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*“Councils hold
the **local levers**
to the **national**
challenges facing
government”*

**Councillor Louise Gittins,
new LGA Chair**



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All change

As the new Chair of the LGA, I feel privileged to be working on your behalf, representing councils in England and Wales, from across the political spectrum, in our discussions with the new UK Government.

As you can read in this edition of **first**, we are keen to establish a new, respectful relationship with central government, and to demonstrate the local solutions to the national challenges we face (p5).

We have already set out our proposals for: reforming the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system (p4); rolling out five-year local housing deals to help deliver 200,000 additional homes (p7); and delivering a devolved skills and employment service to help boost growth (p15).

Elsewhere in this month's magazine, we highlight how many MPs in the new Parliament are, or recently were, councillors (p9), and look at some of the new laws proposed in last week's King's Speech that will affect local government (p10).

We also mark Pride (p16) and Disability Pride (p18); look at issues for local fire services, including in respect of pay and conditions, and culture (p20-21); and highlight a series of LGA workforce surveys illustrating the recruitment and retention difficulties that the sector faces (p22).

Councillor Louise Gittins
is LGA Chair



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Landmark report urges reform of 'broken' SEND system

A major new independent report on services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has found that the current system is not working for families, schools and councils, underlining the need for fundamental reform.

The Isos Partnership report, commissioned by the LGA and the County Councils Network (CCN), also reveals that educational outcomes for SEND pupils have not improved since changes introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014.

The act extended the SEND system from birth to age 25, and implemented a new approach intended to join up education, health and care support.

Councils say the need for reform of the SEND system is now "unavoidable", with the report showing services at breaking point.

They are calling on the Government to set out SEND reforms over the next 18 months, delivering its manifesto pledge to ensure mainstream schools become more inclusive.

The report – 'Towards an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND in England' – also sets out how councils are struggling to manage a more than doubling of children on education, health and care plans, within a system that creates "perverse incentives" to shift responsibility between



public bodies and inadvertently creates adversarial relationships between local authorities and parents.

It warns that, unless the system is fundamentally reformed, outcomes for children and young people with SEND will not improve, and the system will become even more financially unviable for councils.

The report estimates that councils are projected to be spending £12 billion a year on SEND services by 2026 – up from £4 billion a decade ago – but will still face a £5 billion

funding black hole to meet demand that year.

Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, said: "What parents and children need and deserve is a properly reformed and funded SEND system that meets the care and support requirements of every child and young person with special needs."

Cllr Tim Oliver, CCN Chairman, said: "The SEND system is broken. With a new government in place and elected on a 'change' platform, it is vital that reform happens over the next 18 months."

Children 'harmed' by delays in health services

A new report by NHS Providers has warned a "forgotten" generation's life chances are being harmed by delays in accessing care.

Its survey has found that the NHS is struggling to meet rapidly rising demand and increasingly complex and acute care needs among children and young people. There is also "deep concern" among NHS

trust leaders about the long-term harm caused by delays in services for children and young people, including a widening health inequalities gap.

NHS Providers is calling for a cross-government plan to improve the wellbeing of children and young people, including greater investment in early intervention and preventing ill health.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "It is concerning to see that many children are not receiving the timely care they need, which can have long-lasting effects on their health and development.

"We know that the foundations for future health are laid in the earliest years of life. Investing in services, such as health visiting, that give children the best start in life, reduces demands on GPs, hospitals and social care.

"It means children start school ready to learn and to achieve, so our schools can be more effective.

"Investing at the start of life gives our children the best chance of being safe, happy and healthy throughout their lifetime and into old age.

"However, we also need to see greater alignment, integration and collaboration between partners, wrapped around a common purpose that addresses the whole child and ensures a coordinated approach to their physical, emotional, and social wellbeing."

DPM: 'I believe in local government'

Local leaders quizzed government ministers about devolution, adult social care, homelessness, special needs education and transport, climate change and roads at last week's LGA Councillors' Forum.

In her first speech as Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner acknowledged the challenges local government faces and thanked the sector for keeping vital public services running.

"You have a team who believes in local government and local power... Local government will always have a seat at the table and a voice in our government. Nothing works without strong local government," she said.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government pledged to reset the central-local relationship and rebuild its foundations by "going back to basics and delivering good and reliable services for people across Britain".

She said she wanted to position the sector at the heart of Labour's five missions, including delivering 1.5 million homes and safer streets, but acknowledged the "biggest crisis facing local government is financial", with rising demand and costs.

She reaffirmed the Government's



LGA Chair Cllr Louise Gittins (right), with Angela Rayner and minister Jim McMahon

commitment to providing long-term integrated funding settlements, and ending the "Dragon's Den approach" of bidding wars.

"Instead, we will show you some respect with long-term funding giving you the flexibility to spend it where it is needed."

Ms Rayner was accompanied by Local Government Minister Jim McMahon who, in response to questions, talked about place-based budgeting, 'invest to save', and adult social care funding.

Councils 'vital' to response to covid inquiry

COVID-19 caused unnecessary deaths and economic costs because of significant flaws in the UK's pandemic planning, according to the first report of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, led by Baroness Hallett.

However, the report recognises the important role local government and directors of public health play in the response to any pandemic and as part of a 'whole system' civil emergency response going forward.

Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, said: "This is a hugely important report by Baroness Hallett, and we thank her for her work to help the nation reflect on and understand what happened.

"At the heart of the inquiry are the bereaved families and survivors, and it is important that we look carefully at the findings and recommendations and learn lessons for the future.

"Local government in England and Wales responded quickly to the pandemic to help protect and support their residents in unprecedented circumstances, using the expertise, capability and innovation of the sector at a time of national crisis.

"However, as we made clear in our evidence and statements, too often central government hasn't understood the role of local government, what it does and what it is capable of doing.

"This has meant that local knowledge and expertise was at times overlooked.

"The LGA and the Welsh LGA stand ready to work collaboratively with councils and the Government to play our part in future preparedness. It is vital that local government is at the heart of developing the response to the inquiry's 10 recommendations."



LGA 'offer' to new government

The new Parliament presents a great opportunity for national and local government to work in partnership and reset the relationship between them, to deliver transformative change, the LGA has said.

Writing to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer after the 4 July general election, LGA Chair Cllr Louise Gittins also highlighted how local government – as place leaders, innovators, and providers and convenors of local services – holds the keys to solving some of our biggest national challenges.

These include: ending the housing crisis; achieving net zero; improving the nation's health and wellbeing; driving inclusive growth; and giving children and young people the best start in life.

"With the right support and reforms, local government's offer is huge: we will unlock prosperity, breathe life back into struggling communities, and rebuild vital services that

improve people's lives and break down barriers to opportunity," she added.

But Cllr Gittins also warned there has "never been a more difficult time for local government", with council finances on a knife edge and LGA analysis predicting a £6.2 billion funding gap over the next two years.

"If we are going to jointly solve issues such as the broken children's social care market, special needs education, homelessness, and temporary accommodation, then the forthcoming spending review must prioritise these areas," she said.

In her letter to the Prime Minister, Cllr Gittins welcomed the Government's commitment to delivering a radical transfer of power from Westminster to local communities, noting that "with more power, local government can help kick-start economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity".

Leadership changes at LGA

The LGA has a new chair – and only its second female chair – after Cllr Shaun Davies stood down after being elected MP for Telford in the general election.

Cllr Louise Gittins has served as Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council since 2019, having previously served as Deputy Leader from 2015.

She was first elected as a councillor in 2011, and had been Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People policy board since 2022.

Cllr Gittins said: "I am excited and honoured to be taking up this important cross-party role on behalf of councils of all types and political colours across the country.

"We are entering a period of huge change, but also opportunity, and my immediate priority is working with the new Government on a fundamental reset of the relationship between central and local government, one of trust and mutual respect."

Elsewhere, Cllr Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council, has been selected as Leader of the LGA's Labour Group, after her predecessor, Cllr Nesil Caliskan, was elected MP for Barking.

Eve Roodhouse, currently Chief Officer, Culture and Economy, at Leeds City Council, will be joining the LGA as Interim Director of Strategy from August. Nicky Old, Director of Communications, is leaving for a new job as Director of Communications at the Publishers Association.

Sarah Pickup, the LGA's Deputy Chief Executive since 2015 and previously Deputy Chief Executive of Hertfordshire County Council, has retired after 40 years' continuous service to local government.



Cllr Louise Gittins

Council spending on homelessness 'triples'

The percentage of councils' total housing budget being spent on homelessness and temporary accommodation has more than tripled since 2015, according to LGA analysis.

The data – based on the set council budget at the start of the financial year – shows that councils in England expected to spend £1.048 billion on homelessness in 2023/24, compared with £315 million in 2015/16. In that year, 18 per cent of councils' total housing budgets were allocated to homelessness, whereas spending on homelessness accounted for 60 per cent of total housing budgets in 2023/24 – meaning councils have less money to invest in and run homelessness prevention services.

The LGA has previously warned that councils are spending at least £1.75 billion annually on supporting nearly 113,000 households in temporary accommodation because of a lack of social housing. Without a concerted effort to address severe housing shortages and increase councils' stock of available social housing, these figures are likely to rise further.

As part of its Local Government White Paper, the LGA has called on government to relieve the pressures on council budgets by implementing a series of measures, including reform of Right



to Buy, abolition of permitted development, banning 'no fault' evictions of tenants, and continued access to preferential borrowing rates for housing.

Cllr Claire Holland, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "Homelessness pressures on councils are spiralling, as a larger proportion of their budgets is put towards costly temporary accommodation because of a lack of social housing. The way to properly resolve the issue is to address the shortage of suitable housing across the country and build up councils' stock of social housing.

"Councils need to be given the powers and resources to build affordable homes their communities need."

New digital transformation framework launched

Digital transformation in councils is set to be boosted by the launch of a new mission-driven framework to bolster efficiency, improve public services and connect residents.

Building on the LGA's Local Government White Paper priority of driving change through innovation and freedom from bureaucracy, the framework will support councils to use the latest digital technology to solve some of the biggest challenges facing their communities.

The LGA's Local Government Digitalisation Framework sets out three missions – to achieve digitally enabled councils, digitally empowered citizens and digitally equipped places – and provides good practice principles, as well as insights and learning from the sector.

Cllr Alex Coley, Deputy Chair of the

LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said: "Councils are constantly innovating to develop new solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing residents and their communities, but, too often, these face hurdles or extra costs.

"The digital transformation of an entire sector is a collective endeavour that relies on a shared vision, an inclusive approach and commitment to innovation. The LGA's framework for securing the digital future of local government sets a clear direction for a long and complex journey.

"These missions are a declaration of intent and a tangible commitment to taking bold collective action on digitalisation to deliver services more efficiently, engage more effectively, and create thriving communities well equipped for the 21st century."

Social care 'in precarious position'

Nine out of 10 directors of adult social services have no confidence, or are only partially confident, that their budgets will be sufficient to fully meet their statutory duties in 2024/25, according to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' (ADASS') spring survey.

The survey also found that the number of people in England needing more complex council-funded care, with multiple visits from two or more care workers – known as 'double-handed care' – rose by 7.4 per cent in the year to March, to 48,955.

The pressure on councils to provide more hours of complex care and support means people needing low-level and early support at home "are at risk of missing out

or their needs escalating", ADASS warned.

Cllr David Fothergill, the LGA's Social Care Spokesperson, said: "The adult social care sector remains in a precarious position and, despite councils' best efforts, more than 400,000 people still face a wait to be assessed, for their care package to start, or for a review of their care plan.

"The LGA is calling for immediate investment in adult social care to tackle the urgent issues affecting services and pave the way for a longer-term and sustainable settlement. This needs to be delivered alongside a long-term care workforce plan and a shift to a more preventative model of health and wellbeing."

• See p25, p29



Local deals 'could deliver 200,000 social homes'

New research by the LGA suggests that the rollout of five-year local housing deals by 2025 would lead to 200,000 additional social homes being built over 30 years.

The report, from Pragmatix, finds that a system that allows local management and greater consistency of housing funding is key to delivering the social homes the country needs, and could lead to a 21 per cent increase in social housebuilding.

The research suggests that moving towards a single, long-term fund could help improve the delivery of housing by prioritising a strategic approach over short-term thinking and avoiding boom-and-bust cycles of housebuilding.

Delivery of more social rented homes would also result in benefits such as reduced government spending, tax benefits from construction, and lower spending on temporary accommodation provision.

The report estimates that a programme of consecutive, minimum five-year housing deals would deliver net socioeconomic benefits worth £31 billion in today's prices over 30 years.

Cllr Claire Holland, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "Over the past 30 years, growth in the housing stock has stagnated and the number of housing completions is failing to keep up with demand. The only way to solve this country's housing crisis is by giving councils the powers and resources to build more of the genuinely affordable homes our communities desperately need.

"Councils know their areas best and need the autonomy and funding certainty to be able to deliver long-term plans for housebuilding in their local areas. Five-year local housing deals are crucial to give local areas the powers to build more affordable, good-quality homes at scale, quickly, where they are needed."

In brief

New dates for LGA annual conference

The LGA will hold its 2024 annual conference and exhibition in Harrogate from 22-24 October. The event was originally scheduled for 2-4 July, but was postponed because of the general election. Cllr Kevin Bentley, LGA Senior Vice-Chairman, said the organisation is "acutely aware" that the new dates fall over school half-terms in some areas, but added: "The chance to convene as a sector at such an important time will be invaluable." The programme and speakers are being finalised and will be updated at www.local.gov.uk/conference, where delegates can also book places.

Unpaid carers

A report from the charity Carers UK has found that 62 per cent of current and former unpaid carers had no choice in taking on their role – equivalent to 10 million adult unpaid carers – because of a lack of alternative care options. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Helping councils to better support unpaid carers should be a crucial part of a long-term and sustainable funding solution for social care. Investing more in early action is fundamental to ensuring someone can continue living independently in the home and community they love."

New programme for chief executives

A first-of-its-kind development programme for local authority chief executives has been created by the LGA and Solace, the network for local government and public sector professionals. The Local Government Chief Executives' Development Framework provides a consistent approach for chief executives to follow, and covers seven themes: the core chief executive role; politics and the political interface; good governance; public ethics; continuous improvement; resource management; and managerial leadership. To apply, visit www.local.gov.uk/local-government-chief-executives-development-hub

Aggregate Industries launches significant report to analyse the true cost of coastal erosion to the UK

A new in-depth report published by Aggregate Industries, one of the UK's leading manufacturers and suppliers of sustainable construction and building materials, has attempted to answer what the true cost of coastal erosion is going to be to the nation.

Data shows that sea levels are expected to rise by a further metre by 2100, a figure that puts more than a quarter of the UK's flood defence structures at risk of failure.

That estimated cost of coastal erosion to the UK, previously put at £12 billion, is largely attributed to the degradation of natural coastal defences such as salt marshes and seagrass beds, of which the UK has already lost significant portions in the last century. The economic impact is equivalent to more than the UK Government's annual spending on police, fire services and law courts.

Commenting in the report, Lee Sleight, Aggregate Industries UK CEO, said: "In the face of the relentless and escalating threat of coastal erosion, we stand at a critical juncture where the



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silent force of the seas is reshaping the very fabric of our nation.

"The disheartening reality is that land, present merely 50 years ago, has vanished, and the forecasted rise in sea levels by a metre over the next century paints a dire picture.

"While the government's commendable commitment of £5.2

billion aims to protect vulnerable locations, the enormity of the challenge demands more. As we confront this unprecedented crisis, our collective responsibility is not merely to adapt but to innovate, fortify, and safeguard the resilience of our coastlines for generations to come. And we have the solutions to do so."

How Aggregate Industries can help

Here at Aggregate Industries, we have an array of Sea and Flood Defence aggregate solutions that are well-suited to cater to the evolving requirements in a world where rising sea levels are an increasing concern.

Here are four products that are already making a significant impact around the UK:

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) offer an eco-friendly approach to managing surface water runoff in urban and rural areas. Unlike conventional systems that quickly channel water away, SuDS replicate natural processes to reduce flooding, enhance water quality, and promote biodiversity. Techniques include permeable surfaces, green roofs, swales, detention basins, and infiltration devices, which allow rainwater to be absorbed or slowed down. SuDS mitigate flooding risks, act as natural filters to remove pollutants, and improve water quality before it reaches water

bodies, reflecting a commitment to sustainable drainage solutions.

Hydromedia

Hydromedia is a porous concrete solution for urban water management and sustainable development. Made from a mix of aggregates, cement, and water-permeable additives, it facilitates rapid drainage, reduces surface runoff, and minimises flooding risks. Its porous nature allows rainwater to infiltrate the surface, replenishing groundwater and reducing the strain on traditional drainage systems. Hydromedia also improves water quality by filtering impurities as water passes through.

SuperDrain Asphalt

SuperDrain Asphalt is an innovative and sustainable product designed for urban water management. Engineered with advanced permeability, it efficiently manages surface water runoff, reduces flooding risks, and

alleviates pressure on conventional drainage systems. Its composition promotes groundwater recharge and maintains water quality by filtering impurities.

Armourstone

Armourstone is a robust coastal protection and erosion control solution, consisting of large, durable stones. It acts as a barrier against natural forces, absorbing wave energy, mitigating storm impacts, and stabilising shorelines. Armourstone enhances coastal aesthetics while providing long-lasting protection.



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A new Parliament

A third of MPs have local government experience

Now that the votes have been counted, we can look at what the results of the general election on 4 July mean for local government, and our hopes for the new Government.

First to note is that nearly a third of the House of Commons – 200 MPs – have local government experience as either a councillor or an officer. This includes many with whom you will be familiar, such as: Shaun Davies, the LGA's former Chair; Nesil Caliskan, who, most recently, was the LGA's Labour Group Leader; Michael Payne, who was an LGA Deputy Chair; and Vikki Slade, who was a Deputy Chair of our Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board.

We are also well-served among the ministerial ranks. At the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has become, Ministers of State Jim McMahon and Matthew Pennycook are former councillors.

In the Cabinet, Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, Environment Secretary Steve Reed, Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting, and Scotland Secretary Ian Murray are all former councillors.

And newly elected Georgia Gould, another former LGA Deputy Chair and former Chair of London Councils, is Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office.

As LGA Chair Cllr Louise Gittins wrote in her welcoming letter to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, a new Parliament offers the chance to reset the relationship between central and local government, and to work in partnership to deliver transformative change.

Our Local Government White Paper (see **first** 695) demonstrated how local government is the key to solving some of our biggest national challenges.

We work at the frontline of people's daily lives. We shape places, provide vital services which hold our communities together, keep people safe, and create the conditions for prosperity and wellbeing.



The white paper called for a fundamental reset of the local-national government relationship, and we welcome the Government's commitment to deliver a radical transfer of power from Westminster to communities, giving local leaders the tools they need to be true place leaders.

However, there has never been a more difficult time for local government.

Councils find themselves in an increasingly precarious position, facing the toughest of decisions.

Local government has faced a 22.2 per cent cut in core spending power since 2010/11. Combined with rising costs and growing demands, financial resilience is at an all-time low, despite the sector continuing to innovate and make efficiencies.

The Government's commitment to reintroduce multi-year funding settlements and end competitive bidding are a vital step forward. However, if we are going to jointly

solve issues such as the broken children's social care market, provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, homelessness and temporary accommodation, the forthcoming spending review must prioritise these areas.

As ever, local government stands ready, with our experience and expertise, to work with the Government to find innovative and reforming solutions to the issues facing the country and to deliver a better future for our communities.

We will continue to meet with new ministers over the coming weeks to work on our shared ambitions, and to place our sector at the heart of the new Government's missions to deliver change.



To find out more about the **LGA's parliamentary work**, please visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament.

See **p10** for the LGA's briefing on the **King's Speech**

The King's Speech

A bumper batch of bills includes many of interest to councils

The new Labour Government's first legislative programme – announced in the King's Speech on 17 July – contains 40 bills, 26 of which appear to be relevant to local government.

Described as 'mission led' and 'based upon the principles of security, fairness and opportunity for all', the speech includes a number of positive bills that have the potential to tackle some of the big issues we face as a nation, according to the LGA.

Councils hold the local levers to solve many of these national challenges, whether it is improving care for adults and children, boosting inclusive growth, improving life chances for all, or tackling climate change.

The new legislative agenda includes some encouraging signs that the Government recognises that, with the right powers and flexibilities, councils are critical to help it deliver its missions.

For councils to deliver, it is also crucial they have adequate long-term



funding and more financial certainty through multi-year settlements.

The LGA and councils are committed to working closely with the Government on the details of proposals to ensure that, together, we can address the fundamental long-term challenges facing our communities and help them deliver on their priorities.

In light of the King's Speech, and as **first** was going to press, the LGA Board and the LGA's Executive

Advisory Board were meeting to review the organisation's approach and offer to working with the Government, to ensure the LGA's priorities reflect the Government's missions and other critical issues for our members.

Some of the key bills for local government are outlined below and right. More details are available in the LGA's 'King's Speech 2024: on-the-day briefing', at www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses

English Devolution Bill

The King said: "My Government believes that greater devolution of decision-making is at the heart of a modern dynamic economy and is a key driver of economic growth."

The bill would:

- make devolution the default setting, with places granted additional powers (over strategic planning, local transport networks, skills, and employment support) without the need to negotiate agreements where they meet governance conditions
- introduce new powers and duties for local leaders to produce local growth plans
- create a strong new 'right to buy' for community assets, such as empty shops, pubs and community spaces.

Crime and Policing Bill

The King said: "Legislation will be brought forward to strengthen community policing, and give the police greater powers to deal with antisocial behaviour."

The bill would:

- introduce new Respect Orders to tackle persistent adult offenders
- fast-track Public Spaces Protection Orders to tackle street drinking
- create a duty for local partners to cooperate on antisocial behaviour, with an antisocial behaviour lead in every local authority area
- strengthen the law to tackle those who exploit children for criminal purposes
- provide a stronger, specialist response to violence against women and girls.

Renters' Rights Bill

The King said: "Legislation will be introduced to give greater rights and protections to people renting their homes, including ending no-fault evictions and reforming grounds for possession."

The bill would:

- abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions
- apply a Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector
- create a digital private rented sector database that councils can use to target enforcement action
- support quicker, cheaper dispute resolution with a new ombudsman
- make it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants in receipt of benefits or with children
- make it easier for councils to identify and fine unscrupulous landlords.

Skills England Bill

The King said: “My Government will establish Skills England, which will have a new partnership with employers at its heart, and my ministers will reform the apprenticeship levy.”

The bill would:

- establish Skills England, bringing together business, providers, unions, mayoral combined authorities and national government
- Skills England would:
 - develop a single picture of national and local skills needs
 - identify the training for which the Growth and Skills Levy will be accessible
 - ensure the national and regional skills systems are meeting skills needs and are aligned.

Better Buses Bill

The King said: “A bill will be introduced to allow local leaders to take control of their local bus services.”

The bill would:

- remove barriers that limit bus-franchising powers to metro mayors
- remove the ban on publicly owned bus companies
- provide more accountability over bus operators
- give local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The King said: “My ministers will get Britain building, including through planning reform, as they seek to accelerate the delivery of high-quality infrastructure and housing.”

The bill would:

- make improvements to the local planning system, modernising planning committees and increasing local planning authorities’ capacity
- accelerate housebuilding and infrastructure delivery by:
 - simplifying the consenting process for major infrastructure projects
 - further reforming compulsory purchase compensation
 - using development to fund nature recovery – the Government will work with nature-delivery organisations, stakeholders and the sector over the summer to determine the best way forward.

Employment Rights Bill

The King said: “My Government is committed to making work pay and will legislate to introduce a new deal for working people to ban exploitative practices and enhance employment rights.”

The bill would:

- ban zero-hour contracts
- make parental leave, sick pay, protection from unfair dismissal and flexible working available from day one of a job
- make it unlawful to dismiss a woman who has had a baby for six months after her return to work
- establish a Fair Pay Agreement in the adult social care sector
- reinstate the School Support Staff Negotiating Body.

Children’s Wellbeing Bill

The King said: “A bill will be introduced to raise standards in education and promote children’s wellbeing.”

The bill would:

- strengthen multi-agency child protection and safeguarding arrangements
- require free breakfast clubs in every primary school
- create a duty on local authorities to have and maintain Children Not in School registers, and to provide support to home-educating parents
- provide Ofsted with stronger powers to investigate unregistered independent schools
- require all schools to cooperate with the local authority on school admissions, SEND inclusion, and place planning
- require all schools to teach the national curriculum, subject to a curriculum and assessment review.

Other key bills for councils

- Armed Forces Commissioner Bill – establishes a statutory Armed Forces Commissioner, with investigatory powers to act as a strong independent champion for armed forces personnel and their families.
- Budget Responsibility Bill – introduces a ‘fiscal lock’ to ensure any government making significant and permanent tax and spending changes will be subject to an independent assessment by the Office for Budget Responsibility.
- Digital Information and Smart Data Bill – includes plans for a National Underground Asset Register of buried pipes and cables, for use by planners and excavators.
- Draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill – enshrines full right to equal pay for ethnic minorities and disabled people, and introduces mandatory ethnicity and disability pay reporting.
- Great British Energy Bill – establishes a publicly-owned energy production company, which will own, manage and operate clean-power projects.
- Mental Health Bill – modernises the Mental Health Act, including further limits on the detention and treatment of people with a learning disability and/or autistic people.
- Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill – requires those responsible for certain premises and events to take steps to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack and reduce harm in the event of an attack occurring.
- Tobacco and Vapes Bill – introduces a progressive smoking ban to gradually end the sale of tobacco products, and includes powers to regulate the flavours, packaging and display of vapes and other nicotine products, and for enforcement authorities in England and Wales to issue fixed penalty notices for underage sales.
- Water (Special Measures) Bill – strengthens regulation and requires water companies to install real-time monitors at sewage outlets.



Councillor Louise Gittins had a busy first day as Chair of the LGA.

Amid a swathe of filming, induction meetings and introductions at the LGA's London headquarters, Ofsted announced it would be inspecting her council's children's services, and she took a call from Angela Rayner, the Deputy Prime Minister and new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

"You get used to it in local government," she says, with a wry smile.

Cllr Gittins was Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board for two years, and previously Deputy Chair of its Community Wellbeing Board, but says she still feels like a relative newcomer to the organisation.

While a long-standing and active Labour party member, she only became a councillor because she was asked to stand as a 'paper' candidate in the 2011 local elections, when she was told: "Don't worry, you're not going to win."

But she did, becoming Deputy Leader of Cheshire West and Chester when Labour took control four years later, and Leader in 2019.

Then COVID-19 came along – cementing her belief in the importance of cross-party working.

"At that time, it was really important that we all worked together, regardless of political colour, for the benefit of our residents," she says.

The cross-party aspect of the LGA chair's role appealed to her and she'd "had it in the back of my mind" to apply – but, much like becoming a councillor, it took encouragement from others to do so. Now, she feels ready for it.

"I'm so passionate about local government, the LGA feels like a natural environment," says Cllr Gittins.

"It also comes at the right time. I feel comfortable in my role as leader of the council. I know our officers are really proud that I've been given this privilege and this opportunity, and, ultimately, I'm doing this to try to get the very best I can for residents right across the country, including my own.

"I think it's also good that I come from a council that people probably don't know very much about.

"Cheshire West and Chester is not one of the big metropolitan areas, it's not a big county; it's a microcosm of

"There has been too much focus on saying what's wrong"

© LGA

Hope for change

Building trust with government is the new LGA chair's priority

England, with a historic city, industrial towns, an old 'new' town, lots of rural areas, towns, villages, agriculture, massive industry around Ellesmere Port, green growth, high areas of deprivation, but then areas of wealth, living side by side in some cases.

"So, there are lots and lots of opportunities, as well as all the challenges, and that feels a bit like the country as a whole."

Cllr Gittins intends to stay on as Leader because "I need to understand the challenges council leaders are facing". But, as Chair of the LGA, she wants to be seen visiting councils across the country, and to be a 'listening' chair, keen to hear everyone's point of view.

Her primary focus, though, will be on building a new relationship between central and local government following the 4 July general election.

"Now we've got a period of stability and certainty in national government, we need to come together and work with the new Government with hope in our hearts that things are going to change," she says.

"The biggest thing that needs to change is our relationship with government: they need to be seen as listening, working with us, and collaborating; and we need to show them we can deliver on their priorities, their missions.

"Sometimes, there has been perhaps too much focus on saying what's wrong, instead of what's strong.

"I would like us to work together to really show how local government can support immediate government priorities – for example, around getting houses built, reducing homelessness, tackling child poverty, and strengthening the economy. Councils are already doing these things and could do more."

The LGA is reviewing its Local Government White Paper – published during the general election campaign – to align it with the new post-election agenda, and this work needs to move "at pace", says Cllr Gittins.

"Now is the time to take stock and say, OK, how does this align to what the new Government is trying to do and



how can we tweak and change, and what are our messages coming from that?"

The white paper warned that councils in England face a \$6.2 billion funding gap over the next two years, and Cllr Gittins is clear the Government is "well aware of that, because we've shouted about that quite a lot".

"The money is really, really important to help tackle the challenges councils face. It's the demand on services, whether it's children's, adult social care, homelessness – they're the three biggies," she adds.

"But if we go in just focused on 'give us the money', it's not going to happen. We need to start off by building that relationship of trust and showing we can deliver."

She feels residents and local communities are becoming more aware of the pressures on local authorities, and are more open to being asked to 'play their part' by looking after their areas and looking out for each other.

Her personal priorities are about tackling health inequalities and ensuring all children and young people get the best start in life.

"I'm passionate about addressing the differences in healthy life expectancy, and about preventative measures to help people live longer, healthier and happier lives the way they want to," she says.

"In too many parts of the country,

the difference in life expectancy between the poorest and wealthiest areas is too high, and in some places this rises to 16 years or more.

"Professor Sir Michael Marmot's work on the wider social determinants of health underpins everything we do every day in local government – providing housing, green spaces, leisure facilities, environmental services, libraries and culture is so important.

"People work hard all their lives and bring up their families; they should be able to live gracefully into older age."

A keen walker, Cllr Gittins talks about how being outdoors and engaging with culture

helps create a sense of wellbeing. Her council has a campaign running called 'joyful movement', about getting people moving (rather than focusing on sport).

The aim is to develop a "narrative of how moving makes people feel", with residents and partners encouraged to move in a way they enjoy – for example, dancing in their kitchens at home, going for a walk during work lunch breaks, or playing in the park with their kids.

She adds: "'Active soles' is a great example of an expanding network of places encouraging people to wear comfortable shoes for work so, in their breaks, they can go and stretch their legs: it's taking away barriers to being more active, and I'll be encouraging the LGA to do it too!"

"I'm passionate about helping people live longer, healthier, happier lives"

Sharing best practice: Emergency Preparedness



Maximising the lifesaving potential of existing assets

There is potential to transform your community's emergency preparedness to improve survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, by maximising the lifesaving potential of existing assets – defibrillators.

Each year, over 30,000 people have an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in the UK – the survival rate is less than 1 in 10.

Every minute without CPR and defibrillation reduces the chance of survival by up to 10 percent.

Ensuring ambulance services can see your defibrillators

The Circuit is the national defibrillator network which provides ambulance services with visibility of the nearest defibrillator. This helps emergency call handlers direct bystanders to their nearest defibrillator when 999 is called, to enable defibrillation to start before the ambulance arrives.

Registering your defibrillators is quick and free of charge.

You can check if your community's defibrillators are registered by visiting: DefibFinder.uk

Over 90,000 defibrillators are already registered on The Circuit across the UK. However, it is estimated that tens of thousands of defibrillators are not registered. If they aren't registered emergency call handlers can't direct bystanders to them in an emergency. **At a time when every second counts, a defibrillator could be nearby, but not used.**

Defibrillator visibility and social deprivation

Across England 41% of the most deprived areas have zero defibrillators registered whilst in Wales 24% have zero defibrillators registered.

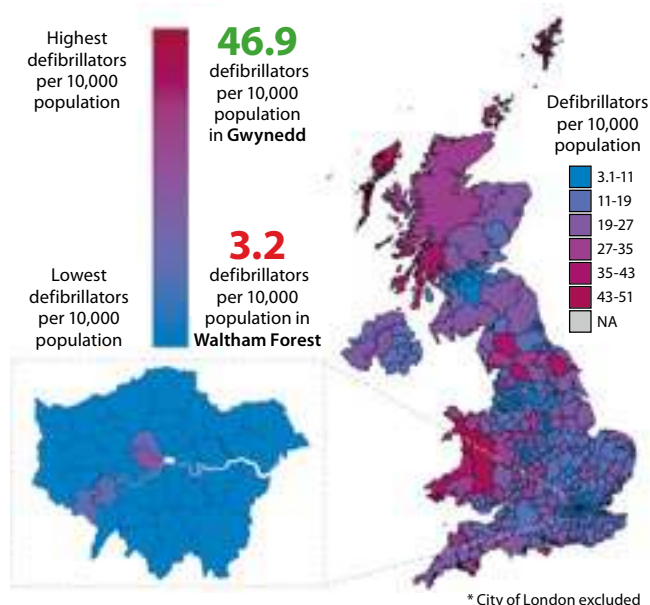
Presenting an acute vulnerability in defibrillator visibility to ambulance services in the event of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, in locations where the risk is typically greater.

Making a difference through the registration of existing defibrillators

Thousands of unregistered defibrillators can be found across sports sites, community centres, businesses, and schools. Embedding a call to register defibrillators within your emergency preparedness outreach and assessment activities will support you to enhance your response and resilience.

Help us save more lives

Defibrillators per 10,000 population visible to ambulance services



Data correct as per 01/06/2024. Source: The Circuit, the national defibrillator network.

Take action

For more information or to register your council's defibs visit TheCircuit.uk



If you have any questions, please contact: ndnsupport@bhf.org.uk

The circuit
The National Defibrillator Network

Local **skills** and **jobs**

Taking steps towards a devolved employment and skills service



Councillor **Liam Robinson** is Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board and Councillor **Martin Tett** is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board



Local government leaders know how vital a joined-up employment and skills offer is to creating inclusive and sustainable local economies where people want to live and work, and where employers want to invest.

To make this happen, we need an ambitious, reformed and devolved employment and skills service, linked to local services and meeting local needs.

The LGA's new employment and skills offer, agreed by our boards in June, sets out practical steps that the Government can take, working with us to move towards a devolved model across England.

Our proposals will help the Government deliver on its missions to boost growth and break down barriers to opportunities, and should be used to further shape the manifesto commitments to support more young people and adults into work, and deliver a highly skilled workforce.

Building on our 2022 Work Local proposals (see www.local.gov.uk/work-local), our new proposal

recommends moving forward via three interlinked offers:

- **Youth Pathways** – to help young people (age 16-24) not in employment, education or training (NEET), or at risk of being so, find their first job or put them on a career path
- **Working Futures** – for adults who are disadvantaged in the labour market, and who need personal support to find work or better work
- **Skills for All** – to provide a better match of skills supply and demand, and a skills and learning offer linked to local careers advice and jobs, and promote lifelong learning.

Initially, the three offers would be delivered using existing programmes and devolution deals, as part of local government's place-shaping role.

Existing devolved authorities and their constituent councils have already made significant strides over recent years to negotiate deals and deliver tangible benefits. With

their collective expertise, they can deliver more and at a quicker pace. For other parts of England, there should be a review of the devolution deal process to put them on a more ambitious path.

The three offers should be locally planned and commissioned through outcome-focused 'local employment and skills agreements', which would run for at least three years. These would reflect the varied needs within an area and its communities, and the respective roles of local government, set within a clear national framework.

Other measures needed to kick-start this process include: creating a new 'duty to cooperate' on all partners; a programme of joint working and co-location of Jobcentres and councils; an early call for new initiatives or pilots; new policy, planning and delivery networks to promote dialogue and learning; and a minister-led joint national board to coordinate detailed planning.

Previous independent cost-benefit analysis revealed that, across a local area, pooling budgets and working collaboratively has the potential to increase by 15 per cent the number of people moving into work and improving their skills, thus delivering benefits to people and places, reducing costs to the public purse and contributing to growth.

The LGA's proposals are key to providing a better offer to individuals and employers by enabling councils to use their local knowledge to reach into communities across England. We are confident that our approach will make a tangible difference to how local areas tackle long-term unemployment and economic inactivity, and help employers across all sectors recruit.

This is vital to breaking down barriers to opportunity and boosting inclusive economic growth. We stand ready to work with government to implement these.



i To read the **LGA's employment and skills offer** in full, please visit moredetails.uk/3Wcub9b

Embracing diversity

The LGA supports people from different backgrounds to stand as councillors

June's Pride celebrations and events – many of them continuing into July and August – commemorate the LGBTQIA+ population, and diversity within our communities.

Pride is also a time to reflect on how our different backgrounds and experiences offer local government a wealth of knowledge to help deliver better public services.

It is important that communities are served by those who are reflective of the needs of the people they represent, and it is our duty to ensure that everyone can freely express and be themselves.

Most issues affecting the public are cross-cutting, which provides an opportunity to collaborate and build stronger relationships with different community groups.

There are several steps we can take to make our local areas more inclusive such as through reviewing our policies and processes to eliminate any structural or unconscious bias.

When we lead by example, we make local government even more attractive to a diverse range of prospective councillors and officers ready to make a difference.

The LGA's Be a Councillor programme encourages and supports people from different backgrounds to put themselves forward for election as councillors. You can find out more at www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor or email beacouncillor@local.gov.uk for any queries.



'Bringing communities together'



Councillor **Harry Doyle** (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Culture at Liverpool City Council

It was never my intention to go into politics, it was always just an interest of mine – education has always been my calling.

But as we approached the 2018 local elections, two councillors in the area where I live and now represent stood down, and I had a lot of encouragement from local members including my MP at the time, Stephen Twigg.

It's funny how unexpected

opportunities can just land in your lap!

At first, balancing some supply teaching with representing my area and driving change was quite difficult. It's hard to say how, but you just learn to manage your time more effectively.

In 2021, I became Lead Member for Culture and Visitor Economy, helping steer Liverpool through a turbulent recovery post-COVID-19.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be spearheading the city's bid to host Eurovision 2023 on behalf of Ukraine!

For the first time in the contest's history, we ran a full community and education programme that saw community parties, children learning Ukrainian sign language, and artists going into care

"We're there to serve our communities – nothing beats getting that right!"

homes to sing and dance to some old Eurovision classics.

That's the power of culture – bringing communities together. Thanks Abba!

Perhaps your journey may not be as sparkly as Eurovision, but then, who knows.

And yet, despite the huge achievements in my leadership role, the thing that most makes my heart fill with happiness is the moment a local resident says thank you. As councillors, we're there to serve our communities – nothing quite beats getting that right!

'Shared human values'



Councillor **Simon Minas-Bound** is Conservative Group Leader at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

I feel serving as an LGBTQ+ elected councillor and former council leader is both a privilege and a profound responsibility.

Representing my community means constantly advocating for inclusivity and equality, ensuring that every voice, especially those often marginalised, is heard.

Navigating a political landscape that sometimes feels distant and resistant to change requires resilience, dedication and

nerves of steel. A good support network also helps!

One of my core beliefs is that no issue should be monopolised by a single political party. LGBTQ+ rights, climate change, healthcare and education are universal concerns that transcend partisan lines.

It's important to focus on shared human values rather than divisive politics – hearing diverse views about the issues and wanting to understand different potential solutions, even if we don't like what we hear.

Understanding that people face multiple forms of discrimination and struggle is crucial.

I don't see being an LGBTQ+ individual as my current biggest defining characteristic or life challenge, but others

"It's important to focus on shared values rather than divisive politics"

might. I recognise that my experience is just one thread in a much larger tapestry of societal challenges.

The struggles faced by a queer person of colour, someone with disabilities, or a trans individual are distinct and multifaceted. It's essential to encourage individuals with these diverse views to stand, get elected and share their 'street corner' on life and for us to listen – and I mean listen really hard.

It's about fighting for justice, not just for the LGBTQ+ community, but for everyone, collectively and one by one.

'Part of a great team'



Councillor **Kevin Guy** (Lib Dem) is Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council

My eyes were first opened to the impact of politics and politicians when I was serving in the Royal Navy.

Seeing the consequences of conflict first-hand made me want to better understand the world and the role of political leadership.

This led me to university and then volunteering in my local MP's office. Someone suggested I should stand for election as a councillor and here I am, 13 years later.

My favourite thing about being a councillor is solving problems, which I find ridiculously satisfying.

Whether I'm helping one resident with a simple waste collection or getting into the nitty-gritty of a multi-million pound, transformational project, there's nothing more rewarding.

"If you're thinking about standing ... go for it"

All councillors know the role can be very full on, especially if you're juggling responsibilities or facing homophobic comments and general personal abuse online.

Our council recently joined the LGA's 'Debate Not Hate' campaign and councillors from all parties shared moving experiences and concerns in the debate.

My key message to anyone thinking about standing for election is to go for it. Councillors come from all walks of life, and you can make a real difference, but only if you put yourself forward.

Local government and your residents need your voice.

Yes, there is negativity out there but there's also a lot of support, awareness and love.

For me, it really helps to remember I'm part of a great team and to know I'm making a difference for my residents and for future generations.

'The importance of representation'



Councillor **Ani Stafford-Townsend** is a Green Party member of Bristol City Council

My activism began in the 1980s when I discovered the harmful effects of aerosols on the environment. This led me to engage in feminist and social activism.

The 2010 coalition spurred my entry into party politics, and I found a natural home in the Green Party due to its strong stance on climate, social, and racial justice.

Central Ward, where I serve, embodies privilege and deprivation and boasts fantastic diversity. One of the biggest challenges is overcoming lack of trust in politics and winning over hearts and minds to collaborate effectively.

Balancing my roles is tough: I run my own business, have a child, and attend council meetings often scheduled around a typical '9 to 5' routine. I don't get paid leave, and my disabilities require careful pacing, which is complicated by my ADHD-induced hyperfocus.

"As a queer trans person, I believe in the importance of representation"

As a queer trans person with disabling conditions, I believe in the importance of representation.

I strive to be open and authentic, demonstrating that embracing one's differences is possible, despite significant challenges. The abuse often directed at those perceived as female in public life can drown out one's message.

First elected in 2015, I am now in my third term. I cherish being part of my inner-city community and challenging perceptions.

It's crucial to have interests outside of politics, as it can be consuming and often negative. Finding space for perspective and distance is key to maintaining the strength to persevere.

Reducing disparities

A new report highlights good practice in disability work

Disability Pride Month brings people together every July to celebrate the diversity of those with a disability or long-term health condition and promote understanding of their experiences and challenges.

It is a prompt for local government to progress action on reducing disparities in outcomes for the 24 per cent of the UK population who are disabled, as well as an opportunity to celebrate the contributions that disabled officers and councillors make in local government.

In December 2023, the LGA convened the Local Government Disability Champions Network (LGDCN), which is open to officers and councillors in local government who have a formal or informal role as a disability champion, are disabled, or consider themselves an ally.

Chaired by LGA Vice-President Baroness Brinton, the LGDCN aims to support a more inclusive local government sector by raising awareness of how barriers might be addressed, promoting the voices of disabled people, identifying and sharing good practice, and supporting efforts to address poor practice.

The LGDCN recently commissioned a report involving case studies collated from nine councils, across England and Wales, where disabled officers and councillors used co-produced approaches to successfully deliver projects within their areas of work.

The report shows that, although different approaches were taken in the case studies, the barriers and enablers to success were similar, with change being most impactful when it was led by an officer or member with lived experience of disability.

This resulted in political, community, and employment benefits for each local authority involved, with notable changes in policy, organisational culture, and a shift to inclusive employment practices.

The main barriers faced were:

- time constraints, especially around managing any additional workload on top of the day job

- budgetary limitations, with there often being a lack of specific budget assigned to disability work
- lack of understanding by staff and leadership of the importance of disability work
- the difficulty of making the topic of disability 'fit' into a political or corporate environment.

The main enablers of success were:

- the drive and determination of those with lived experience in making change
- the ability to build relationships with allies across the council community
- political or managerial leaders being understanding of disability issues
- organisational leaders promoting a culture that gave those with lived experience of disability the platform and space to drive change.

When asked what lessons could be learned from their projects, contributors highlighted relationship

building as a key area of focus, particularly learning different mechanisms for influencing.

Making sure you have the right data to make a case, and building allies to advocate by fostering relationships with disability charities and community groups in the local area, were also vital.

The full report – which details the challenge faced in each case study, steps taken to overcome barriers, enablers, and lessons learned – will be published on the LGDCN pages of the LGA's website.

The next step for the LGDCN is to use the insights from this research to promote good practice throughout the sector, working in a co-produced way to do this, so that we are 'walking the walk' as well as 'talking the talk'.

If you would like to be involved in this next phase of work, the LGDCN is still open to members – please contact Tamsin Hewett on Tamsin.Hewett@local.gov.uk for more information.

i Applications are open for the **LGA's Disabled Councillors Leadership Programme**, with workshops taking place from 23 November 2024 to 15 March 2025. See moredetails.uk/3We856i to find out more and book your place



Cllrs Steve and Mandy Darling, from Torbay Council, walking their guide dogs with a local business owner

Protecting women and girls

The LGA has published a survey of domestic homicide reviews



Councillor **Heather Kidd** is Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board

It is often overlooked that local government plays a crucial role in the fight against the scourge of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

Councils are responsible for prevention, support, protection and coordination of a variety of services, and as Leader of South Shropshire District Council, I championed the opening of our first refuge.

This year, LGA lead members and I have ensured that the organisation has renewed its focus in this area by hosting three domestic abuse webinars. These were coordinated with the Home Office, the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. Each webinar had an attendance of around 100 people.

The events focused on tackling domestic abuse among those with no recourse to public funds, best practice in strategic needs assessments, and children as victims in their own right.

The LGA also appointed a Domestic Abuse Champion, Cllr Kelly Middleton, from Telford and Wrekin.

“Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, the number of DHRs undertaken increased by 76 per cent”

In early 2024, we conducted a survey of councils with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC). This asked questions about domestic homicide reviews (DHR).

A DHR is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves.

Since 13 April 2011, there has been a statutory requirement for local areas to conduct a DHR following a domestic homicide that meets these criteria.

Just before the general election, the then government announced an intention to update how DHRs operate. Publication of the results of our survey was delayed because of the election.

The research shows that, between 2018/19 and 2022/23, the number of DHRs undertaken by respondents increased by 76 per cent.

Respondent authorities spent £1 million on DHRs in 2022/23, 45 per cent more than in 2021/22. This reflects the increase in the number of DHRs commissioned.

Around three-quarters of expenditure was on DHR chairs, which is also impacted by negotiating with the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel.

The main challenges facing community safety partnerships were Home Office delays (79 per cent), funding (77 per cent), increasing numbers of DHRs (63 per cent) and sourcing chairs (63 per cent).

In response, the LGA, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the DAC have launched a Domestic Abuse and Related Death Review Forum. So far, 129 people are members and we have held our first meeting.

The LGA used feedback from this forum to inform our response to the Government's DHR consultation. The forum will be used to inform the new Government of the challenges in this area and possible solutions.

To do justice by victims and family or friends of victims, local government requires adequate resources. I am writing to the new minister making this case.



The LGA's 'Domestic homicide review survey 2024' can be read in full at www.local.gov.uk/publications



Councillor **Nick Chard** is Chair of the National Employers for Fire and Rescue Services

It's easy now to forget just how close we came to a national dispute over firefighter pay and conditions in 2023.

But after a long night of negotiation, the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services came together to avert industrial action, which had felt inevitable.

It wasn't perfect, but the NJC – which is UK-wide and brings together the employer and employee sides – proved its worth, demonstrated agility, and thrashed out a deal.

This year's negotiations were set against that backdrop, with some outstanding items from the 2023 settlement still on the table.

We remained under pressure to deliver, but, strategically, the National Employers also wanted to find an agreement without the public drama of 2023, and to rebuild trust.

We took our commitment to joint working groups seriously, getting people from all sides of the debate round the table to discuss the issues in good faith – as we said we would.

This year's agreement also improved occupational maternity pay as part of our drive to attract and retain more women into operational roles.

The NJC continues to play a key role in the work to improve culture and behaviours across the service through the Inclusive Fire Service Group – and where the National Employers can support cultural change through our work on terms and conditions, we will always look to play our part.

That same aspiration – ensuring the NJC responds to strategic issues by looking through the workforce lens – drove the final part of this year's deal, following recommendations from expert practitioners on the joint working group, which improved the retainer fee for firefighters on the 'retained duty' system (sometimes known as 'on call' firefighters).

For the first time in decades, we increased the retainer fee in recognition of the esteem in which those firefighters are held – many of whom make themselves available for hundreds of hours each week, and who cover huge swathes of the UK.



Improving our conversation

The employer voice in fire service pay negotiations

As always for the NJC, balancing different-sized fire and rescue services with different funding models and different demands is not an easy job.

We know for some services that increasing the retainer fee brings a significant additional financial challenge, which is why we delayed implementation of this part of our agreement until 1 January 2025. We've also explored the wider pay framework this year, through joint working.

While there is some consensus around reforming our pay structure to drive a greater focus on skills, knowledge and behaviours, the complexity meant the National Employers deferred those talks into next year's negotiations.

Ambition remains, but circumstances need to be right to fulfil those aims, and a lot more thinking and consultation is required.

There's so much more we can do, and the National Employers' self-led

“Ambition remains, but circumstances need to be right to fulfil those aims”

review invites our stakeholders to join our national conversation, to increase understanding about how the NJC works and explore where we can improve. There has been criticism over the years – some fair, some not – but the NJC is just the machinery. Together, we bring it to life to deliver our shared agenda.

The past few years have been difficult: there are so many challenges facing the UK fire and rescue service, operationally, financially, and culturally. However, success for the NJC isn't just about avoiding a strike – it's in the measure of how we build sustainability in the years that follow. I look forward to that national conversation.



Cllr Nick Chard is Chair of Kent Fire and Rescue Authority, and is appointed by the LGA to the National Employers for Fire and Rescue Services, which he also chairs.

The LGA provides the secretariat to the employer side of the NJC. To find about more, please see bit.ly/3S3fd4e

The culture **challenge**

Members have a key role to play in building a more inclusive fire service



Councillor **Frank Biederman** is Chair of the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee

Fire and rescue services do an incredible job and I am proud of my role on a fire and rescue authority and as Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee.

As we near the end of our political year at the LGA, it gives us an opportunity to look back and reflect on the challenges the sector has faced, and where we hope to go in the future.

Culture in the fire and rescue service has been a particular challenge over the past year.

Media stories, inspections, independent reviews and inquiries have all highlighted examples of poor behaviour, bullying and harassment. This is not something that any of us wishes to see.

While changing culture takes time, it is something that we all have a role in tackling and improving.

Members and officers can bring their own skills, experiences and knowledge to challenging those behaviours that we do not want to see, with members holding officers to account for progress.

Everyone benefits from a more inclusive service, with a positive culture where everyone can flourish in their careers.

To support this, we have continued to work with our Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network, with sessions on independent reviews and with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), as well as discussions around the role of members.

The network brings together elected representatives responsible for diversity and inclusion issues in their fire and rescue authorities, to develop the skills needed to challenge their services to improve in this area.

We will be looking to build on the work of the champions to ensure the network is meeting their needs.

The LGA also provides training for leading members through our Fire



“We want to ensure services are inclusive, open and safe places to work, and that the public has trust in the sector”

Leadership Essentials programme (see below), including around their role in leading improvement and equality, diversity and inclusion.

At the LGA's annual fire services conference earlier this year, we also held sessions on culture issues, including tackling sexual harassment within the service, covering the law, services' duties and potential remedies. In addition, we held a session on mental health support and the impact this has on staff within the sector.

We will continue to work closely with our colleagues on the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (NJC), who have set out the complexities of the NJC agenda this year (see left).

They have also been working hard on their Inclusive Fire Service Group, which includes employer and employee representation, including

the LGA and Welsh LGA, and has revised its improvement strategies.

The high importance we place on culture has seen us working with our partners, the NFCC and the National Employers (England), to update our joint publication 'Fit for the Future'.

This sets out our shared ambitions for the future of the service, and we are working to ensure that it reflects the current position and challenges in the sector, particularly on culture.

We want to ensure that all services are inclusive, open and safe places to work, and that the public has trust and confidence in the sector.

In its manifesto, the new Labour Government made a commitment to working with the sector on standards and policy. We look forward to working with the new fire minister to represent the views of the sector on these issues, as well as others to drive improvement for the sector.



Please visit www.local.gov.uk/topics/fire-and-rescue to find out more about the LGA's support for fire and rescue authorities.

The next **Fire Leadership Essentials** programmes take place on 29-30 October 2024 and 4-5 February 2025, in Coventry, and are fully subsidised. See bit.ly/4eSZLSd or email grace.collins@local.gov.uk to find out more and book your place

Workforce **worries**

Without the right staff, councils cannot deliver for communities



Councillor **Pete Marland** is Chair of the LGA's Economy and Resources Board

Despite local government being able to offer a rewarding career, where officers can make a positive impact on people and communities, councils across England are struggling with workforce capacity. This is having a negative effect on their ability to deliver the services on which the public rely.

The LGA recently conducted a survey investigating workforce capacity issues across six local government service areas – adult social care, building control, environmental health, finance, IT, and legal. The survey data is concerning, but will not surprise those working in local government.

One workforce issue councils are enduring is a high number of vacancies in key service areas. For example, in the average council building control or legal team, around a quarter of posts are currently vacant. This is very high compared with other public sector organisations – the current NHS vacancy rate is 8 per cent.

There are many factors resulting in high vacancy rates, but a leading cause is being unable to offer a competitive salary to retain staff.

When asked about the reasons given by staff for leaving, the most common response across all six service areas was for more pay.

Not being able to recruit and retain the right employees is leaving councils short-staffed. Just half of the heads of adult social care teams surveyed think they will have the right amount of mental health staff to deliver services next year. With too few care workers, the health of the people local councils care for is put at risk.



“Not having enough permanent staff is forcing councils to become reliant on agency workers”

Similarly, only half of those who head up environmental health services stated that they were confident they would have a sufficient number of environmental protection officers.

Not having enough permanent staff is forcing councils to become increasingly reliant on agency workers.

There are only four permanent members of staff for every one agency worker in council legal services.

Finance and building control teams are in a similar situation, with seven permanent staff for every one finance agency worker, and eight permanent staff for every building control agency worker.

These workers are typically more expensive than permanent staff, costing councils millions of pounds and, sometimes, causing issues around quality and consistency of service.

Across English councils, an estimated \$277 million was spent in 2022/23 on agency workers for adult social care services. This is an average of \$1.8 million per council (not including districts).

Other service areas also have very high spends on agency staff, with \$94 million being spent on legal

agency staff and \$71 million on finance agency staff.

To assist with the workforce issues local councils are facing, the LGA offers government-funded programmes to support officers and help build a pipeline of future talent.

This includes early careers' support, such as Impact (**see opposite page**), and other graduate schemes for finance and planning.

There are also development programmes for chief executives, senior officers and 'rising stars'.

In addition, the LGA provides practical assistance to councils on the workforce challenges they are facing, including support with strategic workforce planning, recruitment and retention, and workforce capacity.

The support available to local government can be found on the workforce pages of the LGA's website – www.local.gov.uk/workforce.

With a new UK government elected, the LGA will emphasise the significance of these findings and encourage ministers to support councils in taking action to address this workforce capacity challenge.

Making an **impact**

The LGA has relaunched its popular graduate development programme



Councillor **Abi Brown**
OBE is Chair of the
LGA's Improvement
and Innovation Board

Local government remains one of the most popular public sector options when graduates choose their future career path, with thousands of applications received every year for a place on the LGA's dedicated graduate programme.

Of these, only a few hundred candidates can be accepted and then placed with councils across the country, in a variety of important, challenging and interesting roles.

As with any long-running scheme, and given the highly competitive graduate market, it is always good to take a fresh look at our offering and see what more we can do to continue to attract the best and brightest into our sector.

'Impact: The Local Government Graduate Programme' is the new name for the scheme formerly known as the National Graduate Development Programme, and both sums up what it's about and what it means for the people, councils and communities involved.

Despite the graduate scheme going from strength to strength over the past 20 years, we recognised a need to rebrand to continue positioning ourselves as a leading option for graduates, staying ahead of the competition and future-proofing the programme.

This was especially important given the growth in our graduate offering, with our new specialist stream for those wanting to pursue a career in public finance, and 'Pathways to Planning', which aims to create the next generation of local government planners (see www.local.gov.uk/pathways-to-planning).

Our research showed that applications were increasingly from those already actively applying to graduate schemes, or from people familiar with a career in local government.

We were also often referred to as a 'fast stream for local government' or simply 'local government', which is not an accurate or adequate description of who we are and what we do. As a result, and to broaden our appeal to a wider audience, we wanted to better establish our own identity.

The new name gives more clarity and immediately highlights the

dual 'impact' of the programme: the meaningful impact that graduates have on councils and communities as a result of taking part, but also the positive impact on their careers.

The name change has already taken effect, backed by a national marketing campaign, and will be phased into all our communications, ahead of applications opening for next year's cohort at the start of October.

Wholly managed by the LGA (through the sector support offer, funded by the UK Government), our two-year programme sees high-calibre candidates go through a rigorous recruitment process before being interviewed by partnering councils, who take them on as graduate management trainees.

It offers councils a wide candidate pool that would otherwise be difficult for them to access. It also develops graduates' skills across a range of in-demand services – including housing, social care, children's services, and regeneration – and/or gives them key roles in transformational or cross-cutting projects.

Alongside completing a minimum of three placements, trainees undertake a prestigious learning and development programme delivered by Solace, the network for local government and public sector professionals, and postgraduate qualification, before embarking upon a fulfilling career with one of our partner councils.

There has never been a more important time to work in local government, to support our communities and improve our vital local public services.

Impact will continue to encourage high-quality candidates, from across the country and all backgrounds, to apply and find out what an impact they can make on people's everyday lives.



i To find out more about **Impact for councils** and to apply, please visit www.local.gov.uk/impact-local-government-graduate-programme-councils or email impact@local.gov.uk

Empowering councils for future success

Competitively priced support is available from the LGA

The LGA has launched a new hub designed to offer councils an extensive range of improvement resources and comprehensive support on a chargeable basis, as an addition to its free sector support offer.

LGA Solutions (see www.local.gov.uk/lga-solutions) is of the sector and for the sector, and we are passionate about working collaboratively with councils to help you achieve your ambitions. This ethos underpins our approach to services.

Developed with the express aim of helping local government deliver its priorities, LGA Solutions ensures that its services are highly competitive in cost, often below the market rates for similar work.

This commitment reflects the LGA's dedication to supporting councils in achieving their goals.

LGA Solutions is a comprehensive support network, combining existing chargeable services and newly developed resources to provide councils with expert assistance across various strategic and policy issues.

Whether you need guidance on pressing policy concerns or support in managing the daily operations of your council or combined authority, the LGA Solutions hub is equipped to offer expert help tailored to your needs.



Because LGA Solutions is delivered by teams of proven professionals committed to strengthening local government, it has expertise that you can trust. Our in-house experts bring:

- Sustainable solutions that focus on delivering results, not just diagnosing problems.
- Unparalleled, up-to-date contacts across all government departments.
- Experience and understanding of working in politically led organisations at senior levels.
- Deep insights into 21st-century public services and the associated policy and workforce implications.
- The ability to assemble a delivery team with the expertise to match your specific needs.
- Partnerships with other consultancies and organisations, ensuring access to high-quality products and services at reduced rates.

The hub is structured into six areas, ensuring targeted, effective support:

- **Workforce** – enhance your workforce operations with a range of tailored offers.
- **People** – we deliver a programme of sector-led support to adult services through adult social care peer challenges.
- **Place** – improve local plans and decision-making, and undertake reviews of planning departments via our Planning Advisory Service.
- **Leadership development** – access our part-subsidised, competitively priced leadership training programmes, including our Leadership Academy, Boosting Middle Leaders programme, and Impact: The Local Government Graduate Programme (see p23).
- **Data and benchmarking** – use the LGA research team's expertise for insightful data analysis and benchmarking. Our LG Inform+ service helps organisations improve overall performance through access to key information.
- **Corporate** – benefit from our communication support offer and bespoke consultancy services on a range of issues.

Our sector support offer

In addition to chargeable services, the LGA provides a broad spectrum of free support to councils through our sector support offer.

This covers themes including governance, leadership, finance, workforce, transformation support, children's services, Partners in Care and Health (adult social care), cyber, digital and technology, One Public Estate (OPE), planning (the Planning Advisory Service and Pathways to Planning), procurement, sustainability, communications, and culture, tourism and sport.

For further information, visit our sector support webpage at www.local.gov.uk/our-support, or contact the LGA principal adviser for your region (see www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers).



Discover how **LGA Solutions** can be your partner for success at www.local.gov.uk/lga-solutions. For general enquiries, please contact Vitaly Voytenko at vitaly.voytenko@local.gov.uk

Choice and control in digital social care



Dr Clenton Farquharson CBE is Co-Chair of the TEC Action Alliance and Associate Director of Think Local Act Personal

What do I want from technology-enabled care?

It's a question I often consider, particularly as someone who works in social care and who draws on digital care. But, surprisingly, it's not a question I've ever been asked.

The organisations providing my care don't ask, nor do the companies developing the support systems I use.

I'm not alone. Despite 2.03 million people in the UK using technology-enabled care (TEC) – from telecare pendant alarms to home monitoring sensors – most people are allocated certain types of TEC, rather than being asked, early on, what exactly they want.

When gadgets are imposed on people, particularly individuals who lack confidence around technology, without good conversations about their ambitions, this often leads to frustration and low engagement.

I've heard many stories of people putting their TEC device in a drawer and leaving it there.

These aren't just my observations. Evidence from a recent academic study draws the same conclusions.

When social policy researcher Dr Sarah Alden began to examine what people want from TEC, she found that most studies include views from care staff and care organisations, but not people who draw on care themselves.

Determined to rectify this, Sarah conducted nearly 50 interviews and focus groups with people, families and unpaid carers, and examined more than 100 sources of evidence to explore the different ways people use technology to support their lives.

Her findings were published recently by the TEC Action Alliance – a group of around 30 care organisations, including the LGA, Care England, Homecare Association and the TEC Services Association – whose aim is to put the voice of people, families and unpaid carers centre stage when technology-enabled care services and solutions are developed.



“Most studies include views from care staff and care organisations, but not people who draw on care”

The alliance commissioned the research for its latest report, ‘Implementing TEC so we can all live gloriously ordinary lives’, and the results are eye-opening.

When people were asked what they wanted from TEC, nine clear priorities came out. People said they wanted:

- awareness – to know more about the ways in which technology can meet their needs
- independence – devices and systems that support them to do more for themselves
- control – to maintain control over care technology wherever possible
- reassurance – peace of mind for them and their families through connected technology
- seamlessness – technology that is joined-up and compatible with familiar devices
- personalisation – technology to be tailored to their needs and offer them genuine choice
- equal decision-making – a say in the design and functionality of their care technology
- support – help, advice and training if they struggle to access or adopt technology

- privacy and security – reassurance around online safety and autonomy over their data.

We're now calling on councillors, commissioners and service providers, whenever they procure TEC contracts, to ensure suppliers respond to these nine principles.

We're also calling for a simple, common TEC language. Commissioners, service providers and suppliers all use different – often technical – terms. Replacing these with easy-to-understand definitions, recognised by everyone, would support more people, families, and health and social care professionals to understand and find suitable digital care.

I believe passionately that these foundations must be in place when digital support is provided, so everyone can lead the technology-enabled lives they deserve.



The TEC Action Alliance Action Paper, ‘**Implementing TEC so we can all live gloriously ordinary lives**’, is available at www.tec-action.org.uk/implementing-tec-so-we-can-all-live-gloriously-ordinary-lives
See p29

A return to mission-driven government



Councillor **Bev Craig**
is Leader of the LGA's
Labour Group

As the newly elected Leader of the LGA's Labour Group, I'm thrilled to be writing under a Labour Government!

It is the product of a lot of hard work and a tremendous commitment by Labour councillors, and we should be proud of the part we played.

Councillors were crucial to securing a Labour win, and will be vital to supporting the Government through delivery.

One of the Government's core aims is to return our country to mission-driven government. This will allow it to focus on areas that matter most to people, and to ensure we build a cohesive and productive set of changes.

The five core missions are kick-starting economic growth, making Britain a clean energy superpower, taking back our streets, breaking down barriers to opportunity, and building an NHS fit for the future.

These all run through local government. We are the sector delivering on these promises, and I know we will all work hard to do so.

The country has spoken for change, but not just in policies. They want a return to the politics of public service, where the Government works with, and for, communities.

Therefore, resetting the relationship between local and national government is key.

We all share the ambition of rebuilding our country so it works for everyone, so productive relationships are crucial.

Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and

Local Government, has been clear that Westminster has hoarded power for too long and, therefore, held back communities from achieving their goals.

The Government will devolve powers (including over transport and housing), move away from a deal-based approach to devolution, and work in partnership with local leaders to implement growth plans.

Crucially, it has committed to longer-term funding settlements, allowing councils to plan for, and invest in, the future.

We now have a serious government with renewed energy and a desire to work productively with local government. I look forward to working with it.

"We all share the ambition of rebuilding our country so it works for everyone"



Councillor
Louise Gittins is
Chair of the LGA

Winds of change

It's been a whirlwind of change since the general election – at the LGA, locally, and nationally.

It has been a great honour and privilege to become Chair of the LGA, after my predecessor, Cllr Shaun Davies, stepped down on being elected MP for Telford.

During the election campaign, the LGA was ably and professionally led by our Senior Vice-Chairman, Cllr Kevin Bentley. I would like to thank him and Cllr Davies for their long-standing service and commitment to local government and the LGA. I look forward to continuing to work with Cllr Bentley and the LGA's other political group leaders – Cllr Bev Craig, Cllr Joe Harris and Cllr Marianne Overton – as we develop the LGA's relationship with the new Government, and set out local solutions to the national challenges we all face.

You will already have read elsewhere in **first** about some of our early work in this respect, on special needs education,



five-year local housing plans, and employment and skills.

I wrote to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer immediately after the general election to congratulate him on his appointment, and to set out our sector's 'asks' and its 'offer' to help deliver on our shared ambitions.

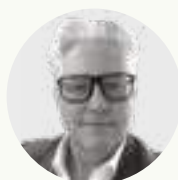
We were delighted to hear from Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner and Jim McMahon, Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, at last week's meeting of the LGA's Councillors' Forum.

The LGA will continue to meet

with new ministers over the coming weeks, to evolve and develop our Local Government White Paper proposals to reflect government priorities, and to influence the many new bills coming before Parliament that will impact on the work of councils.

What won't change is the LGA's commitment to supporting you, our member councils, as – day in and day out – you continue to deliver the vital local services on which your residents rely.

I look forward to meeting you on my visits to councils and at the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate on 22-24 October.



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

Resetting national-local relationships

Recent months have been difficult for Conservatives, particularly in local government. We lost some great Conservative councillors during the local elections in May, and we experienced an incredibly gruelling general election campaign.

Our recent defeats will make us stronger as a movement as we start to rebuild the party and the local government family.

Despite the results, I am delighted to see several newly elected Conservative MPs with local government experience in the House of Commons, including former council leaders and councillors with strong connections to the LGA.

“Our recent defeats will make us stronger”

So, I want to give a special shoutout to Lewis Cocking, Bradley Thomas, Blake Stephenson, Gregory Stafford, Rebecca Smith, Andrew Snowden, Joe Robertson, Jack Rankin, Rebecca Paul, Ashley Fox, Peter Fortune, Charlie Dewhirst, Aphra Brandreth and Peter Bedford.

Over the coming months, the LGA Conservative Group will be working tirelessly to engage with potential Conservative leadership election candidates in our mission to reset the relationship between the parliamentary party and Conservatives in local government.

For far too long, we have suffered an unequal relationship and now is the best time to reset that relationship. The LGA launched its Local Government White Paper during the general election campaign, outlining how an incoming government can start to do that.

I fully stand behind that white paper and I look forward to seeing so many of the new Labour MPs who stood by that white paper lobbying the new Labour Government to get some of those proposals onto the statute book.



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

Largest number of MPs ever

The general election was historic: it created an earthquake across every region of the country, with the Liberal Democrats making gains from Yorkshire to Dorset, Norfolk to Wales, Inverness to Sussex.

I want to offer a huge congratulations, particularly to the Lib Dem councillors who were elected as MPs. I think it is 35 in total, plus eight former councillors!

It's really amazing, and it exceeded our expectations. With 72 MPs, we have shown that our party is well and truly back as a national force in Parliament.

I hope our new champions will stand up for local government and hold this new Labour Government to account. The sector needs parliamentarians to champion it now more than ever.

Councils are in a financial and staffing crisis. We need Lib Dem MPs to be banging the drum for local government.

We must do something about local government funding, the future of social care, and the crisis in special needs education, otherwise local government will collapse. It's as simple as that.

“The sector needs parliamentarians to champion it now more than ever”

Of course, the sector has a long way to go too, in delivering genuinely affordable homes again, including council homes, and tackling the climate emergency – building on the best practice delivered by Lib Dem councils and councillors.

Tackling the backlog in investment in the nation's infrastructure will make this happen.

Let's use the optimism there is at the moment, and channel that energy into solving some of the huge crises facing the country.



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

A better focus on the local

Congratulations! What an election for our group members.

The political landscape has shifted away from the old two-party system, as people look for something else, something better.

That's where our members come in, increasing the diversity of thinking in Parliament.

Some of our members will have their own political views and we will certainly not agree on everything. Nevertheless, there will be many issues where we can join forces to improve funding and legislation to help us do more for residents locally.

“The political landscape has shifted away from the old two-party system”

With 18 MPs, our Independent Group has a good opportunity to help shape plans and influence Parliament on local government issues across England and Wales.

Our councillors have worked hard on developing proposals, incorporated into the LGA's cross-party Local Government White Paper, which now encapsulates a useful way forward for central and local government in a new relationship and a renewed agenda.

The synergy with Labour's 'missions' is evident, and we will need to work together with more than 3,000 LGA Independent Group councillors to get the best ideas developed and put forward for action.

Congratulations to our successful new MPs, and to all our members who dared to stand for Parliament and helped people think about the things that matter, often bringing a better focus on the local.

Thanks to all who helped in the elections – a no-less-vital part of the process!

Our group enjoys a renewed vitality and focus on improving life for our residents, helping to design better funding and legislation, based on local needs.

£750k for electrical reuse and recycling

© RECYCLE YOUR ELECTRICALS



Scott Butler is
Executive Director of
Material Focus

Our research shows that although 80 per cent of people support more recycling, many still find it hard to turn their good intentions into action.

With 880 million electrical items hidden in UK homes – 30 per household – and 103,000 tonnes binned every year, there's a stack of electricals that could be reused or recycled.

Our Electricals Recycling Fund wants to help solve this problem by supporting new collection projects.

Last year, we gave £1.8 million across more than 40 UK projects, making it easier for some 10 million people to reuse and recycle their electricals.

We supported these projects with our award-winning Recycle Your Electricals communication campaign, led by our mesmerising 'pawsuader', HypnoCat.

We are now making available an

additional £750,000 for new applicants.

The Electricals Recycling Fund supports two types of projects: expanding existing household collection services for small electricals, and innovating new collection methods.

Since its launch in 2023, 228 new recycling locations have been opened, millions of e-waste items have been saved from landfill, and 500 people helped through repair and donation projects.

These projects span the UK, with Oxfordshire piloting the first vape recycling scheme, and collecting more than 10,000 vapes at household waste recycling centres alongside a kerbside collection for around 70,000 households.

In another example, Newcastle's pop-up recycling centres and a doorstep collection of small electricals reached more than 300,000 people, collecting 1.64 tonnes of electricals.

Local authorities, waste collection authority areas, waste contractors, reuse organisations, non-profits, producer compliance schemes, retailers and startups are all encouraged to apply.

By addressing the e-waste issue, the



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funded projects have already saved tonnes of precious materials from being lost forever.

With the additional £750,000, we are looking forward to backing more innovative solutions. To apply, please visit www.materialfocus.org.uk/electricals-recycling-fund/



Material Focus is an independent not-for-profit organisation working to ensure electricals are recycled and reused, see www.materialfocus.org.uk

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Sharing learnings from CQC assessment



Councillor **Tony Kingsbury** (Con) is Executive Member, Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing, at Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire County Council's Adult Care Services were recently rated 'good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

As one of the first three local authorities to be formally assessed under new legislation, we're keen to share what we've learned from the process.

First, it's never too early to start planning – we'd been preparing for more than a year. This included incorporating feedback from an LGA peer review and gaining insight from the five CQC pilot assessments.

So, when we were notified, we felt well prepared – essential for the smooth running of the assessment process.

Having members involved from the beginning, in the development of the self-assessment and commenting on the final version before submission, was really useful.

I also had several briefings with Chris Badger, our Executive Director of Adult Care Services, and the officers supporting the assessment. I particularly wanted to understand the range of activity in different areas, such as addressing inequalities and our support for unpaid carers.

Being included throughout the process was important, to help us work

together as a team, and there was an all-member briefing to keep all councillors informed.

Peer support from an experienced ex-director of adult care and a counterpart cabinet member in another authority gave me additional points to think about, including the political situation, how challenges are handled, and the relationships I have with officers and partners.

My interview with a CQC assessor was a relaxed conversation (the opposition spokesperson, chair of overview and scrutiny, and chair of the health and wellbeing board were also interviewed). The opening question – 'tell me about Hertfordshire' – allowed me to give a broad overview and add some key things I wanted to get across.

I was asked about how I influence political and budget decisions, how scrutiny works, my relationships with the director and officers in the service, how the organisation works with partners (including the NHS), our approach to inclusion and diversity, managing waiting lists, and what I was proud of. The importance of knowing our communities, understanding who are the 'seldom heard' groups, and how we act on their feedback, was a key theme throughout.

We then waited several (long!) weeks

for a draft report, which officers could comment on before it was published on the CQC's website.

Along with the leader of the council, I was front and centre of communications activity, planned before the final report was released. We wanted to showcase the breadth of services, recognise the officers' dedication and share news of the outcome.

Our report is extremely positive across all themes, highlighting the passion and commitment of a highly skilled workforce, strong leadership, and productive relationships with partners and providers. We scored 'good' on eight of the nine themes, and on partnerships we were 'exceptional', which I am thrilled with, as it's a real strength in Hertfordshire.

The full council meeting gave me a chance to share the outcomes of the report. I was questioned by members from my party and the opposition, who also congratulated officers on the outcome.

Assessment encourages appraisal of what's working and areas for improvement: the report noted that our areas for improvement are already being addressed. We've recently discussed the resulting action plan at our adult care panel, which will be revisited by members to scrutinise and review progress.



The LGA and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, as Partners in Care and Health (PCH), have published '**Care Quality Commission assessments for adult social care: must know guide for councillors**'. Please visit the PCH website at www.local.gov.uk/partners-care-and-health to read the guide and access other resources and support

Making culture accessible to all



Councillor **Tracey Dixon** (Lab) is
Leader of South
Tyneside Council

Tourism contributes more than £400 million to the South Tyneside economy annually.

But our tourism economy is so much more than the 6.4 million visitors we welcome every year; it's about ensuring that we provide diverse and inclusive activities for all.

A decade ago, we pursued an ambitious programme of investment and regeneration that acted as a catalyst for private sector investment. We have invested significantly, yet sympathetically, in our stunning foreshore to offer an enhanced visitor experience. This is now the perfect backdrop for the 'This is South Tyneside Festival', an exciting and free, three-month-long programme of live music, entertainment and family friendly events, and the cornerstone of our annual events programme.

As a borough with areas of significant poverty, we're passionate about making arts and culture accessible to all communities. This free festival is an annual highlight for residents.

Thousands of people are directly employed by tourism, and our investment in music and festival events is a vital part of our work to create jobs.

In autumn 2021, South Tyneside was named one of 54 Arts Council 'England Priority Places', to receive additional

support from the Arts Council to develop new opportunities for investment.

Our Cultural Partnership later launched 'Making Waves', South Tyneside's cultural strategy for 2022 to 2027. This shared vision builds on the area's unique cultural offer, drawing on its creative talent and strengths, with a focus on developing them to help reach more people.

This was further enhanced earlier this year with a Place Partnership grant, match-funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to boost cultural participation in the most disadvantaged parts of South Tyneside.

Our borough already has so much to offer, with its heritage, stunning coastline and vibrant events programme, and we wanted to celebrate and develop this.

This year, our summer parade was delivered in partnership with The Cultural Spring and Out North East, a new inclusive LGBTQ+ charity, as is one of our four Sunday concerts – expanding our Pride offer South of Tyne.

More local performers will support headliners at this summer's Sunday concerts, giving them a platform to showcase their talents; and the Amphitheatre Live Music season is partly delivered in partnership with North East-based support agency Generator, which works with musicians, artists and those working in the creative industries.

We are also expanding our partnership arrangements with the Great North Run, on 8 September. This year, 500 of our Year 6 pupils will experience elements of the event, with the iconic finish line being used as an integral part of a



South Tyneside
summer parade 2024

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bespoke local fun run – 'Fit for the Finish'.

Fundamentally, we believe that culture plays a key role in enhancing and enriching people's lives, while boosting their health and wellbeing. To maximise these benefits, we have used our status as an Arts Council England National Portfolio library provider to good effect.

We have developed new unique performance spaces, such as our roof terrace 'Story Garden', and grown the scope of our activity programme, with the introduction of cycle cinema and pop-up theatre events. The results have been compelling, with hard-to-reach audiences now engaging in high-quality cultural experiences.

We are now starting to see the fruits of our labour. Rising visitor numbers, along with enhanced satisfaction and participation levels, are proof that our approach is working towards the creation of a sustainable economy fit for the future.



Performers at Sandhaven
Beach, South Tyneside, in 2023

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i **This is South Tyneside Festival**
runs from July to September, see
www.southtynesidefestival.co.uk
to find out more

A fragmented vote distribution



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



Many councillors took the opportunity of the snap general election to resign their seats, minimising the cost to local authorities of conducting by-elections.

The broader section of electors participating on 4 July may explain the fact that, among the local seats changing hands, there were many combinations of victor and vanquished.

Our estimate of the ‘national equivalent vote’ based on May’s local elections put Labour on 34 per cent, Conservatives on 27 per cent, Liberal Democrats on 16 per cent, and the Greens, Reform, Independents and small local parties on 23 per cent.

The general election saw Labour with 35 per cent, the Conservatives on 24 per cent, Liberal Democrats on 13 per cent,



and ‘others’ on 28 per cent, with Reform alone polling 15 per cent. Both elections produced a highly fragmented vote distribution, with large numbers of voters preferring alternatives to the two main parties, whose combined vote share of just 59 per cent establishes a new benchmark.

There was little evidence in by-elections before the 4 July vote of the changes to come for the Conservatives, with several seats gained. Conservative fears of Reform UK eating into their support proved well founded, though. They lost East Riding of Yorkshire’s South East Holderness ward to Reform, but managed, by just 124 votes, to hold the Beverley and Holderness parliamentary seat.

Although Labour were successful in Gosport’s Conservative-defended Grange and Alver Valley ward, they could not repeat the feat in the Gosport parliamentary seat, despite a 26-point decline in the incumbent party’s vote share.

The Liberal Democrats won their highest number of parliamentary seats and were optimistic of unseating the Conservatives in Runnymede and Weybridge. The task remained beyond them, however, and they lost Elmbridge’s Cobham and Downside ward, too.

The Greens won four seats at the general election, including retaining their

Brighton Pavilion seat. Although not in that constituency, the party also gained Brighton & Hove’s Brunswick & Adelaide ward from Labour.

Another Green gain from Labour was in Lancaster’s University ward, the electorate of which mostly comprises students. Turnout was just 5.4 per cent – on the same day as a general election – but the record for low turnout remains with Wigan’s Ashton ward (5.3 per cent).

There were two further defeats for Labour. In Preston, they lost the Lea and Larches ward to the Liberal Democrats, watching their vote share collapse by 31 percentage points.

The Conservative victory in South Derbyshire’s Hatton ward relied upon the Liberal Democrats squeezing both main parties, but especially Labour. However, Labour captured the Derbyshire Dales parliamentary constituency – which includes the Hatton ward – from the Conservatives, by just 350 votes.

Basildon South and East Thurrock was one of the last parliamentary seats to declare, resulting in a fifth seat for Reform UK, who edged out Labour by just 98 votes as the Conservatives fell to third place.

Much of Essex’s Pitsea division is located within the parliamentary boundary, so Labour’s victory here would have helped its cause – but turnout of just 41 per cent was 12 points lower than recorded for the parliamentary seat.

By-election results

Brighton & Hove, Brunswick & Adelaide GREEN GAIN FROM LAB 6.3% over Lab Turnout 65.1%	Essex, Basildon Pitsea LAB GAIN FROM CON 11.8% over Con Turnout 41.2%	Preston, Lea and Larches LIB DEM GAIN FROM LAB 4.3% over Lab Turnout 48.8%
Chesterfield, Staveley North LAB GAIN FROM LIB DEM 2.3% over Lib Dem Turnout 50.2%	Gosport, Grange and Alver Valley LAB GAIN FROM CON 5.7% over Con Turnout 43.0%	Ribble Valley, St Mary’s LAB GAIN FROM LIB DEM 0.8% over Con Turnout 72.9%
East Riding of Yorkshire, South East Holderness REFORM UK GAIN FROM CON 4.7% over Con Turnout 51.6%	Lancaster, University GREEN GAIN FROM LAB 6.1% over Lab Turnout 5.4%	South Derbyshire, Hatton CON GAIN FROM LAB 9.2% over Lab Turnout 50.6%
Elmbridge, Cobham and Downside CON GAIN FROM LIB DEM 11.9% over Lib Dem Turnout 62.0%	Mansfield, West Bank LAB GAIN FROM CON 6.1% over Mans Ind Turnout 20.0%	Spelthorne, Ashford East CON GAIN FROM IND 2.9% over Ind Turnout 58.8%
	Powys, Rhiwycynon CON GAIN FROM IND 7.5% over Plaid Cymru Turnout 50.4%	Suffolk, Pakefield LAB GAIN FROM CON 5.7% over Con Turnout 57.8%

Only results where a seat changed hands are shown here. For a full list of recent by-elections and additional data on these and other results, please visit www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections

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