proud history of being at the forefront of economic growth and development in our country and every area of the UK should have a globally competitive city.

"As this report rightly highlights, too many of our urban areas have fallen behind our European peers, and city leaders need to be trusted with the powers and flexible funding to realise their full potential, including being able to reinvest what they raise locally.

"Given the right policies, finances and space to deliver, cities can boost our productivity, tackle our inequalities and reach our climate ambitions, not just for urban areas but for the whole country."



In brief

Membership survey

The LGA wants to know what you – our members – think of the work we are doing on your behalf, to help inform our future plans. We have commissioned BMG Research to undertake our latest ‘perceptions’ survey and would urge councillors approached by researchers to share their views on how well we are doing in our role as the national voice of local government and working to support councils. We use the results to help inform our priorities, our ways of working and our approach to supporting councils. The survey will only take around 15 minutes to complete and starts in mid-October. If you have any questions, email keiron.watt@local.gov.uk

Brownfield land

Nearly 100 local authority regeneration projects in England will receive a share of £60 million as part of the second phase of the £180 million Brownfield Land Release Fund. The funding will help councils build more than 6,000 new homes on brownfield sites, transforming unused, redundant or derelict sites into thriving neighbourhoods. The programme is being rolled out by One Public Estate, a partnership between the LGA and government. Cllr Shaun Davies, LGA Chair, said: “Councils have continued to embrace opportunities to bring brownfield sites in their ownership forward for housing, and this fund plays a key role in helping councils to provide the types of homes their communities really need.”

Social housing

The Government has launched a national advertising campaign informing social housing residents of their rights to report issues of concern, make complaints to their landlords, and escalate them to the Housing Ombudsman, if necessary. ‘Make things right’ aims to improve social housing conditions, and will run until 3 March on social media and online, followed by further advertising in non-English languages. A communications toolkit for landlords, councils and other partners has also been made to support the campaign – see <https://socialhousingcomplaints.campaign.gov.uk>

‘Trust councils to make transport decisions’

Councils, not Whitehall, should be trusted to make decisions about local transport issues with their residents, the LGA has said, in response to the Government’s ‘Plan for drivers’.

The plan, announced at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester, proposes restricting the ability of councils to enforce 20 mph zones on main roads and moving traffic infringements in yellow box junctions.

Other proposals include a consultation on removing councils’ access to the national automatic number plate recognition database, which can be used to issue fixed penalty notices for certain motoring offences; and restricting the hours bus lanes operate.

The proposals follow previous announcements, including an extension

from 2030 to 2035 on banning the sale of new electric and diesel cars.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, the LGA’s Transport Spokesperson, said: “Councils want to work with the Government to make our roads safe and attractive for everyone who uses them.

“However, it is councils – who know their communities best – that should be trusted to make local transport decisions with their local residents, not Whitehall.

“They must continue to have the ability to work with local residents on any measures which can help improve road safety and air quality and reduce congestion.

“Removing the ability of all councils to enforce moving traffic violations would be a backwards step that will risk creating a two-tier transport system between London and the rest of the country.”

All councils need bus franchising powers – LGA

Councils need new powers to decide the way local bus services are delivered to end a ‘spiral of decline’ in services.

A report from the LGA and the Urban Transport Group warns that the task of patching and mending gaps in the network and protecting vital bus routes is more challenging than ever for local authorities.

They are calling for a review of current legislation that would allow all cities, towns and rural areas in England to have the same rights to introduce bus franchising as those enjoyed by mayoral combined authorities.

Those would include power over the fares that are charged and standards that should be met; and over the frequency of bus services provided and where and when they run.

The report, ‘A smoother ride’, recommends simplifying and improving the franchising

process. It is published at the same time as Greater Manchester becomes the first city region outside London to run franchised bus services.

With every £1 invested in bus services estimated to bring an economic return of £4.50, taxpayers, the LGA and the Urban Transport Group are calling for greater long-term investment in local bus services.

Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Transport Spokesperson, said: “Councils should be in the driving seat to deliver good, affordable and reliable bus services in their areas, not private bus operators, but are restricted from taking greater control over them.

“By providing councils with new franchising powers they would be able to keep fares down, increase the number of local bus routes and make buses more attractive for everyone to use.”

Right care, right person

Time is needed to implement changes in emergency responses to people in a mental health crisis

The Department of Health and Social Care has developed 'Right Care, Right Person', a National Partnership Agreement on mental health and policing, with the aim of ending the inappropriate and avoidable involvement of police in responding to incidents involving people with mental health needs.

Humberside Police and its partners pioneered the 'Right Care, Right Person' model. It took three years to develop using a local professional network of social care, health and police representatives.

The LGA agrees that the needs of people experiencing mental health crisis should be addressed by the most appropriate service, and this may not always be the police.

Concerns, however, have been raised by the LGA, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), and others, that this model is being rolled out too quickly, without the involvement of key local partners.

This risks undermining the positive approach advocated by the model as well as significant dangers to people experiencing mental distress, those who care for them, and adults and children in need of safeguarding.

With London's Metropolitan Police having announced that it would introduce the model at the end of October 2023, the LGA is concerned that many other forces will introduce the approach without fully involving councils and other partners.

The LGA has written to the ministers responsible for mental health, social care, children and young people, and criminal justice, to underline that 'Right Care, Right Person' needs to be implemented

in a much more managed way, to allow for councils and other partners to plan for its introduction.

We have had responses to the effect that, while they acknowledge our concerns and are willing to engage with us around developing specific guidance and monitoring impact, decisions around how or whether to roll out this approach ultimately rest with local police commanders.

However, ministers emphasised that any roll-out of 'Right Care, Right Person' should be developed in partnership with councils and the NHS.

The LGA also engaged with the National Police Chiefs' Council and it has reassured us that they want to see police forces roll out 'Right Care, Right Person' with partners, rather than imposing it on them.

Children's services have also not been meaningfully involved in the

development of the National Partnership Agreement, and members of the LGA, ADASS and ADCS have highlighted safeguarding concerns for younger children living in a household with an adult in crisis and for older children who themselves may be in crisis, particularly children in care or 16 and 17-year-olds transitioning to independence.

Undertaking such a radical change in delivery without appropriate planning or engaging with established networks could increase the risk for people already vulnerable because of mental health crisis.

The LGA will, as ever, continue to work with government to identify the implications of 'Right Care, Right Person' for local government and cost any new burdens.

The need for local collaboration and partnership is key to the model being effective and successful.

i See www.local.gov.uk/parliament for more on the LGA's parliamentary and lobbying work. See p13



Step ahead

The LGA launches campaign to help support care leavers

Next week marks the beginning of National Care Leavers' Week (25 October to 1 November), a time to celebrate our care leavers, amplify their voices and raise awareness of the challenges still facing the sector.

For councillors, supporting those leaving care is an enormous but thoroughly rewarding responsibility.

As corporate parents, it is your job to make sure that young people are ready for what's next when they leave care, from managing household bills to getting a job and ensuring they have strong relationships to support them into adulthood.

At the LGA's annual conference in July, LGA Chair Cllr Shaun Davies set out our intentions to ensure those leaving care are given the best start to their adult life.

To show this commitment, we are launching our new Step Ahead campaign, which will not only work to improve direct support to care leavers but also refresh and go further in the support we provide to councils in supporting their care leavers.

We're kickstarting our campaign with a collection of good practice case studies from councils across the country (see below, for one), as well as encouraging councils to celebrate National Care Leavers' Week by



providing shareable assets for social media channels.

As part of the campaign, we have also been exploring:

- how the LGA as an employer can do more to support care-experienced employees and prospective employees
- how we can make the most of our ability to bring together partners from different sectors to work together
- where we can do more to make sure councils have what they need to provide children in care

and care leavers with the best possible support.

Making sure we help people on the right path to a settled, successful and happy adulthood is one of the most important things we can do, and across the country, councils are working on innovative approaches to support them.



See www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/step-ahead for more information about the **Step Ahead** campaign. We'd love to hear your council's story in supporting care leavers – please email amelia.sutton@local.gov.uk

The pan-London offer

When it comes to developing policy and support for those leaving care, young people deserve a seat at the table – as can be seen through the Pan-London Care Leavers Offer.

The initiative, led by policy-makers from the Association of London Directors of Children's Services, London Councils, Partnership for Young London (PYL) and the Greater London Authority, aims to create more aligned services in support of care leavers, to improve the outcomes

for looked-after children and young people leaving care.

The pre-established Pan London Children in Care Council (CiCC) is made up of representatives, aged 14-24, who are motivated to use their lived experience of care to improve both their own lives and those of their peers.

Through the CiCC, young people identified a number of policy areas for the care leavers' offer, such as health and housing. They also hosted a care

leavers' offer consultation event in partnership with PYL, which brought together 98 people from across London.

A lesson to be learned from the initiative has been to recognise that the young people involved often need to prioritise other areas of their lives over their involvement in the initiative.

Young people need effective access to support for the different challenges in their lives, and multiple routes for engagement should be programmed into the work.

'Turning adversity into opportunity'

Sebastian Scott is studying law at SOAS University of London

Getting into law is very challenging, and the challenges are exaggerated when you have experience in the care system.

I have often worked harder than my peers to get to this point.

From 10 years old until 22, I've been part of the care system in some capacity, bouncing from my stepmother's home to my sister to more institutionalised facilities.

These years were my formative ones, the age when you mature from a boy into a young man, where your environment is crucial to who you can become as a person and the values you hold.

For a long time, I struggled to form my own identity that was true to me. Adaptability had become my ally.

From living in a working-class environment in Lewisham to moving to more affluent Kent, mixing with people from all walks of life, I could comfortably switch

my demeanour and language. I developed the ability to wear different social masks.

Over the years, with support from a handful of organisations including the Care Leaver Covenant, I recognised that adaptability wasn't merely a by-product of my upbringing but it was a skill I'd honed.

I began to view it as an asset and advantage that other people I came across didn't have.

Being in care often means you don't have access to an established professional network. Ultimately, I built my own, forging relationships with people I admired and wanted to learn from.

Without financial support, I learned to be financially literate and independent from an early age.

Nobody in my initial network attended college or university, so I had to go out and do my own research.

All of these deprivations drove me to be self-sufficient, resourceful, and proactive, setting me up to take advantage of every opportunity that came my way.

A casual chat in the gym with a lawyer turned into a blueprint for what I needed to do to work towards a future that aligned with my values.

Interacting with the Care Leaver Covenant led to several foot-in-door moments; my circumstances gave me the skills to push them open and walk through.

In this way, I view myself as 100 per cent self-made, and I'm proud that at 18 I departed from the secure estate and began my new journey. At 23 I am proud to be studying law at SOAS University of London, one of the most prestigious institutions in the world.

People are regularly surprised when they learn I'm care experienced. Growing up, it made me feel on the periphery, an outsider, there was a stigma.

Now that I'm on the path to being a lawyer and person of influence, I feel society making assumptions again, but they're positive and admiring.

I see this as a massive way I can give back to others from a similar background or who have shared similar experiences. I can show the world that being care experienced doesn't put a person at a disadvantage or make them a burden – it can be the exact opposite.

I believe it's time the working world started recognising the value in care experience as there are tremendous assets in character and skill which are not utilised in society. Because out of the other side comes a person who turns adversity into opportunity.

i **The Care Leaver Covenant** is a national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16-25 to live independently. We collaborate with local authorities across England to support care leavers, see www.mycovenant.org.uk. If you are in Wales and interested in the Care Leaver Covenant, please contact delivery partner, Spectra, at hello@spectraconnect.co.uk



Sebastian Scott, law student





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Children's mental health

A series of new think pieces is exploring issues and solutions



Councillor **Louise Gittins** is Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board

There have been large increases in the number of children who need support with their mental health following – but also pre-dating – the pandemic.

Behind these statistics are the real-life stories of young people and the struggle they and their families may be facing, with long waits or little support.

We also know that mental ill health does not impact all people equally.

Some groups are likely to be more affected as they either do not have the same protective factors, or they have vulnerabilities that may leave them more likely to experience poor mental health.

These include children in care, young people who identify as LGBT+, children from low-income families, and from some black and ethnic minority groups.

The relationships that councils have with partners and stakeholders, including schools, health, police and the voluntary sector, are integral for ensuring we can take a collaborative approach to supporting children's mental health and wellbeing.

Despite promising ambitions set out by national government, however, the approach we are currently taking is unlikely to tackle the rise in demand for services, meaning not as many

children and young people are going to be able to access the support they need.

The LGA has a series of asks with regards to children's mental health on both a local and national level.

We always want to improve and refine these to be confident that what we are asking for will make the most difference to children and young people, their families and carers, and that councils have the tools they need to improve services.

So, we have brought together a range of stakeholders, people with lived experience, researchers, and experts in mental health, to independently develop a series of think pieces exploring children's mental health, and provide an opportunity to think differently about what children and young people need to live well.

We are very grateful to the colleagues who have contributed their views (see right for tasters of just a few of them). They have offered intriguing and thought-provoking responses to what we need to see change to support children and young people, and their families and carers.

As you read through them, and the LGA's view, I hope the content supports you to consider your role, your organisations, and how, collectively, in our day-to-day work we can secure a positive future for children and young people.

Lola, a young person involved in the NSPCC's Young People's Collective

"One way the Government can ensure that it is creating policies that will benefit all children is to include the voices of children themselves. As many of us have personal experience with the current system and all its flaws, we are the perfect people to ask for insight. It is also nearly impossible to create a system to support us without including us in deciding how it works."

Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner for England

"If we want to promote good mental health among children, we need to start at the beginning – and look at the foundations for a happy life. For me, it is clear that this means starting with family."

Professor Jim McManus and Sarah Muckle, respectively former President and Policy Lead for Children and Young People at the Association of Directors of Public Health

"Improving children's mental health now is of vital importance. These children will grow up to be the next generation's parents, and study after study has shown us that poor mental health in pregnancy, and in parents and carers of babies, has a negative impact on a child's mental health."



To read the children's mental health think pieces in full, please visit www.local.gov.uk/foreword-childrens-mental-health-think-pieces

Re-thinking care capacity, Re-thinking care models



With care homes across England, Scotland and Wales, HC-One is the UK's largest provider of residential, dementia and nursing care to the public sector.

Home to the biggest nursing and care workforce outside of the NHS, HC-One is well positioned to help overcome the challenges faced by the publicly funded residential adult social care sector.

Through close partnership working with over 100 Local Authorities and NHS Trusts, HC-One is leading the way in the innovation and development of specialist service lines to meet the new patterns of demand in the UK, both throughout this winter and beyond.

Enhanced D2A Service:

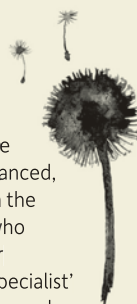


Services across the UK, and is borne from our belief that everyone stepping down from hospital deserves the opportunity to return to their own home.

HC-One's Enhanced D2A Service builds on its experience of providing Discharge to Assess and Intermediate Care

Specialist Dementia Care Communities:

HC-One's Specialist Dementia Care Community (SDCC) is a newly enhanced, market leading service focused on the welfare and wellbeing of people who are emotionally distressed by their dementia and therefore require 'specialist' care, as evidenced by leadership, bespoke staffing, staff competence and skills, and environmental design.



For more information about the care we provide, or to talk to us about developing a specialist service in your commissioning area, please contact us:

E: contracts@hc-one.co.uk

T: 0333 999 8699

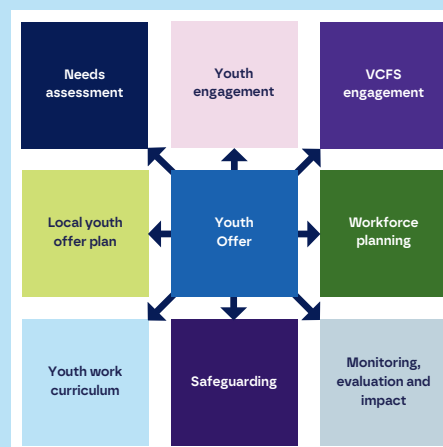
W: hc-one.co.uk



We are here to help

Is it your responsibility to review your local youth offer in light of the updated local authority Statutory Duty (functions in respect of youth work)?

The NYA's **Toolkit for local authorities** supports you to meet the rights and needs of young people in your area and is aligned with the updated Statutory Duty.



Take a look at the Toolkit for local authorities by visiting: www.nya.org.uk/stat-duty or by scanning the QR code.

Our Toolkit for Tier 1 Local Authorities has been developed in an easy-to-use interactive digital format to help council leaders, cabinet members, council officials, elected members, funders and navigate the updated Statutory Duty, from the first step of assessing their local need, through to evaluating the impact of their services.

It provides information on the legislation and regulatory frameworks, as well as best practice that those commissioning and delivering services should consider, and checklists to help you comply with the updated duty.



Contact us at guidance@nya.org.uk

Talk to us at the NCASC conference at Stand E26



@National-Youth-Agency



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@NationalYouthAgency



Improving health and care services

More focus is needed on prevention and the funding of adult social care



Councillor **David Fothergill** is Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board

Every citizen has the right to good health and wellbeing to enable them to make a full and positive contribution to their families, neighbourhoods and wider society.

Councils are uniquely placed to positively influence many of the wider determinants of health, such as housing, education, the environment, economic growth, and skills.

And our responsibilities for public health, adult social care, and as the interface between local government and health, enable us – in partnership with our local communities and stakeholders, including, crucially, people who draw on care and support – to drive forward action to improve and sustain individual and population health and wellbeing.

Too often, though, councils are driving this approach despite national priorities, rather than because of them.

Funding is an important issue, while the ability of local leaders to lead can be hampered by both national directives that stifle local priority setting and a

narrow approach to accountability that only looks upward, rather than outward to communities and citizens.

Ahead of the Autumn Statement and in the run-up to the next General Election, the LGA is working on a White Paper for local government, as part of its Make It Local campaign.

This will argue that stronger and more empowered local government could deliver the public's priorities more effectively and strengthen the value that the public places on the UK's democratic structures.

In respect of health and care, we believe councils need:

- a relentless focus on prevention and wellbeing to improve population health, reduce health inequalities, help reduce the long-term cost of care and treatment, and maintain sustainable health and social care services
- increased and sustainable levels of funding for adult social care and public health to stabilise the market and help meet current unmet needs
- real freedom for local leadership to focus on what is important for local communities.

The LGA has consistently argued that the current social care and health

“We need to usher in a new commitment from government to improve people’s lives and bolster public services”

system is unsustainable, and will buckle unless we urgently invest to protect health, prevent sickness and intervene early to minimise the need for costly hospital treatment and care.

Given the financial challenges across the public sector, providing additional funding is exceptionally challenging.

However, we believe the Government should introduce a ‘Prevention transformation fund’, because it’s clear that, without specific resources for prevention, we won’t see the radical step change required to reduce impacts on the NHS and adult social care.

When it comes to the latter, we welcomed the money announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement (up to £2.8 billion in 2023/24 and up to £4.7 billion in 2024/25), but much of it will be absorbed by pay and inflationary pressures.

It also falls short of what is needed for councils to fully deliver against their Care Act responsibilities, to tackle workforce and market pressures, and meet unmet and under-met need.

The pandemic powerfully illustrated how effective local government, working with its partners, can be in supporting the wellbeing of people and communities.

We need to build on this experience to usher in a new commitment from government to improve people’s lives and bolster public services.

With such a commitment in place, we can create the optimum conditions for strengthening the resilience of individuals, our communities, and our health and care services, and ensuring those services make their full contribution to the economy.



To find out more about the **LGA's Local Government White Paper**, please visit www.local.gov.uk/local-government-white-paper, and see www.local.gov.uk/make-it-local for our **Make It Local** campaign.

Social Care Minister Helen Whately, Shadow Social Care Minister Andrew Gwynne, and NHS England Chief Executive Amanda Pritchard are among the speakers at the **National Children and Adult Services Conference 2023** in Bournemouth, from 29 November to 1 December. See www.ncasc.info to book your place

Race and political leadership

Weekender events for black, Asian and minority ethnic councillors go from strength to strength

It is almost 20 years since the LGA convened its first (now annual) leadership weekender event for black, Asian and ethnic minority elected members.

Ongoing feedback has confirmed that the weekenders – one of the longest-running events in the LGA's leadership support calendar – have been pivotal to the success of a significant number of participants.



They have taken their learning into their councils, which has led to varying levels of success in addressing issues of key concern – both in relation to internal and external themes.

On an individual level, some participants have described the weekenders as being 'critical' in enabling them to move into senior political leadership roles within their local authorities, as well as for some becoming MPs.

Hosted annually by LGA Leadership Adviser Grace Collins MBE, and facilitated by David Weaver, LGA Associate and Senior Partner at DWC Consulting, great store is placed on ensuring that the discourse, leadership dilemmas and agenda address some of the unique issues faced by many black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) political leaders. This is enhanced by the involvement of excellent speakers and facilitators,



Participants at the LGA Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Councillors Weekender Event in February 2023

all of whom generate powerful discussions, insights and learning.

These events have stood the test of time and are as relevant today as they were when we held the first event in 2004.

Indeed, many contend that the scale of the challenges relating to race and inequalities, alongside growing divisions in communities and society, makes these leadership events even more important now.

The current context is daunting: we are in a cost-of-living crisis, there are deep budget cuts, and communities are facing unprecedented levels of anxiety, including racialised trauma in some areas of the country.

'My experiences were reflected and understood'

Having attended the BAME councillors weekend training courses, I would highly recommend them. They are cross-party, which makes them even more relevant, and a great opportunity to explore and exchange views across a wide spectrum.

I hadn't seen them advertised before, and I was in my 24th year as a councillor when I booked in. It was one of the best things I've done.

For the first time, I was able to talk about some of my experiences honestly



Councillor **Mimi Harker**
OBE (Con), Vice-Chairman of
Buckinghamshire Council

and openly, because I found that they were reflected and understood across the board. That was a comforting feeling! There was much to learn. Being a

councillor for 24 years doesn't mean you know it all, and my motto is 'every day is a school day'.

I did learn a huge amount throughout both training weekends, as well as making some fabulous friends.

It was great to come away with some good contacts, having heard excellent speakers, and feeling rejuvenated, refreshed, with resolve resumed! I'm a more confident councillor as a result of attending these weekends. Wonderful!



It has never been more vital for black, Asian and ethnic minority members to understand how to leverage their personal and political assets to navigate turbulent times.

At a time of depressingly low levels of voter registration among black and Asian communities because of their decreasing faith in the political system, the role and importance of effective leadership from these communities cannot be overstated.

It is symbolic that this article is being published during Black History Month. This provides an excellent moment to reflect on the historical context of black, Asian and ethnic minority political leadership and celebrate its contribution over the decades.

Of course, Black History Month reminds us of the contributions of trailblazers such as Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Mahatma Gandhi – and, this year, of black women's achievements, with the theme for 2023 being #SalutingOurSisters.

But it is also the ideal time to acknowledge the often-overlooked contributions of current-day black,

Asian and ethnic minority councillors who are making a difference because of their powerful and influential leadership.

The LGA's leadership events learn from and build on these experiences.

There have been many highlights over the years, but one of the consistent plaudits has been on the theme of 'political branding and developing a strong political identity'.

Having this discussion as black, Asian and ethnic minority members has not only been interesting, but also critical – and, for most, extremely empowering!

Our vision recognises that black, Asian and ethnic minority members, like their white counterparts, require dynamic spaces where they can develop and sharpen their political approaches.

We are proud that the LGA's BAME councillors' weekender events have grown in size, reaching more members from a wider section of the country.

It has also stayed true to its mission to enrich the discourse on race and leadership development, alongside empowering black, Asian and ethnic minority elected members to realise their powerful leadership potential.

'Food for thought'



Councillor
Amanda Onwuemene,
Green Party
Spokesperson
for Policing and
Domestic Safety at
Wirral Metropolitan
Borough Council

I have found the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Councillors' Weekender events the LGA holds to be amazing.

I have attended two so far. Each one has provided me with additional skills and knowledge, given me food for thought as I expand my journey through politics and social policy, and has led to very firm friendships being formed with a truly inspiring group of people.

If you have the opportunity to attend an event, I would say take it!

'Reassuring and helpful'



Councillor **Chidi Nweke** (Residents Association),
Epping Forest
District Council

I attended and enjoyed the LGA Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Councillors' Weekender event last year, and this presented me with a valuable opportunity to enhance my political leadership skills and connect with like-minded councillors.

The event provided vital insights, concepts, frameworks, and practical hints and tips that have contributed to my development as an authentic and effective leader.

I gained valuable knowledge, cultivated important connections, and received support in navigating the unique considerations faced by black, Asian and ethnic minority elected members.

As a new councillor then, this was very reassuring and helpful to me.



The LGA's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Councillors Weekender events take place on 28-29 October 2023 and 24-25 February 2024 at Warwick Conferences, Coventry, see tinyurl.com/ymszchkr to find out more and email grace.collins@local.gov.uk to book your place

Cyber unpacked

The LGA has produced new resources to help councillors with cyber security



Councillor **Alex Coley** is Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Understanding cyber security and its threat to local authorities has never been more important.

Cyber threats are rapidly developing in scale and sophistication, while the fast-paced digital transformation and organisational change within councils during the pandemic, and since, has created and exposed new vulnerabilities in technology, processes, skills and training.

Cyber attackers can prey on human emotion and trust to manipulate and 'socially engineer' their targets.

Techniques include phishing, scareware and fake sites.

Training, education and awareness are extremely valuable in reducing the likelihood of 'social engineering' being successful.

The risk associated with a cyber incident is greater than ever: there were at least 11 million attacks on UK local authorities in 2022, and all staff and elected members need to be prepared.

Recent incidents at Gloucester City, Hackney, and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils highlight the increased cyber risk faced by local authorities.

Cyber attacks may cause major disruption to critical council services, damage a council's reputation and finances, and have a significant impact on residents and staff.

There is no such thing as 100 per cent cyber secure, but it is vital

that councils are equipped to protect against cyber attacks and prepare for them – and, in the face of an incident, are supported to respond and recover effectively.

When discussing cyber risks, the conversation tends to focus on the role of the IT department. While they do have a role to play, it is everyone's responsibility to understand cyber vulnerabilities and threats to councils.

However, there are a number of barriers preventing senior leaders, officers and elected members from having open conversations with IT teams about cyber risk. For those who are new to digital issues, one of these barriers is a lack of understanding of key technical concepts.

The LGA's new video series, 'Cyber Unpacked', offers a fresh way for those who are less familiar with technical concepts to learn about cyber security and digital topics in a quick, engaging and accessible manner.

These short, animated videos on cyber security topics help to explain some of the common terms you might hear in your council when talking about risk, data and security.

Topics in the first series include 'What is data?', 'What does good password security look like?', and 'What is phishing?', and are relevant to all members and staff who would like to learn more about cyber security and digitalisation.

They can improve understanding of cyber risk in less than three minutes, helping with decision-making in the long term and with moving us towards a more cyber-secure workforce.

October is Cyber Awareness Month and an opportune time to use the LGA's new resource to become more familiar with cyber security concepts and to raise awareness of its importance within your organisation.

We hope you enjoy watching the Cyber Unpacked videos, and please share these with your colleagues. They form part of the LGA's wider sector support offer on cyber, digital and technology, available at www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology

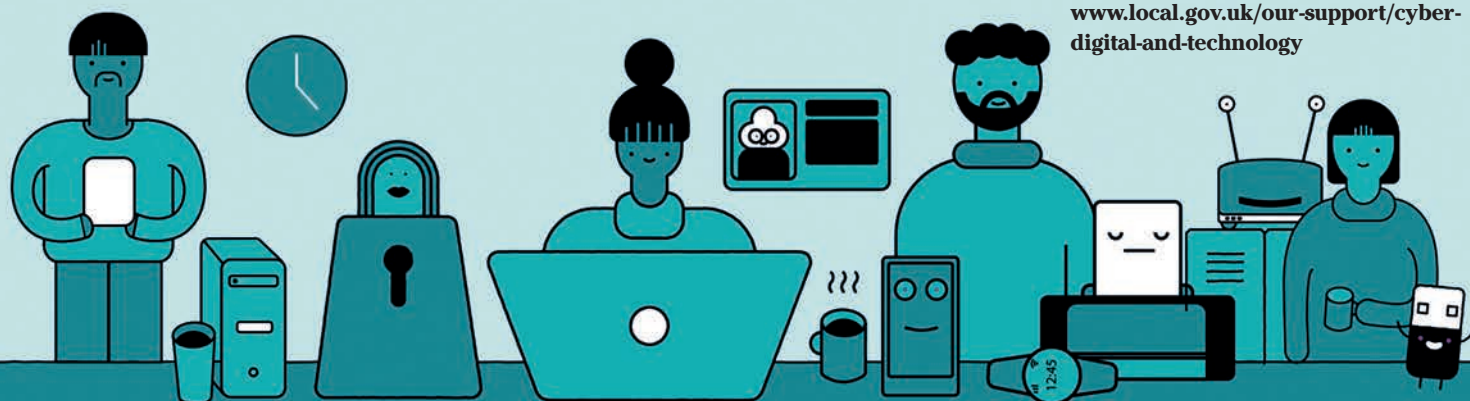
Leadership essentials: digitalisation

As local leaders, councillors set the digital priorities of their local areas to deliver benefits for staff, residents, businesses and visitors.

In December and January, the LGA is running three Leadership Essentials Digitalisation programmes for councillors to learn more about their role in building secure

digital public services that meet the needs of communities effectively and efficiently.

The cost of attending is fully subsidised. To book, email grace.collins@local.gov.uk or visit www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials



Gearing up for the General Election

Housing and community policing were among the issues discussed at the Lib Dems' autumn conference



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



It was great to see so many Liberal Democrat councillors at our first in-person autumn Liberal Democrat Conference for four years.

We were especially pleased to have such a good turnout at the four events held by the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group.

Torbay Lib Dems told us how they turned around children's services during their time in power and saved them from being run from Whitehall.

We heard about the experience of Eastbourne in improving and regenerating their town centre, and how important it is to take local traders and other businesses with you.

Liberal Democrat-led Portsmouth and Kingston discussed how they are working hard to provide more council housing and affordable homes: the Liberal Democrats are committed to building 150,000 council or housing association homes a year, and it was good to hear some practical answers on building these homes at a local level.

My thanks to all who spoke and attended.

I was also delighted to welcome party Leader Sir Ed Davey to our LGA conference reception.

"We have committed to invest significantly in renewable power"

We had plenty to celebrate following May's local election successes, as we now either run or are part of the leadership in 76 local authorities, and have almost 3,000 councillors across the UK.

This has meant we have increased our representation on nearly all LGA boards and we were able to remind people about our work on their behalf at a national level.

Working with our partners in the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors, we submitted amendments to party policy on the natural environment, refugees and asylum seekers, armed forces champions, and housing, including pushing for greater use of brownfield land and for existing planning permissions to be built out.

There was passionate debate and some great speeches – just as you would expect from a Lib Dem conference.

Our housing policy will strengthen neighbourhood plans, give more rights to tenants, and focus on ensuring 150,000 new social homes are built a year.

I was delighted that conference agreed a fairer deal for flat owners by resolving to replace long residential leaseholds with commonhold.

We also approved plans to tackle the climate emergency at conference. We have committed to invest

significantly in renewable power, so that 80 per cent of the UK's electricity is generated from renewables by 2030, and have put forward new plans to mandate major infrastructure upgrades to the sewage system.

We have also adopted a policy to create a 'blue corridor' programme for rivers, streams and lakes, to ensure clean, healthy water.

A policy motion on 'Protecting our neighbourhoods – a return to community policing' was passed unanimously. This includes the creation of a proper national recruitment, training and retention strategy to tackle the shortage of detectives. It also urges the Home Secretary, the Mayor of London, and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to draw up an urgent plan to implement the recommendations of the Baroness Casey Review.

I was also pleased we have introduced a new policy on ending period poverty, which calls on local authorities to make period products freely available in their buildings – something to which many Lib Dem councils have already committed.

Overall, there was a fantastic buzz around conference as the party gears up for the General Election – and, of course, for next year's round of local and police and crime commissioner elections.

Local people's priorities

A long-term plan for towns was announced at the Conservative Party Conference



Michael Gove
is Secretary of
State for Levelling
Up, Housing and
Communities

People sometimes ask, 'what have the Tories ever done for us?'

Let's consider the facts.

We have delivered better state schools than ever before, with our children the best readers in the western world and more students from state schools at our best universities.

There are more students securing top grades in maths, physics and chemistry – and our universities are the best in Europe and are growing.

We have near record numbers in employment with one million more new jobs, and welfare is simpler, fairer and better targeted.

We have taken hundreds of thousands completely out of income tax and families have many more hours of free childcare.

Since COVID-19, our economy has grown faster than those of France or Germany, no doubt in part thanks to the UK's fastest vaccine rollout in the world.

Thanks to Conservatives in government, we have stronger defence with two new aircraft carriers, new nuclear submarines and a strengthened NATO.

We have delivered the fastest decarbonisation of any major economy and we are world leaders in offshore wind.

Brexit has been delivered and

“Our councillors and former councillors are the stars who guide our path forward”



Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at the Conservative Party Conference

membership of the world's fastest growing trade bloc secured. The Union has been strengthened, devolution has been delivered in England and nationalism is in retreat in Scotland.

We need to ensure that every family has a safe, decent warm home and that many more young people can have a home of their own. We're on track to deliver a million new homes in this Parliament but we need many more.

Our long-term plan for housing will deliver the attractive, affordable new homes that we need in the hearts of towns and cities and on brownfield land.

We will resist the proposals of the Labour Party – and now the Lib Dems too – to build all over the green belt and destroy precious natural habitats.

We can deliver a beautiful built environment and an enhanced natural environment. And by investing and building in our cities and towns we will power the regeneration of communities overlooked and undervalued in the past.

Across the North of England, across the Midlands, across the whole of our United Kingdom, it is Conservatives who are levelling up, bringing high-quality jobs and high-tech companies

to communities the length and breadth of the country.

So I was delighted to announce at conference our £1.1 billion long-term plan for 55 great British towns.

The \$20 million, 10-year endowment-style fund for each town will empower communities across the UK to take back control of their future.

Funding will be spent on local people's priorities: reviving high streets, tackling antisocial behaviour, improving transport and growing the local economy.

Councils will be integral to the success of our Long-Term Plan for Towns, and I look forward to working with all of you in this endeavour to level up across the UK.

I want to thank everyone who serves in local government: our councillors and former councillors are the stars who guide our path forward, the local heroes who are responsible for thousands of acts of kindness and leadership every day.

Our councillors remind us that we win as a team – and as a team we have so much more to do to deliver Conservative victory at the next election, but together we can.

Rallying for local government

Labour says it will grow every corner of our country



Sarah Owen
is Shadow
Minister for Local
Government, Faith
and Communities

Labour is ready to answer our country's call for change – that was the message I heard at the biggest and best Labour Party annual conference I've attended in more than a decade.

As Labour's Shadow Minister for Local Government, Faith and Communities, it was a privilege to speak at so many inspiring fringe meetings, not least the fantastic LGA Labour 'Rally for local government', which saw hundreds of councillors pack out a giant auditorium.

There was an incredible energy in the room, and a real pride that recent local election success has seen Labour establish itself firmly as the largest party in local government.

The message from Labour councillors was loud and clear – that local government craves stability, deserves respect, and needs a fresh start.

That's why I confirmed that in government, Labour will create long-term certainty for local areas: no more bidding, and no more overcentralised government.

Within the first 100 days, we will introduce the Take Back Control Act to deliver the biggest transfer of power from Whitehall to the town hall in history.

Across the week, the recurring theme of conference has been Labour's mission to get Britain's future back.

There is real concern in this country that nothing seems to work any more: crimes going unpunished, NHS waiting lists



Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer at his party's annual conference in Liverpool

spiralling out of control, high streets in terminal decline.

The Conservatives have spent years claiming that they have taken the difficult decisions, when all they've really done is force local government to do it for them.

Councils have been stripped of resources and respect, making it even harder to deliver for their residents. Every councillor in this country understands why people are demanding change.

This year's conference has shown that Keir Starmer and the Labour Party is prepared to lead that change. We've shown that we can change our party, and now we're ready to change our country.

The highlight of conference was the incredible speech delivered by Keir Starmer – who literally rolled up his sleeves to set out why Labour is ready to lead.

Keir set out our new plan to get Britain building again, by taking on the blockers who are imposing a veto over British aspiration.

We have a serious plan to build

“Local government craves stability, deserves respect and needs a fresh start”

1.5 million new homes across the country, with new development corporations with the power to remove the blockages, new infrastructure to support families and communities to grow, and a new effort to re-wire Britain by expanding the National Grid faster.

I'm delighted too that we have committed to a great old Labour idea, creating a fresh generation of Labour new towns, building on the success of places like Telford, Stevenage, Crawley, and Milton Keynes.

Both the conference and Keir's speech gave a compelling answer to the question 'Why Labour?'.

We have shown that we will serve the nation's interests, we will grow every corner of our country, and that we have a real plan: to take back our streets, switch on Great British Energy, get the NHS back on its feet, and get Britain building again.

Roll on the General Election.



**NATIONAL
CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES
CONFERENCE 2023**
BOURNEMOUTH, 29 NOVEMBER – 1 DECEMBER

Bookings are open for #ncasc23

NATIONAL CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES CONFERENCE 2023

29 November – 1 December 2023 | Bournemouth

The National Children and Adult Services Conference is a must-attend event for councillors, directors, senior officers, directors of public health, policy makers and service managers, and any individuals or organisations with responsibilities for children and adult services in the statutory, voluntary and private sector. Join us to hear about and respond to the very latest thinking on key policy and improvement agendas in social care, children's services, education, health and related fields.

To book and to find out more, please visit ncasc.info

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Rural voters want change



Councillor **Roger Phillips**
is Chair of the Rural
Services Network

It has been clear over the past few weeks that we are preparing for a General Election.

As our National Rural Conference 2023 alluded to in September, change is coming, and it seems many of the announcements, from all parties, are already courting the rural vote.

Our conference, attended by Lord Benyon, Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs, highlighted some of the biggest issues and challenges facing our rural communities.

From rural transport to the rural economy, all aspects were put under the microscope by a series of experts.

Our conclusion? To truly level up rural areas, we need proper, continued investment through fair funding. Rural areas do not want handouts as short-term solutions.

Once government understands the specific needs of rural areas, addresses the bespoke challenges, and assigns the correct funding to address them, then rural areas will flourish.

Research carried out by the Rural Services Network, using the Government's own metrics in its Levelling Up White Paper, showed that if rural England was thought of as a distinct region, it would be in the greatest need of support.

The focus is on narrowing the gap between regions, but what about gaps within regions?

Rural areas have so much to offer. There are more than 500,000 rural businesses in England – 23 per cent of all registered businesses. Yet productivity and gross value added in rural areas is lower than in urban ones.

Far too much focus is placed on agriculture and the hospitality industry, which means other industries are squeezed out of the debate and their potential is being lost.

Unlocking the digital potential of rural areas could add up to £26 billion annually to the UK economy and grow turnover for rural businesses by £15 billion. Yet only



“The focus is on narrowing the gap between regions, but what about the gaps within regions?”

36 per cent of rural voters have gigabit capability and 4 per cent do not get mobile coverage indoors.

Building 10 new affordable rural homes would create an economic boost of £1.4 million and cost just £1.1 million to build. However, most rural developments are too small to include affordable homes.

What is clear is that the solutions for rural life are intrinsically linked. Without good jobs and a thriving economy, rural areas will flounder.

But the people holding these jobs need somewhere to live, without paying extra to do so simply because the central funding formula works against them. They need access to healthcare, schools and reliable transport to get them there.

More than that, rural areas have a greater sense of community.

We heard a story at conference from a rural village in Devon where an older gentleman had fallen off his bike. In the

six hours it took the ambulance to arrive, the village used its Facebook page and WhatsApp group to find a qualified medic and erect a shelter over the injured man to keep him dry and warm.

These are the same communities creating hundreds of neighbourhood plans so they can have an influence on how their local areas are developed; and working together to create community energy groups to give their places access to green and sustainable energy.

Almost 10 million people live in rural England. That is more than the whole of Greater London. The rural vote could swing the next General Election and, as politicians, we ignore it at our peril.



The Rural Services Network is an LGA special interest group; see www.rsnonline.org.uk to find out more. See **p27**

Conference highlights need for Conservatives in local government



Councillor **Kevin Bentley** is Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group

Party conference has enabled Conservative local leaders to come together to share ideas and contribute policy.

In October, hundreds of councillors and party members attended LGA events at conference, where we were pleased to launch our ambitious manifesto of ideas ahead of the General Election.

Together, our local government family in the Conservative Party will now start our lobbying efforts, alongside MPs and Peers, to make sure that our recommendations are not only adopted in the party's manifesto at the General Election, but also in the first King's Speech immediately after the General Election.

A digital version of our manifesto can be found on our website (see [local.gov.uk/lga-conservatives](https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-conservatives)), and I would strongly encourage you to share it with your Conservative MPs, where possible.

Party conference also showed why having Conservatives in local government, working in partnership with national government, is so important; and, frankly, why the country cannot risk a Labour government that is full of headline spinning but absolutely no substance.

Arising from the representations we have made to ministers at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities around the impact that inflation is having on the delivery of Levelling Up Fund (LUF) infrastructure projects, we were pleased to receive confirmation from the new Levelling Up Minister, Jacob Young MP, that he has now signed off several LUF project adjustment requests.

This means that local authorities should be in a better position to get spades into the ground for their vital infrastructure projects.

Let's be under no illusion and let's ignore the spin from Labour: levelling up remains a priority for our government and it was what we were elected on to deliver.

The Prime Minister knows that actions speak louder than words, which is why he has put local people in control of more than £1 billion of funding with a long-term plan for left-behind towns.

There is a road to winning the next General Election, and we will!

"Levelling up remains a priority for our government... it was what we were elected on to deliver"



Councillor **Shaun Davies** is Chair of the LGA

Providing local value for money

Dealing with the budgetary and financial pressures facing councils continues to dominate the focus of the LGA and our teams, ahead of the Autumn Statement on 22 November.

As this edition of **first** was going to press, the LGA was finalising its representation on behalf of councils to Chancellor Jeremy Hunt.

This sets out the overall financial challenges faced by local government and the specific pressures in four key areas: adult social care and winter pressures; children's services; housing and homelessness; and net zero.

We know that funding, cost, and demand pressures are growing for all councils, putting at risk the financial sustainability of the sector.

However, while local government needs additional funding and multi-year financial settlements to help with longer-term planning (we are now on our fifth one-year settlement), this is not just



about the money. We also need to see existing funding devolved locally and councils given the powers and responsibilities they need to join up different pots and projects – because we know that money spent locally is money spent well.

It's not just the LGA saying this.

For example, modelling of interventions on heat, buildings and travel by Innovate UK found that local action would deliver net zero by 2050 while saving taxpayers around £140 billion compared with national approaches.

And analysis by the University of York suggests that the expenditure through

the public health ring-fenced grant provided to local councils is three to four times as cost-effective in improving health outcomes than if the same money had been spent in the NHS.

We could achieve so much more, not just with greater investment, but with the right investment – and by making it local.

The LGA will continue to support councils in difficulty, and those at risk of falling into difficulty. Please liaise with your regional principal adviser if there is anything we can do to help your council (see www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers-and-regional-teams).



Councillor **Nesil Caliskan** is Leader of the LGA's Labour Group

Labour is ready to govern

It was great to meet so many colleagues and friends in Liverpool for this year's Labour Party conference.

There was a tremendous atmosphere – helped by a record attendance of more than 1,000 Labour councillors.

Our LGA Labour 'Rally for local government' was held on Sunday afternoon in a packed auditorium, including hundreds of new Labour councillors elected in May.

I was delighted to be joined by so many wonderful speakers, including frontbenchers Angela Rayner, Sarah Owen, and Wes Streeting, as well as some of our brilliant new council leaders, such as Brighton and Hove's Cllr Bella Sankey, and Medway's Cllr Vince Maple.

It was also an honour to deliver the Local Government report to conference and highlight the incredible work Labour councillors are doing every day in their communities.

Rishi Sunak says the country does not want a General Election – but most people beg to differ. The seismic result in Rutherglen and Hamilton West sent a clear message: people are now looking to the Labour Party to deliver change.

"A mission-driven Labour government will give Britain its future back"

The party has set out our plan for how a mission-driven Labour government will give Britain its future back, with a strong national economy and secure finances.

I was pleased to hear Angela Rayner, Deputy Leader and Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, commit to delivering the biggest boost in affordable housing in a generation, with council housing at the core of the party's plans.

Labour has shown we are not just fit to govern, but ready to govern with a plan and a vision to rebuild Britain.



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

An agenda we can deliver

Local government has been steadily squeezed by austerity, inflation and centralisation over the years.

Limited funding streams come with conditions and ring-fences, and time-wasting and expensive bidding processes.

In our cities and towns, there are buildings hinting at a more prosperous past for local government. The symbolism continuously reminds us – local government used to do stuff, communities used to have pride in their councils.

"In the aftermath of the party conferences, we need to ask where were the debates about the future funding of council services?"

Today, councils are in the worst crisis since the foundation stones of these buildings were laid.

Councils are facing a collective multi-billion pound spending gap in their finances – up to £4 billion, the LGA estimates – as the impact from a massive cut in central government funding since 2010 collides with stubbornly high inflation and pressure on services from an ageing population, and demands on children's services.

We have seen billions worth of public assets flogged to help plug holes in council budgets, which will come back to haunt us.

In the aftermath of the party conferences, we need to ask where were the serious debates about the future funding of council services – tackling the social care crisis, reforming business rates to support growth and job creation, community-led devolution not dictated by Whitehall?

We don't need lip service.

Now is the time for the LGA to up the ante and push our political parties to address these issues as manifestos are firmed up ahead of the next General Election.

There is no better time for the LGA's Make It Local campaign (see www.local.gov.uk/make-it-local).



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

Leading the journey to net zero

A life-size white elephant called HS2 greeted us as we arrived to support so many of our inspiring councillors at the Green Party Conference in Brighton in October.

They are not following the Prime Minister's eye-catching U-turns and, in stark contrast, are looking for reliable, long-term funding for energy-saving measures, community-led energy schemes and a clean environment.

At the Independent Group's evening conference reception and Saturday morning debate on the LGA's 'Make It Local' campaign, there were rousing speeches from Green Party Co-Leader Cllr Carla Denyer, our LGA Vice-President Baroness Natalie Bennett, LGA Independent Group Deputy Leader Cllr Caroline Jackson and me.

Locally, we can lead the journey to net zero faster and more efficiently compared with national approaches, taking our communities with us and saving taxpayers around £140 billion, creating £400 billion in wider co-benefits.

"Sunak's delays put the agreed 1.5°C maximum temperature rise further out of reach"

PM Rishi Sunak's delays put the agreed 1.5°C maximum temperature rise further out of reach, with significant damage.

All our speakers emphasised the importance of 'local' in local government.

Cllr Julian Dean, from the Association of Green Councillors, wrapped up events with a brilliant session highlighting the achievements of our councillors across the country.

I hope our Plaid Cymru colleagues also had an excellent conference, and I look forward to joining you in the spring.

The LGA Independent Group's own political conference is for all members: Independent, Residents Association, Green Party, Plaid Cymru, and smaller political parties.

It's at award-winning Wyboston Lakes, near Bedford, from 24-25 November (register at <https://forms.office.com/e/4dXUSLznH5>). Don't miss it!

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

Councils vital to vaccine uptake



Professor **Susan Hopkins** is the Chief Medical Advisor of the UK Health Security Agency

Winter is approaching, and with it comes a seasonal increase in respiratory infections.

Flu and COVID-19 outbreaks can harm health, exacerbate health inequalities and, at their worst, damage the economy and people's livelihoods.

Councils are a key partner to enable vaccines uptake, equipping our communities with immunity and protecting the most vulnerable among us.

Vaccines are a powerful tool to prevent, control the spread and reduce the severity of disease. They prevent millions of deaths worldwide every year.

The success of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme has been down to effective local intelligence and implementation alongside national strategy and coordination.

Local directors of public health and their teams have been at the heart of activity to tackle the virus, with councils

working closely with the NHS, voluntary, faith and community groups, to support the mass vaccination rollout that helped us towards living with COVID-19.

Working together again will allow us to build strong, broad immune defences for those at greatest risk of getting seriously ill this winter.

Recent UK Health Security Agency modelling shows last year's flu vaccinations prevented around 25,000 hospitalisations in England.

Even with this success, the health impact of last year's flu season remained severe, with deaths and hospitalisations from flu eclipsing those from COVID-19 at the peak of the 2022/23 season.

COVID-19 variants are also circulating, increasing the risk to pregnant women, older people and those in vulnerable groups of all ages especially at risk of getting seriously ill.

It is therefore important that as many eligible people as possible have their flu and COVID-19 vaccines in good time, to



build up their protection. Those who do are more likely to have milder symptoms and recover faster, cutting their risk of being hospitalised and reducing pressure on the NHS.

Councils can help by using your networks and channels to make sure eligible cohorts are aware of the vaccine offer.

By working together, we can make sure people get their vaccines and are able to head into winter with the best protection.

i To see who is eligible for the flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme please visit: www.nhs.uk/wintervaccinations

Being a supportive employer



Lowri Shepstone is a Communications and Engagement Officer at Powys County Council, and the council's Endometriosis Champion

'You're a woman. You will just have to learn to live with it.'

It's a phrase I've heard several times, from GPs and others, as I've struggled to get the support I need.

I have endometriosis, a common gynaecological disease affecting one in 10 women and those assigned female at birth, whose symptoms include chronic pelvic pain, painful periods, painful bowel movements and more.

It has affected me from my first period (aged 14), but I only got a formal diagnosis of it in 2016, just before my 31st birthday.

Endometriosis affects everyone differently, but two things that many with

the disease experience is a lack of support from society as a whole, and wondering how you're going to power on through the pain on a daily basis.

Since my diagnosis, I have been lucky enough to have supportive employers, but the same is very much not true for everyone.

I joined Powys County Council's communications team three years ago, while on the waiting list for my third endometriosis surgery, and I'm delighted that it has now become the first UK local authority to sign up to the Endometriosis Friendly Employer Scheme.

The scheme is run by Endometriosis UK, a charity I have volunteered with for several years, and provides guidance on how to support employees with endometriosis, as well as how to tackle stigma and change the culture surrounding endometriosis in the workplace.

Being an Endometriosis Friendly Employer means Powys will be updating existing HR policies to include endometriosis, creating an information toolkit for managers, and including lots of information about the disease in both internal and external communications.

We're also going to be sending information on endometriosis to all schools in the area.

The council has also appointed me as its Endometriosis Champion.

I'm excited to see the difference we can make across the council itself and the local area through this scheme, and I also hope we inspire more local authorities to sign up and commit to supporting staff who have the condition.

i To find out more, please visit endometriosis-uk.org/endometriosis-friendly-employers

English-Welsh partnership marches forward



Councillor **Jonathan Lester** (Con) is Leader of Herefordshire Council, Councillor **Mary Ann Brocklesby** (Lab) is Leader of Monmouthshire County Council, Councillor **James Gibson-Watt** (Lib Dem) is Leader of Powys County Council, and Councillor **Lezley Picton** (Con), is Leader of Shropshire Council



There isn't a council leader who isn't ambitious for their authority.

We're all passionate about wanting the best for the people we represent. It's also in our interests for neighbouring authorities to thrive, because, collectively, we all benefit.

In the Marches region, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Powys and Shropshire have similar characteristics, similar geography and similar challenges, as well as a mutual ambition for our very special region.

Over the past year, we've been having wide-ranging conversations about shared interests, including transport, water quality, health and planning.

The more we talked, the more we realised what we had in common – not least a drive for innovation in how we deliver our services.

So, we started to build our case for coming together in a ground-breaking partnership of union connectivity that recognises our natural geography and shared heritage.

From there, the Marches Forward Partnership was born.

In October, Herefordshire and Shropshire Councils will join Monmouthshire and Powys County Councils to sign a memorandum of understanding.

For the first time, two English and two Welsh authorities will work together on cross-border interests.

Transport, skills and housing, alongside energy, climate change, tourism and digital connectivity, are high on our agenda – all common issues for the area's population of almost 750,000.

Better still, our region could reap significant economic benefits, because we will join forces to apply for funding from both the UK and Welsh Governments on major projects that will benefit the Marches region, which covers 80 per cent of the English/Welsh borderland.

The initial response from both governments is positive.

They are enthusiastic about what we're looking to achieve and we're hopeful we'll unlock millions of pounds for identified initiatives that support the rural economy and green growth.

Of course, we know this isn't a panacea. The partnership won't have all the answers, but it will bring opportunities.

It already is, because we're benefiting from stronger links between authorities, as well as improved partnership working with familiar and new organisations.

People want to talk to us and that's a fantastic start.

It's important to say that this partnership comes with no ties, so it

doesn't stop any of us from working with other authorities and organisations.

We describe it as a bit like a combined authority, but with no strings attached and no elected mayor – rather, a cross-party collaboration between like-minded authorities who work together as partners where there is mutual benefit and added value.

It's early days, but we've already agreed that each authority will lead on different themes and our asks to the governments will be evidence-led and community-focused.

We recognise we need to fit in with the levelling up agenda around boosting local areas and reducing inequalities.

We will make a strong case that devolved powers and fiscal freedoms must support rural areas as well as urban conurbations, because it's imperative that we grow our economies appropriately, so they are fit for the future.

At the same time, we're strengthening the relationships between two countries that share borders and a unique identity forged over centuries.

While the Romans, Normans and Plantagenets failed to unite this historic area, we are convinced this partnership can together take control of some of the big issues that are important to so many people in the Marches.



Kirsty Kitchen is Head of Policy at Birth Companions

A better approach

The needs of women who have involvement from children's social care while pregnant or during the first two years of their child's life are acute, yet all too often overlooked, amid siloed and overstretched services.

That must change if we are to reverse deeply concerning trends: the increasing rate of care proceedings; worsening maternal outcomes; and growing numbers of women who die during pregnancy, birth and the year after birth

while subject to child protection proceedings or having had a child removed.

That's why we at Birth Companions have published 'The Birth Charter for women with involvement from children's social care', setting out 14 principles to inform policy, commissioning, and professional practice, supported by current evidence and insights from women with direct personal experience.

The Birth Charter highlights examples of good practice in councils.

Salford's Strengthening Families service, for example, has been developed to provide an 'integrated and agile' early help and social care system that demonstrates the value of breaking down the barriers between services and systems.

In Lambeth's Flourish service, practitioners work with women in a holistic way, including all the important people in their lives, and aim to improve all systems' responses to families.

But good local practice must translate

into an improved national picture. Birth Companions is calling for a national health and social care pathway for pregnant women and mothers of infants subject to pre-birth or parenting assessment, or child protection proceedings.

Compassionate, trauma-informed and fair treatment could mitigate risks for mothers and babies, reduce the number of avoidable separations, and improve health and social care outcomes for women and their children.

Local government is a linchpin for socially connected communities and of fundamental importance in making this urgent need a reality.

i For more information on **The Birth Charter** visit www.birthcompanions.org.uk/resources/birth-charter-children-social-care. Birth Companions is a national charity working to improve the lives of women and babies who experience inequality and disadvantage during pregnancy and early motherhood

Winter warmers to tackle loneliness



Kate Groves is Marketing Manager at the Eden Project

The Big Lunch has become the UK's largest community-led fundraiser and neighbourhood get-together.

It's a lot of fun for participants, but it's also more than just lunch: 14.1 million people took part in the Coronation Big Lunch and The Big Lunch; 10.7 million people said it made them feel they belong more in their community; and more than £14 million was raised for local charities and good causes.

A record number of councils supported the campaigns, including Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, which boosted community connection by transforming ordinary public benches into interactive hubs where people can chat, make friends and learn about local support networks. Dudley was inspired to introduce the benches for comedian John Bishop's 'Say Hello' initiative. Part of our annual 'Month of Community', Say Hello is about encouraging people to make new connections and it provided the perfect vehicle for the council to highlight Loneliness Awareness Week.

Cllr Ian Bevan, Dudley's Cabinet Member for Public Health, said: "We all need



The Big Lunch at Christmas, London Borough of Newham 2022

to take steps to combat loneliness and build good relationships with neighbours. The Say Hello benches are a chance for people to take five minutes and have a friendly chat with someone they might not normally meet."

Building on the success of last year's first Big Lunch at Christmas, developed in partnership with Newham Council, we're now getting ready to launch a new 'Winter Warmers' campaign. This will provide

communities with a menu of activity ideas, from simply sharing a mince pie with a neighbour, to Advent windows, festive Big Lunches and winter walking trails.

Councils can use the campaign to help tackle loneliness and support communities during winter and the cost-of-living crisis.

Wigan Council promoted the first Big Lunch at Christmas to its voluntary and community sector organisations, and will be encouraging its network of Warm, Welcoming Spaces – part of the authority's cost-of-living campaign Here for You – to invite residents to connect over a mince pie or something to eat as part of Winter Warmers.

i Register your interest in **Winter Warmers**, and arrange a short call with Kate Groves to discuss your involvement by emailing kgroves@edenproject.com

Finding solidarity through culture



Councillor **Liam Robinson** (Lab) is Leader of Liverpool City Council

One year ago, Liverpool found out that a milestone moment in the city's history was about to become a reality.

Following an intense, competitive bidding process, Liverpool had leapfrogged 20 other cities to be named the official host city for the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 on behalf of Ukraine.

It was a seminal moment that kick-started an unprecedented, fast-paced programme of curation, development and event delivery, which, ultimately, resulted in Liverpool being regarded as the best-ever Eurovision host city.

In Liverpool, we have spent the past 15 years, since our European Capital of Culture status, honing our reputation as a world leader at staging large-scale, outdoor events. But Eurovision was different: we were delivering it on behalf of a country at war.

From the start of Russia's illegal invasion of a proud sovereign nation, the people of Liverpool stood in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. In Eurovision, we were able to find a particular expression of that solidarity: united by music.

Our twin city of Odesa, from the frontline of Russian bombardment, lent direct support for hosting responsibility – understanding the opportunity that Eurovision provided for a unique expression of international support for their culture and sovereignty.

Twinning cities may seem an old-fashioned, tokenistic gesture – an exchange of certificates, some warm words, but nothing tangible. But here



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was an opportunity to give twinning a new purpose.

Since the outbreak of the war, we have reached out to our Odesian friends, showing our solidarity with their plight and offering support where we can.

Over the past 12 months, this relationship has deepened, the Mayor of Odesa and his team guiding us when needed, to ensure that the Ukraine thread ran through everything we were delivering as a Eurovision host city.

Knowing we did our twin city, and the rest of Ukraine, proud makes every second of that whirlwind planning and delivery period worthwhile.

Even during the bidding process, however, we were looking at the potential legacy of hosting this competition: we were focused on strengthening our relationship with Odesa from the start.

In April, Liverpool's magnificent Central Library was formally twinned with

“Twinning is so much more than a piece of paper”

Odesa's Regional Scientific Library in a historic ceremony attended by HM King Charles and the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska.

We are now exploring ways in which these two venues can work together to educate visitors about each other's home cities.

Liverpool is further cementing this friendship with a historic memorandum of understanding, which commits to work with Odesa to support the protection and rebuilding of its cultural infrastructure.

Odesa has a special role in Ukrainian culture and history, with a unique collection of historic buildings and cultural institutions, now under sustained threat.

Just as Russia seeks to obliterate Ukraine's cultural identity, Ukraine's international friends can respond by reinvigorating its cultural links with the wider world, and standing with them in the defence of their historic and cultural infrastructure.

We are honoured to be asked to use the creative talent and expertise in Liverpool in such a profound way, and we are excited to see how these conversations progress.

For us, twinning is a pivotal part of a local authority's civic function and is so much more than just a piece of paper. It can be powerful, ambitious, progressive and truly transformative.



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Innovative approaches to healthy ageing



George MacGinnis is Healthy Ageing Challenge Director at UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

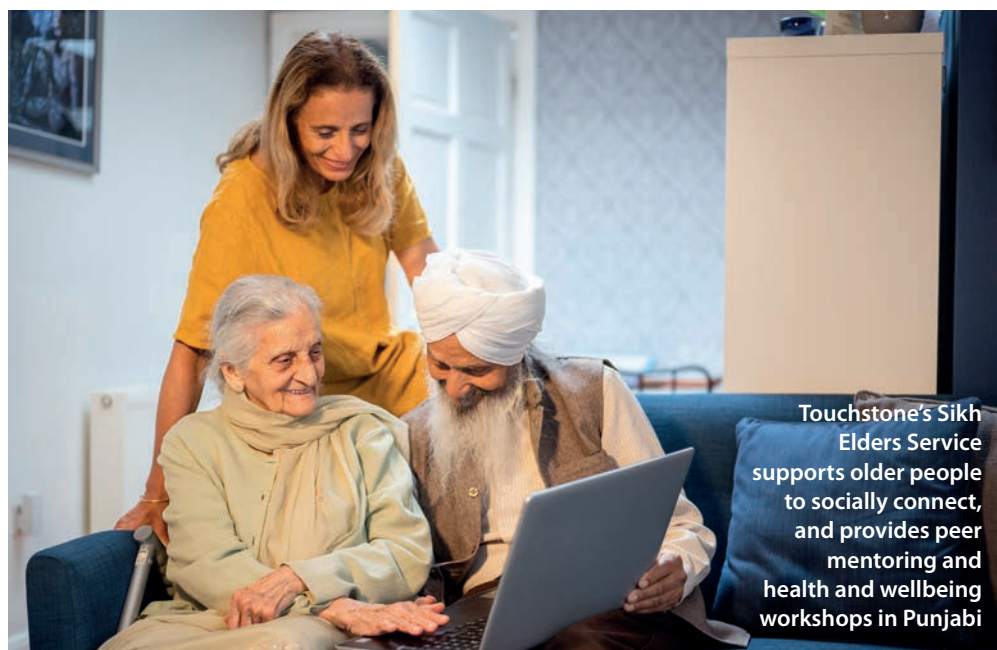
By 2050, a quarter of the UK population will be 65 years or over. Yet, a 65-year-old today will live less than half their remaining years in good health.

Many places across the UK are feeling this pressure more acutely, yet they aren't always taking full advantage of the opportunities that promoting a healthier older population offers.

Investment in healthy ageing has wide-ranging benefits, from helping older people stay in purposeful work for longer through to savings in the health and social care system.

UK Research and Innovation's Healthy Ageing Challenge helps to increase the number of years we live in good health.

It does this by supporting businesses



Touchstone's Sikh Elders Service supports older people to socially connect, and provides peer mentoring and health and wellbeing workshops in Punjabi

© PETER KINDERSLEY

through research and funding for innovative projects with potential for impact at scale.

The Challenge has invested £98 million, supporting more than 240 projects across the UK, over the past four years.

Many of these projects are already working with local authorities to address key needs in care, housing, population health, leisure and employment. They include:

- **Active Families Northeast** – providing physical activity interventions to improve the health

and lives of vulnerable older people, targeting neighbourhoods where it is most needed.

- **Good Boost** – present in more than 100 gyms across the country, using technology to enable gym staff to deliver high-quality musculoskeletal rehabilitation in leisure venues.
- **Transitions** – an app-based service developed by East Sussex County Council to help people prepare for, and better navigate, significant transitions in later life.
- **Connected Health** – developing a non-invasive monitor for care homes that remotely detects incontinence events and prompts a timely care response.
- **Disabled Living in Greater Manchester** – developing a real-time virtual assessment tool for assistive technology to reduce delays to hospital discharges for people living with disabilities.
- **Appt Health, in London** – providing preventative healthcare for hard-to-reach patients, such as minority ethnic groups.

Another excellent example is the work of the Tribe Project, based in the West Midlands (see left).

These collaborations are helping to address health inequalities, supporting existing council services, and helping them access hard-to-reach communities.

Creating community capacity



Councillor **John Spence** CBE (Con) is Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and ICS Integration at Essex County Council

In common with other authorities, Essex County Council faces challenges in meeting growing demand for care and support.

This isn't just a question of the amount of care and support available, but equally whether what is available meets the diverse needs and aspirations of people living in our communities.

Essex is rising to this challenge through our investment in 'micro-providers' – growing the number of community businesses offering support to help people live safe and well in their homes.

We are finding that such providers are well placed to 'reach the parts' we otherwise struggle to.

To help people set up as micro-providers, to run their businesses and find customers, Essex works with Tribe, a not-for-profit initiative and UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge Trailblazer project, which has built digital tools to support the growth of this new market.

Essex has found that micro-providers increase and diversify social care capacity, expanding choice and control for people who draw on care or support to live their lives.

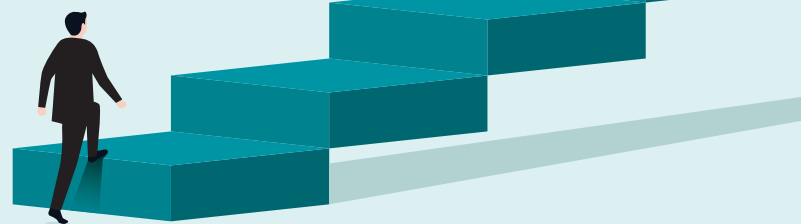
Tribe's mission is to create social care equality in the UK. It is a consortium that includes Skills for Care, Carers UK, Shared Lives Plus, Bronze Software Labs, and TSA, the industry and advisory body for technology-enabled care.

i To find out more, please visit iuk.ktn-uk.org/programme/healthy-ageing-community. Our annual conference, **#HealthyAgeing2023**, showcasing our projects, takes place from 13-14 November – register free at www.healthyageinguk.org/2023

One step forward...



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



Labour's victory in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West parliamentary by-election ensures that the imminent contests in Mid Bedfordshire and Tamworth will be examined for further evidence of a resurgence.

Yet, regular readers of this column know that Labour's successes in local by-elections have often been tempered by losses. And once again, Labour gain a seat only to lose another. The gain was in Lancashire's Chorley Rural West, a vacancy caused by the death of Conservative Keith Iddon, who was then chairman of the county council. The absence of a Green candidate probably helped Labour's cause.

Iddon had also been elected for Chorley Council in 2021 and his death meant a second vacancy, this time for the borough's Croston, Mawdesley and Euxton South ward. Any prospect of a second Labour win was thwarted by Conservative Debra Platt.

Labour's step backwards occurred in the contest for Colchester's Highwoods ward.

A double by-election in December 2022 produced a split result with Labour and Liberal Democrats each taking a seat from Independents. The Labour winner then resigned seven months later with the Liberal Democrats capturing the seat at the second attempt.

A similar early resignation might have brought an upset in Tamworth's Amington ward, where electors will be voting in the parliamentary by-election.

Three months after securing victory, Labour's Liam Bone was forced to resign because he accepted a civil service post that is politically restricted.

His defeated Conservative opponent in May, Donna Summers, stood again but – crucially – so did Michelle Cook, who had fought and won here as a Conservative in 2019. Cook, standing as an Independent, polled 16 per cent of the vote, enabling Labour to secure the win.

A second Liberal Democrat gain in Milton Keynes was hardly in doubt. The electoral history of Newport Pagnell South ward shows that the 2021 election, which returned Conservative Scot Balazs, was exceptional.

Before and since, the ward has elected Liberal Democrats.

Conservative candidates have been having a generally challenging time of late.

In Minster Cliffs, it was the turn of the Swale Independents to inflict the damage. The result last May saw the Conservatives win two of the three seats with the sole Swale Independent topping the poll. This time round, the Conservatives were edged into third place behind Labour.

There was more than just a vacancy for the Conservatives to defend in North Yorkshire's Hutton Rudby and Osmotherley, which lies within Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Richmond parliamentary constituency.

The Conservative cause was not helped

by the withdrawal of the Labour-nominated candidate, providing an opportunity for the Liberal Democrats.

However, context matters in this case. At the inaugural election in 2022, the seat was won by the Conservative with a 40 per cent vote share while a candidate with no party description placed second with 29 per cent.

In fact, Bridget Fortune, the winner, and runner-up David Hugill, were both Hambleton-based Conservative councillors, each chasing the same seat. When Fortune resigned, local Conservatives picked Hugill as her successful replacement.

The win ensures the Conservatives continue to have half the council seats and benefit from the chair's casting vote.

Local by-elections

Barking and Dagenham, Mayesbrook

LAB HELD
13.9% over Con Turnout 14.2%

Chorley, Croston, Mawdesley and Euxton South

CON HELD
9.2% over Lab Turnout 29.6%

Colchester, Highwoods

LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB
8.1% over Lab Turnout 19.7%

Haringey, South Tottenham

LAB HELD
52.8% over Con Turnout 20.2%

Haringey, White Hart Lane

LAB HELD
43.2% over Con Turnout 19.6%

Hull, Bricknell

LAB HELD
12.9% over Lib Dem Turnout 34.8%

Lambeth, Vauxhall

LAB HELD
14.1% over Lib Dem Turnout 21.7%

Lancashire, Chorley Rural West

LAB GAIN FROM CON
11.5% over Con Turnout 29.1%

Lincolnshire, Carholme

LAB HELD
11.6% over Lib Dem Turnout 25.4%

Liverpool, Fazakerley East

LAB HELD
10.8% over Ind Turnout 20.3%

Milton Keynes, Newport Pagnell South

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON
16.5% over Lab Turnout 26.7%

North Yorkshire, Hutton Rudby and Osmotherley

CON HELD
10.5% over Lib Dem Turnout 38.8%

South Norfolk, Mulbarton & Stoke Holy Cross

LIB DEM HELD
13.0% over Con Turnout 24.5%

South Norfolk, South Wymondham

LIB DEM HELD
2.2% over Con Turnout 16.8%

Swale, Minster Cliffs

SWALE IND GAIN FROM CON
5.1% over Lab Turnout 17.9%

Tamworth, Amington

LAB HELD
9.2% over Con Turnout 23.8%

Wolverhampton, Bushbury South and Low Hill

LAB HELD
37.1% over Con Turnout 12%



For more details on these and other recent results, please visit www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections

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- Holding council meetings online
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- Licensing and regulation
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- Supporting your constituents with complex issues
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