

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT first

Local  
Government  
Association

No.707 August 2025

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“Councils are  
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and innovation”

#### Devolution Bill

Councils are vital to success  
of English devo **p10**

#### Debate not hate

Survey finds systemic abuse  
and misinformation **p19**

#### Extreme weather events

Adapting to the risks of  
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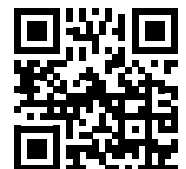


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## English devolution bill published

**As first** was going to press, Parliament was going into its summer recess – but not before delivering the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.

The LGA issued a press release and briefing in response, and you can read more about the bill in this edition of our membership magazine (see p10).

Elsewhere, we have lots of coverage of our fantastic annual conference in Liverpool (p12), including the ever-popular Innovation Zone (p15).

We made several key announcements during conference, including our latest Debate Not Hate survey on abuse and intimidation of councillors (p19) and our peer-led report on ‘Supporting constituent councils within a mayoral combined authority’ (p22).

We also launched our LG Inform app, putting data on your council and how it compares with others at your fingertips (p13), and announced the winner of the Local Government Challenge 2025 (p20).

Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe writes about Bradford’s year as UK City of Culture (p26) and our lead comment is from Oliver Coppard, Mayor of South Yorkshire Combined Authority (p27).

This is the last edition of **first** until September, so please check on the LGA’s website ([www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)) for our latest news and updates. ●

**Councillor Louise Gittins**  
is LGA Chair



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Tel editorial 07464 652610  
Tel advertising 01223 378 047  
Circulation 16,700 (July 2025)

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

Photography [istockphoto.com](http://istockphoto.com)

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# Tackling barriers to growth could unleash £276bn of economic potential

**Councils across England** could unleash £276 billion of untapped economic potential – equivalent to more than a tenth of national output – with government support to break down place-specific barriers to growth, according to LGA-commissioned analysis.

The analysis strips out national, sectoral and regional trends to pinpoint genuinely local economic potential, identifying areas where local leaders with properly resourced councils could make a significant difference.

Produced by the Growth and Reform Network, and published during the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool in early July, the analysis is the first part of a detailed investigation into the role of local government in supporting inclusive growth, as part of the LGA's wider work to highlight the issue.

It shows that urban centres dominate, with at least £234 billion of economic potential, but that rural areas also represent untapped potential worth a minimum £42 billion – equivalent to nearly 10.7 per cent of the rural economy.

Meanwhile, non-devolved areas – those outside formal devolution deals or the Government's Devolution Priority Programme – represent at least £77 billion in potential, equivalent to nearly



12.6 per cent of their local economic output.

While the Government has proposed that mayoral combined authorities hold responsibility for local growth plans, councils around the country – whether they are a constituent council in a combined authority or not – have a unique and critical role to play in driving local, inclusive economic growth.

LGA Chair Cllr Louise Gittins said: "Growth is a shared national, regional and local priority, in which we all have a part

to play. Only councils have the detailed knowledge of their communities and business, and are best placed to unlock economic potential and better jobs.

"Providing sufficient funding is a very cost-effective way to ensure all councils, including those not in combined authority areas, can fully play their part in delivering local inclusive growth – driving up living standards and funding vital public services." ●

● See p21

**A new initiative** to help councils scale up housebuilding in their areas was launched by the Deputy Prime Minister at the LGA's annual conference in early July.

The Council Housebuilding Support Service (CHoSS) will be administered by the LGA and is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Councils will receive fully funded, tailored support to establish, enhance or accelerate their council housing programmes.

Ten councils have been

## Support service for council housebuilding launched

selected as 'vanguards' to co-design the service in its early phase. These include five with housing revenue accounts (Cornwall, Eastbourne, Newcastle, Salford, and Southampton) and five without (Merton, Reigate and Banstead, Rother, Stockton-on-Tees, and Wirral).

The vanguard councils will receive bespoke support shaped around their specific

local context, including expert advice, peer learning, practical tools and strategic input.

The CHoSS offer will be refined with this vanguard group over the summer, before being made available to all councils later in the year. Councils are invited to register their interest online (see [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-housebuilding-support-service](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-housebuilding-support-service)).

Cllr Louise Gittins, Chair of the LGA, said: "This new programme comes at a critical time for local government.

"Councils want to do more to deliver the council houses their communities need, and this initiative will give them the tools, advice and support to do just that."

CHoSS forms part of the Government's wider ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes during this Parliament, with a strong focus on quality and affordability. ●

● See p8

## Election registration reforms announced

**People who abuse** election candidates and campaigners will face tougher sentences, and candidates' addresses will not be published, in reforms set out in a government elections strategy paper. The strategy also proposes expanding voter ID to include UK-issued bank cards, and allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote in all UK elections.

The changes will be brought forward in an elections bill.

Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, said: "It is encouraging to see efforts to improve registration rates and lower the barriers to voting that some people experience, so that all eligible voters are supported to engage in

this fundamental democratic process.

"As with recent reforms to electoral registration and delivery, it is vital that the Government works with councils to ensure that the introduction of significant changes is fair, secure and properly resourced."

She added: "We are pleased to see recognition of the impact that abuse and intimidation can have on candidates and the democratic process. However, councils need further support to combat this threat to democracy, including more consistent policing, and a review of harassment offences against candidates and elected members." ●

● See p19

## 'Record' overspend on social care

**Councils in England** have recorded their highest social care overspend in a decade – £774 million as of last March.

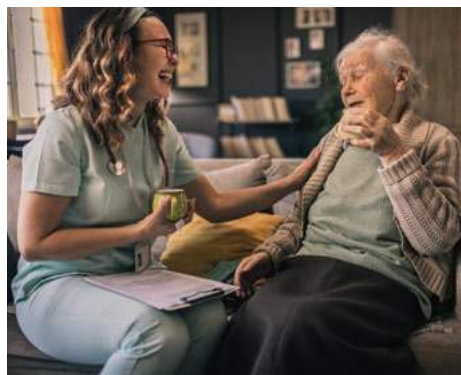
That's according to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' Spring Survey 2025, which found that councils are being forced to cut back on early care and support to prevent people's health and wellbeing deteriorating.

The findings highlight that underfunding could jeopardise the Government's 10 Year Health Plan for England and its proposed shift towards prevention and neighbourhood-based care.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "This survey starkly shows councils are caught in the impossible position of having to choose between meeting people's complex care needs and supporting other people's wellbeing to prevent their needs from escalating.

"In this situation, councils cannot deliver the Government's ambition to shift care from hospital to community without sustainable funding for adult social care.

"Councils want to focus on prevention,



and help people stay independent at home, but rising costs and more people needing access to care are forcing them to prioritise crisis care instead.

"A promise to reform adult social care must be matched by long-term investment so councils can plan, recruit and deliver services that support people to live the life they want to lead, and reduce pressure on the NHS.

"Local government is best placed to lead this shift and deliver neighbourhood-level care, but it cannot do so with one hand tied behind its back by underfunding." ●

● See p6



## Summer childcare costs up 4%

**Summer holiday clubs** to cover Britain's six-week school break now cost parents an average of £1,076 per child, according to new figures from the children's charity Coram.

It found high demand and a lack of cheaper council-run activities are the factors behind rising prices, up 4 per cent on last year.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have even fewer options available.

Cllr Arooj Shah, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Access to holiday childcare provision is vital for families and can have a positive benefit on the development of children.

"We support calls for a better link between term time and holiday childcare, and maintaining the holiday activities and food programme after March 2026.

"While councils recognise the importance of ensuring there is sufficient provision for children with SEND, it can be difficult to ensure the right provision is available, given the challenging situation that many providers face at the moment.

"Councils work closely with providers to improve access to holiday childcare provision for children with SEND, but without investment and recruitment of quality staff this will be difficult to deliver. Adequate funding, skilled practitioners and wider system support are essential to the early identification of need and support for children with SEND, and we urge the Government to consider this in its upcoming reforms." ●

## News in brief

**Industrial strategy**

Stronger regional growth is critical for the competitiveness of eight key sectors with the greatest potential to raise national levels of investment and productivity, according to the Government's recently published Industrial Strategy. Cllr Adam Hug, Chair of the LGA's Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board, said: "The Government's ambitions are only achievable if every local economy is firing on all cylinders. Providing sufficient funding so that all councils can deliver local growth priorities will be essential to realising the full potential of growth plans, industrial strategy zones and other ambitions identified in this strategy."

**Council governance**

The Government plans to legislate to abolish the council committee system, requiring all councils currently operating this model to transition to a leader and cabinet model, and to abolish the directly elected mayoral model for new councils. Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, said: "Councils use various governance systems, with some favouring the committee system and others preferring executive systems. Therefore, there will be mixed views held across our membership. Councils have been engaging constructively with ministers on reforms and it is crucial that we remain at the heart of any conversations moving forward."

**Digital directions**

The LGA has launched a new podcast, Digital Directions, to help councils lead and deliver on transformation in local government. The series will feature conversations with local government leaders, experts and thinkers, digging deeper into their experiences, learning and achievements. The first episode, 'Reimagining a modern digital council', is available now on the LGA's website, at [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk) (search for 'Digital Directions').

# Neighbourhood health at centre of NHS plan

**The crucial role** of councils in delivering the NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England must be recognised, the LGA has said.

The plan aims to bring the NHS closer to people by rolling out neighbourhood health services across the country.

The centres will bring diagnostics, mental health, post-op, rehab and nursing together under one roof in local areas.

Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, said: "Health does not begin in hospitals; it begins in homes, streets, parks and schools.

"The NHS cannot deliver a healthier society on its own. This is why we are urging ministers to set up a new national-local coalition to help deliver these neighbourhood health models that put prevention and place at the heart of public services."

She added: "It is positive that the NHS 10-year plan sets out a clear and bold long-term vision for the future, and we fully support the focus on the three shifts: analogue to digital, treatment to prevention, and hospitals to community.



"But these are not new ambitions. To realise this vision and meet these challenges, we all need to work differently, together and with our communities. The crucial role of councils must be recognised.

"For the 10-year plan to succeed, it is absolutely paramount that all of the NHS, and its partners, engage fully and openly with councils across the country, and work collaboratively with us to deliver for our communities." ●

## 'Short-term funding jeopardising VAWG targets'

**Efforts to tackle** violence against women and girls (VAWG) are being undermined by fragmented and short-term funding, according to a report from the Commons' Home Affairs Committee.

Current approaches lack coordination and essential services are overstretched, with funding mechanisms often reactive rather than preventative, undermining the Government's ambition

to reduce VAWG by 50 per cent. The report calls for a more strategic, joined-up approach to funding, with sustainable resourcing for local services and improved accountability across agencies.

Cllr Heather Kidd MBE, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Councils are deeply committed to tackling violence against women and girls, domestic abuse

and sexual violence. However, the sad truth is that financial pressures have impacted councils' ability to provide VAWG services, which are underfunded and financially unsustainable.

"It was disappointing to not receive clarity in the recent Spending Review, when tackling VAWG is a key government priority.

"Local government needs a long-term and stable financial approach, alongside improved coordination and greater local flexibility around commissioning, to be able to reverse this." ●

## Family support hubs for all council areas

**One-stop shops** for services for babies and young children and their families are to be established in every local authority in England.

The £500 million expansion of the Government's Best Start Family Hubs programme will see hubs rolled out in every council area by April 2026, with up to 1,000 in place by the end of 2028.



The hubs bring together a range of support, including breastfeeding, early language development, parenting skills, housing and mental health.

Cllr Arooj Shah, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils want to ensure every child gets the best start in life, and we are pleased government has acted on our call to expand family hubs to all local authorities.

"Family hubs are an important opportunity for councils and partners to support families, and to help them gain access to a range of vital services in their local area.

"We want to ensure the expansion results in fully integrated local support for communities. To do this, we need long-term, sustainable funding, and local flexibility to ensure services meet local need." ●



## Children leaving care for homelessness – MPs

An "alarming" number of children are leaving the care system and becoming homeless, and not in employment or in education, because children's social care services are overstretched in the face of rising need.

In a report on restoring care leavers' life chances, the Commons' Education Committee calls for a National Care Offer, to ensure a consistent standard of financial and housing support for care leavers is offered by councils. It also wants new funding announced in the Spending Review to be allocated to early intervention programmes.

The committee said the rising level of demand on children's services was down to rising poverty, cost-of-living pressures, and a decrease in funding for early intervention.

Cllr Arooj Shah, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "We support the committee's call for increased funding for early intervention services, which will help to prevent children reaching crisis point and reduce the numbers entering care.

"It is right to recognise the crucial need to support care leavers. We would like a government-funded national exemption for care leavers from council tax, prescription charges, and NHS dental and optical costs, to help prevent financial hardship and ensure access to vital services." ●

## SEND transport costs soar

**New analysis published** by the LGA has found spending by councils on home-to-school transport for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is predicted to reach nearly £2 billion this year (2025/26).

This represents approximately a 200 per cent increase since 2015/16, according to research based on a survey by consultants Isos Partnership.

Nine in 10 responding councils thought spending on SEND home-to-school transport would increase, while only 12 per cent were confident they would be able to balance their budgets for SEND transport over the next five years.

The research also found that the average one-way trip to school for pupils with SEND is nine miles, with councils highlighting a growing minority travelling very long distances to school, most often because of a lack of suitable special school places closer to their home.



Cllr Arooj Shah, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The rapidly rising need for home-to-school transport from children and young people with SEND is yet another reminder of the huge pressures on the SEND system.

"It is also wrong that children are increasingly having to travel long distances to get to school because of a lack of provision near to their home. This has to change.

"We urge the Government in its forthcoming white paper to deliver the comprehensive reforms the SEND system needs, so that it is more inclusive and improves educational attainment for children." ●

# New 'outcomes framework' for councils



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**A 'Local Government Outcomes Framework'** and new initiatives to tackle bureaucracy were among the announcements in Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner's speech to the LGA's annual conference.

Housing was also a key focus, with the launch of a new government-funded Council Housebuilding Support Service, to provide help for council housebuilding programmes (see p4).

A year on from the general election, Ms Rayner said the Government had delivered £5 billion of new funding for local services, a £4 billion uplift to adult social care, £1.6 billion for local road maintenance, and doubled direct investment in preventative children's social care services.

She said the Government was "rolling back the era of micromanagement", with simpler and more flexible funding, and would "radically simplify the funding and reporting regime" that underpins councils' work.

"Through a new Local Government Outcomes Framework, we will move together to a completely new way of measuring performance," Ms Rayner told delegates in Liverpool.

"This will be focused on delivering what we know matters most – outcomes like kids learning to read and write, people living healthier lives for longer, and communities feeling safe.

"It means prioritising the long term, instead of getting caught up in the nuts and bolts. The aim is that it frees you up to deliver meaningful outcomes and facilitates a shift towards prevention."

Alongside the outcomes framework, the Government will be launching a "comprehensive review" of "unnecessary regulations and needless asks" and harnessing its artificial intelligence team to "unlock efficiencies".

The Deputy Prime Minister also pledged to make good on her promise in Opposition to fund councils on the basis of need, with a "full-fat" Fair Funding Review. "Government grant will be allocated based on the drivers of need in your area in a fair and transparent way," she said.

"We will replace the decade-old data and, for the first time, properly take into account factors such as deprivation and poverty, the cost of remoteness faced by rural communities... temporary accommodation and the impact of daytime visitors on major cities and coastal towns." ●

## Funding system is "broken"

**Councils are being** "forced to play along" with the Government's "top-down" devolution programme or "face the threat of local government reorganisation without consent", according to Kevin Hollinrake, Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

He told the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool that ministers should instead be focused on the "opaque" and "broken" local government funding model.

He highlighted the increasing proportion of council budgets spent on "vital" adult social care and children's social care

and SEND services, which "protect the most vulnerable" – but said that increases in, for example, education and health care plans were not sustainable.

"We need real change based on honest and long-term thinking," he said, and called on councillors and frontline staff to contribute to the Conservative Party's policy renewal programme.

Mr Hollinrake said the previous government asked councils to "do too much with too little" and at times didn't treat them "as the equal partners you are".

"I'm not here to claim our record in government was



© LGA/Joe Outterside

perfect: it was not. We didn't always give you the support and respect you deserved but we did make progress," he told delegates – listing the New Homes Bonus, business rates localisation and lifting the borrowing cap

on housing revenue accounts among the latter.

Local government is the "thread that holds communities together" and he promised to work with the sector, as partnership "is the only way forward." ●

## Reform on a mission to 'fix' councils

**Reform UK** is on a mission to "save Britain... and our many broken councils", according to Cllr Jaymey McIvor, the party's Director of Local Government.

Giving the first Reform UK speech at an LGA annual conference, Cllr McIvor thanked the organisation for making the party welcome after its success in May's local elections secured it a political group office at the LGA.

"It is something very special about the democracy that we have in Britain that we are able to accept election results and people rally around to ensure that people

are represented in the way that they voted," he said.

Cllr McIvor, a member of Epping Forest District and Essex County Councils, said it was a "privilege" to see the impact Reform councillors were already having on their communities.

He said councils were facing "unprecedented financial pressures" and that local government budgeting "has been a disaster".

He said Reform councillors would look at every single council department and find efficiencies, with the help of the party's "fantastic" Department of Government Efficiency programme.

"Our councils are broken but Reform will fix them," he said. ●

## 'Existential crisis' in social care

### The Government needs

to do more to address local government's three 'Horsemen of the Apocalypse' – adult social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and housing.

Speaking at the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Housing, Communities and Local Government Cllr Vikki Slade said June's Spending Review made "very little reference" to the "existential crisis" in adult social care, while the delayed Casey Review is just the latest in 25 inquiries and commissions that have yet to make a difference.

Citing Liberal Democrat research showing that nearly 500,000 more people will require care by 2026, she added: "Council tax cannot plug that gap."

She drew on her own



Cllr Vikki Slade MP

© LGA/Joe Outterside

experiences as the parent of a child with SEND to highlight how the system is failing, and called for the Government's forthcoming white paper to guarantee every child gets the support they need and ensure mainstream schools become fully inclusive.

On housing, Ms Slade highlighted a select committee report that found temporary accommodation is "harming our children's

health, development and future" – and was a factor in the deaths of 74 children.

She was also critical of government plans to abolish the council committee system, calling it "centralisation by stealth".

"If the Government is serious about devolution, it must trust local leaders, not strip them of their powers," she added. "It is councils, not Westminster, that get things done." ●

## Independents told to 'drive change'

### Local government

is living through political change and an "age of shocks", including climate shocks, the LGA's annual conference heard.



Baroness Bennett

But while Britain is one of the most politically concentrated countries, with power and resources focused in Whitehall and Westminster, Independents and Greens are offering "different political choices" – which people are interested in.

Former Green Party Leader Baroness Natalie Bennett told delegates: "You in your communities are more connected; you know what the local problems and issues are. Political change doesn't happen because the status quo says 'we realise we shouldn't be running things, we are giving it to you'... We have to drive change."

She referenced the example of disabled people and disability campaigners who protested – successfully – against proposed cuts to benefits. "Campaigning works; demanding change works," she said.

Fellow speaker Cllr Marianne Overton, former Leader of the LGA's Independent Group, highlighted that 97 per cent of people are not members of the three big political parties.

"People are disillusioned with the big parties," she said. "The vast majority of residents... are free and listening, and they want to hear from people like you, from people who are committed to their communities and have a track record of doing something positive that makes life better for their residents.

"You are not 'just' one Independent; you are Independent... You have managed to get elected through your own good qualities and track record of doing something in your communities!" ●

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# English devolution

## New legislation requires neighbourhood engagement

After months of speculation, briefings and ministerial assurances, the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution unveiled the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill on 10 July.

When the Government published the English Devolution White Paper last December, the LGA recognised that it had acted on our long-standing call to transfer power out of Whitehall and into the hands of local leaders – where it should be.

In a deeply centralised country, we know that devolution can play a huge role in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, helping to create jobs, drive innovation and strengthen vital public services. Crucially,

it brings powers and resources closer to those most affected by their use – communities and local businesses.

In preparation for the bill, we have been working with, and listening to, our members closely – through our policy boards, during member visits and webinars, and via wider engagement with our special interest groups. We have worked alongside our political group offices and regional teams to ensure that the views of our members are considered throughout our work.

We have also made good use of our cross-party devolution task and finish group, which has provided invaluable insights and guidance over the past six months to shape our approach.

The message from the sector is clear: the success of

devolution relies on councils, communities and public services working together with mayors in true partnership.

Where mayors hold devolved powers, delivery flows through councils, because bringing decision-making closer to communities makes operational, democratic and financial sense.

A successful system must embed this model, recognising that strategic collaboration across geographies depends on empowered councils, mayors and communities acting together.

Ahead of the bill's publication, the LGA wrote to Local Government Minister Jim McMahon OBE to outline the sector's priorities for genuine devolution.

We called on the minister to engage early and constructively with councils, and we reiterated that council leaders must have a clearly defined and meaningful role in the governance structures

of new and existing strategic authorities – including strong scrutiny and accountability arrangements that respect and reflect local democratic mandates.

We also reminded the Government that local areas are best placed to decide what form of community engagement is appropriate for their context.

The bill introduces a duty on local authorities to make effective governance arrangements for neighbourhood areas. Doing this well – in a way that truly empowers communities – requires new burdens funding.

We will work with government to ensure neighbourhood and community engagement structures work well for the sector and empower communities to engage with wider public services, including the NHS, police and voluntary sector.

We have also argued that, in principle, the Government's ambition to align public service boundaries and geographies offers the chance to increase local democratic accountability and bring greater coherence to the governance of key public services, such as health, transport, skills, economic development and planning.

However, the current piecemeal process of reform risks leaving some areas stuck with an indefinite period of misalignment.

Reforms under the NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England, such as the clustering of integrated care boards, are happening now, and these clusters are unlikely to match





emerging or future strategic authority boundaries. This risks a second wave of re-clustering, which is a resource-intensive and time-consuming exercise.

To help mitigate this uncertainty, the Government should produce a transparent timeline for devolution beyond the Devolution Priority Programme areas. This should form the framework for NHS and other public sector reform, including police reform, to ensure a coordinated approach across the public sector, where coterminosity of services and alignment of geographies is the ambition.

The draft legislation presents positive responses to long-held LGA asks, including the formalisation of devolution through statute and a new enhanced devolution framework. It



also presents challenges for the sector, including a move to simple majority voting, a lack of a formal role for local government within each area of competence, and a ministerial directive to be able to impose strategic authorities on areas.

Further, we recognise that the legislation, as currently drafted, does not provide significant new powers or responsibilities for London boroughs to evolve devolution in the capital. We will continue to work with our London members on the future of devolution there.

Genuine devolution also means giving local areas the powers and tools to shape their own futures. This includes the ability to raise and control resources, define local priorities and lead integrated public services in ways that reflect local needs.

We have called for: the right to request additional competencies, such as culture, to be added to the devolution framework; increased flexibility for investing the integrated settlement; and further exploration of fiscal devolution – including powers to introduce tourism levies

where local areas want them.

We will also work with our members to think about the future of devolution beyond the immediate legislation.

Finally, sustainable, long-term funding for council services and infrastructure will be essential to successful devolution. Councils need the capacity to lead transformation – not just to manage delegation. Without this, we risk undermining the very objectives devolution is designed to achieve: growth, efficiency, equity, and better outcomes for residents.

We recognise that not every issue can be resolved through this bill alone, and that devolution is an ongoing, long-term process. However, we believe that this legislation presents a rare and important opportunity to empower local communities.

We are pleased to see that some of the concerns raised by our members have been addressed in the legislation already. The LGA will publish a detailed briefing of the legislation as introduced, and prior to the bill's second reading in the House of Commons.

In the meantime, we have

published a factual policy summary of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill (see [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses)).

We have also written to all councils to share our initial press statement and will be organising briefing sessions for members in the coming weeks.

The LGA will continue working closely with our members, partners, and parliamentarians (in the Commons and Lords) to shape this legislation, so that every council in England can secure devolution that works for them, their local economies and their residents.

Our devolution and local government reorganisation hub, and newly created mini-hub for the bill, will continue to host guidance and the latest views of the LGA, as well as further information about the support available to councils (see [www.local.gov.uk/devolution-hub](http://www.local.gov.uk/devolution-hub)).

Please continue to provide feedback via your LGA regional advisers and political group offices, as well as by emailing [localism@local.gov.uk](mailto:localism@local.gov.uk). ●  
● See p22, p27

# Improving lives

More than 1,800 delegates attended the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool



Councillor Louise Gittins  
is Chair of the LGA

Every time our local government family comes together, I'm inspired and incredibly proud of everything our sector does to improve the lives of our residents and empower our communities.

If there's one thing I've learned as a council leader – and more recently as the LGA's Chair – is that this vital work sometimes goes unnoticed but deserves far greater recognition.

Over three days in Liverpool, however, the LGA's annual conference shone a spotlight on the exceptional work going on across every level of local government, and created a space for further collaboration – the very heart of what we do best.

There were many enriching experiences, from the various sessions with council leaders sharing ideas, challenges and solutions, and the Innovation Zone's showcasing of cutting-edge practice (see p15), to plenaries on housing, devolution, net zero, and workforce resilience.

The conversations were rich, forward-looking and grounded in our shared mission to deliver for our communities.

Together, councils – of all tiers and of every political persuasion or none – continue to make a difference, and the LGA continues to be there with you every step of the way.

At last year's annual conference in Harrogate, we held the very first Leaders' Council, which provides direct access to government for open dialogue on the country's most pressing issues.

Hearing from my fellow members of the Leaders' Council has been reassuring – a reminder of how much we share, despite the diversity of our local areas.

But the Leaders' Council is more than just a forum for discussion – it's a driving force for change. For example, we've agreed to establish a new task force with the Department for Education on early years and post-16 skills.

Beyond this, I was delighted to report to conference on further wins for our sector, spearheaded by the LGA's policy boards.

For example, the Renters' Rights Bill now delivers on nearly every single one of the LGA's key priorities, from ending unfair 'no fault' evictions – which is one of the leading causes of homelessness – to safeguarding against unjust rent hikes.



Conference delegates registering on arrival

These measures will help families remain in their homes, and with the confidence that they can do so in decent conditions.

Another area of LGA success is around the Government's commitment to allow remote attendance at council meetings.

The LGA has long called for councils to be able to decide this for themselves, and we hope to see legislation soon, as well as protection of councillors' home addresses.

We were also delighted to see the LGA's Work Local policy become government policy when the Department for Work and Pensions published the Get Britain Working White Paper.

The Government will now route employment and skills support locally, through mayors and clusters of councils.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill also reflects several key wins for our sector.

We have successfully delivered enhanced powers for our Trading Standards teams and vital measures to safeguard children and young people, with tighter regulations on vape marketing and packaging.

In June, we also welcomed the ban on disposable vapes, something the LGA was among the first to call for.

These achievements are a testament to the LGA's influence, ambition, and advocacy. However, they are only made possible because of the hard work

The LGA conference in Liverpool shone a spotlight on the exceptional work going on in local government





All photographs © LGA/Joe Outterside



Liverpool City Council Leader Cllr Liam Robinson

of councillors and officers who are committed to serving their communities.

Working in local government offers unparalleled opportunities to make a real difference.

We aren't simply delivery arms – councils are catalysts of progress and innovation, and conference's Innovation Zone showcased fantastic local solutions to the challenges we face.

If you joined us in Liverpool, thank you for sharing your insights. We hope this year's annual conference lived up to your expectations, and we look forward to continuing the conversation on the many issues discussed.

If you couldn't join us, I hope you read about our many announcements in the media – from support for special educational needs and disabilities to economic growth.

## Improving services through information

Staying ahead of the game with up-to-date data about your council and how it compares with others has been made easier by the launch of the LGA's LG Inform app.

The app features 110 key metrics, across 11 topic areas, that can be used for quick reference, offering a concise snapshot to complement the popular LG Inform website.

Launched at the LGA's annual conference in early July, the app allows you to access up-to-date data, accurately share it with others, ask the right questions, and delve deeper to find more detailed evidence.

Timely notifications and alerts as new data is published allow you to stay updated.

To support meaningful and informed discussion and scrutiny, the metrics were selected in careful consultation with local government colleagues, based on the data they found most relevant.

This is an iterative challenge, and the LGA is keen to hear if there are any other metrics that should have been included, or any selected that should be reconsidered.

We recognise that such data does not always provide definitive conclusions about a council, because of performance being impacted by

a range of factors beyond councils' control (for example, the number and proportion of older people, the type of housing, or the level of deprivation in an area).

Councils may also choose to prioritise different metrics in line with local mandates or strategic paths.

Beyond the app, LG Inform is an invaluable tool that allows you to explore further and draw deeper insights. To help you in this research, the source for each metric is listed and all data is shown as it appears in the source publication.

The app forms part of the LG Inform suite of tools, which also includes LG Inform and LG Inform Plus.

For information on LG Inform, email [lginform@local.gov.uk](mailto:lginform@local.gov.uk) or visit [lginform.local.gov.uk](http://lginform.local.gov.uk). To download the app, scan this QR code:



Councils continue to navigate many new things – new legislation, a Spending Review, local government reorganisation, devolution, a reset of funding principles, and electoral change – while, of course, continuing to deliver crucial services.

Annual conference was a great reminder of what sets local government apart: our ability to work together, across boundaries and political divides, in the interests of the people who elected us.

My thanks to Liverpool for being such a fantastic host and to you for providing the energy, passion and drive that made the conference such a success. We look forward to seeing you at next year's event in Bournemouth, from 7-9 July 2026. ●



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# Harnessing opportunities

The Innovation Zone showcased councils' transformational projects



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

Once again, the Innovation Zone (IZ) at the LGA's 2025 annual conference was the beating heart of innovative practice from across the local government sector.

With many sessions standing room only, councils brought the energy and the audience showed their enthusiasm, creating a vibrant atmosphere throughout the three-day event.

I was delighted to launch this year's programme with an opening session from conference hosts Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Liverpool City Council, along with Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.

This session shared how they are transforming access to apprenticeships, training and careers across the region, with digital inclusion at the heart of their platform.

The dynamic programme included a range of topical sessions, including artificial intelligence (AI), local government reorganisation (LGR), and experiences of transformation and change.

Westmorland and Furness delivered a 'Spotlight on' session about its staff expo



Employee Craig (l) and Director Jason Bassett of Dragonheart Homes at IZ workshop 'Prisoners building homes'

and creating a positive culture post-LGR, with Wyre Council sharing how it adapted its transformation approach to harness LGR opportunities.

From high street regeneration and workforce challenges to service-specific innovations and creative uses of data, there was truly something for everyone. Delegates left the IZ buzzing with new ideas and scalable learning, and hopefully an appetite to present their own innovations next year.

This year, we introduced some new 'In conversation' sessions, showcasing closely aligned projects. I was pleased to chair the 'In conversation' on tech-enabled care, featuring St Helens Borough Council, and the Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation, with Hampshire County Council.

Another first for the zone this year saw two

sessions feature as a panel and workshop in the wider conference programme.

In the main auditorium, Cllr David Thomas (Con), Leader of Torbay Council, chaired the 'How AI is transforming council services' panel, exploring the use of AI to improve services, increase efficiency and reduce burdens on staff. This showcased work from North Yorkshire, Torbay, Basildon, and North Somerset councils.

An IZ workshop on 'Prisoners building homes: an innovative approach to delivering affordable housing' – introduced by Cllr Amanda Serjeant (Lab), Deputy Leader of Chesterfield Borough Council, with Bristol City Council, Dragonheart

Homes, and Devon and Cornwall Police – provided a powerful exploration of affordable housing, including hearing from those with lived experience.

Our sponsor Newton Europe was once again a highlight of the IZ, providing a steady stream of coffee and hosting popular sessions including a 'Spotlight on working in partnership to tackle the homelessness and temporary accommodation challenge across London', chaired by Epsom & Ewell's Cllr Alex Coley (Ind); and sessions on transformation through innovation, and supporting disabled children and young people into adulthood.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the incredible LGA team and member-led working group who shaped the wide-ranging programme and chaired sessions, making the IZ such a success.

For those who missed out or want to revisit the good practice shared, presentation slides will soon be available on the LGA website (see [www.local.gov.uk/past-event-presentations](http://www.local.gov.uk/past-event-presentations)).

We will also be launching a new Innovation Zone publication, capturing case studies and learning from this year's programme. ●

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**i** To learn more about LGA support mentioned at the Innovation Zone, please see [www.local.gov.uk/our-support](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support) for our sector support offer and to contact your LGA regional principal adviser

# LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2025

**T**hank you to everyone who took part in the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool and contributed to an incredibly thought-provoking and invigorating three days.

A record 1,800 delegates joined hundreds of sponsors, exhibitors and speakers by the Mersey. They discussed the big issues facing local government,

heard about cutting-edge council practice in the conference's Innovation Zone, and renewed political friendships and networks at receptions and dinners.

Keynote political speakers included: Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner; Kevin Hollinrake MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; Vikki Slade MP, Liberal

Democrat Spokesperson for Housing, Communities and Local Government; former Green Party Leader Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle; and Cllr Jaymey McIvor, Director of Local Government at Reform UK.

We look forward to seeing you in Bournemouth for next year's annual conference, from 7-9 July 2026. ●



LGA Labour Group Leader Cllr Bev Craig, Local Government Minister Jim McMahon and LGA Chair Cllr Louise Gittins



Joanna Killian, LGA Chief Executive



Conference registration



Current and former LGA Independent Group Leaders Cllrs Hannah Dalton and Marianne Overton MBE



Liverpool City Region's stand



Tony Cealy, Black Men's Consortium in the Innovation Zone

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It's what it adds up to that counts

Our clients are... in every aspect of public life and... investments make a... important... to their achieve...



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Innovation Zone



LGA Reform UK Group Leader Cllr Stephen Atkinson and Cllr Jaymey Mclvor, Reform UK's Director of Local Government



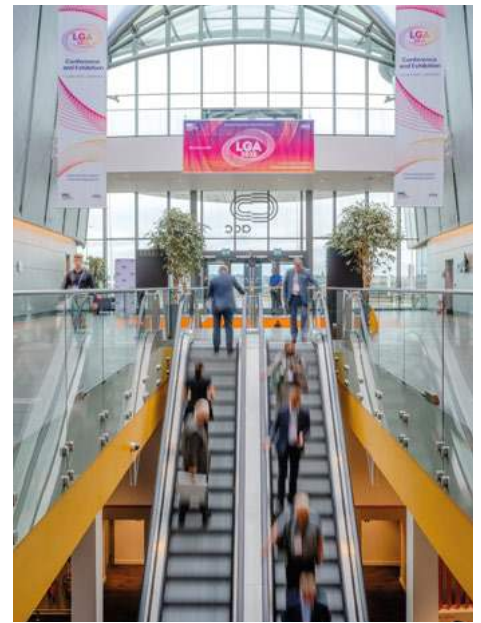
LGA Lib Dem Group Leader Cllr Joe Harris and BT's Sally Fuller



Delegates in plenary



Drinks reception



Delegates in Liverpool



Georgia Gould, Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office



Shadow Communities Secretary Kevin Hollinrake and LGA Conservative Group Leader Cllr Kevin Bentley



Shadow Local Government Minister David Simmonds, Re:State Policy Director Simon Kaye, and London Councils Chair Cllr Claire Holland



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- Our research & consultancy helps improve outcomes for your communities.





**Councillor Marianne Overton MBE** is Chair of the LGA's Civility in Public Life Steering Group

# Councillors under threat

## Survey reveals persistent levels of abuse and misinformation

**A**s a councillor for more than two decades and Chair of the LGA's Civility in Public Life Steering Group, I have always believed that public service is a privilege and a pleasure.

But the findings of our 2025 Debate Not Hate survey are a stark reminder that this privilege is increasingly coming at a personal cost.

This year's survey – published as councillors met for the LGA's annual conference in early July – gathered responses from nearly 1,900 councillors across England and Wales.

It reveals that abuse, intimidation and misinformation are not isolated incidents; they are systemic and growing threats to our democracy.

It is deeply troubling that 72 per cent of councillors reported experiencing abuse or intimidation in the past year.

Even more concerning is that one in five councillors has been threatened with violence, and one in 20 has received a death threat.

So, we shouldn't be surprised that 73 per cent of councillors feel personally at risk – because even if they haven't had such a threat, they will know someone who has.

These are not just statistics – they are real people, real families and real fears.

This year, we have been able to show that women, disabled councillors, LGBTQ+ councillors and those from ethnic minority backgrounds

are disproportionately affected. As someone who has worked closely with councillors from all walks of life, I know how much courage it takes to step forward for election and to serve.

We cannot allow abuse to silence those democratically elected voices.

More than half of councillors reported being targeted by misinformation about their personal or political character. This is not just frustrating and upsetting – it is dangerous.

False narratives, often spread online, erode public trust and can create hostility. As one respondent put it, misinformation is



“the most dangerous attack on democracy”.

Perhaps most heartbreaking is the impact this is having on our future leaders.

More than half of the councillors who responded to the survey were unsure about or unwilling to stand for election again.

Among those, one in four says abuse has influenced their decision, rising to a third of women and more than

a third of disabled councillors. We are at risk of losing dedicated public servants because the environment has become too toxic.

Highlighting these issues is an important step in reversing this trend of normalisation, but more is needed to truly address the impact of abuse on local democracy. We are calling on the Government to:

- legislate to protect councillors' home addresses
- establish a central unit to address the abuse of politicians
- review the thresholds for relevant criminal offences
- permanently resource the police to support Operation Ford
- work with criminal justice agencies to drive a cultural shift, challenging the perception that abuse comes with being elected
- support better public education on local government and the role of councillors.

We also need to foster a culture of respect across parties, communities and platforms. Let's stand together – not just against hate, but for the values that sustain our democracy: respect, truth, and commitment to public service. ●

**i** The LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the responses to, and support for, local politicians facing abuse and intimidation, see [www.local.gov.uk/debate-not-hate](http://www.local.gov.uk/debate-not-hate)

# And the winner is...

## Tackling the most pressing challenges facing councils

The 2025 Local Government Challenge reached its grand finale at the LGA's annual conference, with Harriet Vitty, from Liverpool City Council, crowned this year's winner.

The announcement marked the end of a six-month journey that took 10 officers across England to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing local government and culminated in our four finalists pitching their proposals in Liverpool for the £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart Scholarship.

In May, the programme travelled to Knowsley Council for the fifth and final challenge, which provided the opportunity for the cohort to demonstrate their growth and ingenuity one last time. Hosted at the Shakespeare North

Playhouse in Prescot, the challenge focused on sustaining ambition and career aspirations in children and young people.

Set in a borough that was crowned Local Authority of the Year at the MJ Awards 2024, the challenge reflected Knowsley's wider mission to tackle inequality and promote social regeneration.

Both challenge teams immersed themselves in the community, consulting with local businesses, education providers and Knowsley Youth Cabinet to shape these insights into two distinct and powerful proposals.

Team Ascend, who ultimately won the challenge, proposed the 'Destination Passport', a lifelong career-journey tool designed to connect young people with opportunities in the borough while showcasing local talent.

Central to their vision was the 'BOSS' framework (Believe, Opportunity, Support, Succeed), a culturally relevant approach aimed at sustaining young people's ambitions.

Team Visionaries, meanwhile,

introduced a series of partnership-driven ideas, including TED-style talks aimed at inspiring young people and their families.

Their approach recognised the importance of shared community ambition, and sought to bridge the gap between education and employment through storytelling and visibility.

The final presentations for the Knowsley challenge were followed by the announcement of this year's four highest-scoring LG Challenge contestants – the finalists who went on to present their pitches to delegates and a judging panel at the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool.

Mike Campbell (London Borough of Waltham Forest), Rebecca Dentith (North Yorkshire Council), Jess Finnin (London Borough of Havering) and Harriet Vitty (Liverpool City Council) each hosted a stand, giving delegates the chance to explore their ideas in depth, ask questions and offer feedback.

This interactive format allowed the wider sector to engage directly with the contestants' proposals, sparking conversations around innovation, delivery and scalability.

They then delivered their closing pitches to a judging panel made up of representatives from the LGA, Essex County Council and The MJ, making the case for why their project should take top spot.

At an award ceremony hosted by Cllr Kevin Bentley, LGA Senior Vice-Chairman, local finalist Harriet Vitty was crowned as the overall winner.

Cllr Louise Gittins, LGA Chair, presented the trophy for Vitty's project, The Real Voice Framework, a proposal to integrate artificial intelligence into the special educational needs and disabilities system.

As the 2025 cohort concluded their journey, the LGA extended its thanks to the host councils and all participants.

Officer applications and nominations for the 2026 Local Government Challenge are now open. For details, visit: [www.local.gov.uk/lgchallenge](http://www.local.gov.uk/lgchallenge)

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LG Challenge winner Harriet Vitty (holding trophy), alongside Cllrs Kevin Bentley and Louise Gittins, and fellow finalists (l to r) Mike Campbell, Rebecca Dentith and Jess Finnin



(l to r) LGA Senior Vice-Chairman Cllr Kevin Bentley, Employment Minister Alison McGovern, Skills England Deputy Chief Executive Gemma Marsh, Jaguar Land Rover Operations Director Brian Stone and Liverpool City Region Mayor Steve Rotherham at an annual conference plenary on inclusive growth

# A force for growth

## Councils are key to unlocking economic potential



**Eve Roodhouse is the LGA's Director of Strategy and Policy**

**T**he Government has identified kickstarting economic growth as the pre-eminent mission of its Plan for Change and, in recent weeks, there has been a raft of policy announcements.

Four new growth funds were announced in the Spending Review in June, including one for mayoral combined authorities in the North and Midlands.

The Industrial Strategy set out the critical role local authorities across England can play in supporting the Government's eight key growth sectors. And the recently published English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill aims to put into law the role of mayoral

strategic authorities in delivering local growth plans.

Councils have shown, over many decades, that they are essential to driving sustainable and inclusive growth, knitting together national and local resources and connecting these to the needs of residents and businesses.

To build on this, and at a time of change, the LGA has commissioned the Growth and Reform Network (a collaboration between consultants Metro Dynamics, and think tanks the Future Governance Forum and the Centre for Progressive Policy) to undertake new research to evidence the vital role of local authorities.

Initial analysis, released at the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool, reveals that councils across England could unleash £276 billion of untapped economic potential – equivalent to more than a tenth of national output.

The analysis strips out national, sectoral and regional

trends to pinpoint genuinely local economic potential, identifying areas where local leaders, with properly resourced councils, could make a significant difference in tackling local economic challenges, unlocking local jobs and boosting business opportunities.

Urban areas could deliver at least £234 billion, according to the analysis. Rural areas also present untapped potential worth at least £42 billion – equivalent to nearly 10.7 per cent of the rural economy.

The analysis highlights that there are places not currently covered by a mayoral combined authority, nor on the Devolution Priority Programme, that are ready to press ahead now on delivering inclusive growth.

These areas cannot afford to wait another three or four years for a devolution agreement. They need support and resources to deliver for their communities and businesses, which could unlock at least £77 billion of additional growth.

To guide this work, we have convened a steering group, with expert representation from across the sector.

At the LGA's annual conference, we organised a roundtable with local leaders that underpinned the importance of collaboration between local and combined authorities, and highlighted excellent work now under way.

Examples included the long-term collaboration between government, BAE Systems and Westmorland and Furness Council through Team Barrow, which aims to support ongoing shipbuilding in the town, but also diversify and strengthen the local economy.

We expect to launch our final report in the autumn and look forward to working with local government to make the best case for the sector.

We want to use this research to showcase the excellent work already under way across England and would like to hear from you if your council has a case study to share. Please email [alex.howell@local.gov.uk](mailto:alex.howell@local.gov.uk) ●

# Working within combined authorities

## The LGA has published lessons for councils

The Government's commitment to expanding devolution and establishing strategic authorities across England means that councils are entering a new era of collaboration and opportunity.

A recently published LGA peer report recognises that the success of devolution depends not only on the structures and powers of combined and strategic authorities, but also on the strength and adaptability of their constituent councils.

Consequently, the report and an associated toolkit aim to provide learning from current constituent councils on how to maximise the benefits of working within a mayoral combined authority (MCA).

The report's findings are informed by the perspectives and insights of more than 70 leaders working in, or with, the sector, including council leaders and chief executives, MCA chief executives and scrutiny chairs, civil servants, sector bodies and national organisations.

The peer team engaged with areas that are varied in many respects, but all councils recognised the value that MCA working can bring and highlighted many benefits. These include the collective strength of an MCA to secure additional business investment, the ability to unlock new public funding, and an improved capacity to coordinate policy across a place compared with central government.

There was a strong consensus that what can be achieved collectively within an MCA is greater than the sum of its parts.

While all current constituent councils have come together voluntarily, prior to any mandate, there was a clear message that working together across an MCA footprint is a positive way to improve outcomes for communities.

It was also acknowledged that MCA working is neither easy nor straightforward. There are inherent tensions for councils participating within an MCA. It requires significant capacity and commitment to support the required relationships, develop a clear narrative and make governance arrangements work.

Strong local leadership is also needed to ensure each council is maximising the benefits of MCA working and communicating its benefits.

The LGA sees this report – 'Supporting constituent councils within a mayoral combined authority context' – as a first step in a more comprehensive programme of activity.

It is also recognised that this work will need to be done collaboratively with both councils and combined authorities, including actively engaging with mayors.

This peer project has identified valuable insights on how the LGA can build on its current engagement and working relationships with MCAs. Proposed next steps include working with the sector to develop further, and co-design, the LGA's support offer for combined authority working.

There is also interest in exploring issues highlighted, but not fully addressed, in this report. These include examining the common experiences of different types of councils within an MCA environment, as well as sub-regional working and connections across MCA areas.

These 'place' issues will become more important as new strategic authorities are created at speed.

New mayoral strategic authorities are likely to cover more rural areas and different economic footprints than previously.

Public sector reform is also a key area of focus for councils, MCAs and central government, and there is value in working together to consider the learning so far.

As the number of mayoral strategic authorities increases, and their powers extend, it is important that the sector continues to reflect and build upon effective working arrangements. ●



**i** 'Supporting constituent councils within a mayoral combined authority context' and an associated toolkit can be downloaded in full at [www.local.gov.uk/mca-peer-report](http://www.local.gov.uk/mca-peer-report). See also p27



Councillors Adam Hug, Heather Kidd MBE and Wendy Maples are respectively Chairs of the LGA's Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board, Safer and Stronger Communities Board, and Fire Services Management Committee

# Extreme weather events

## Adapting to the risks of climate change

As board chairs, we have been reflecting, with our other LGA lead members, on the impact of extreme weather events such as flooding and wildfires on councils, fire authorities and, crucially, communities.

There are three key challenges: first, to adapt to the risks of climate change to reduce the impact of extreme weather events; second, to best prepare our responses to extreme weather events as they occur; and third, to help to develop and support community resilience.

With another warm, dry summer under way, fire and rescue services have already had an incredibly busy year for wildfires.

More than 500 wildfires have been recorded in England and Wales between January and June, a 717 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2024 – which, by contrast, was a record-breaking year for flood alerts and warnings in England, which increased by a third to their highest level since records began.

The frequency and severity of extreme weather events are predicted to continue to rise, and it is vital that we plan and prepare for these risks.

The National Risk Register now includes a significant number of weather-related risks, including wildfires, coastal and surface water flooding, and related resilience issues such as regional electricity failure.

The LGA has been calling for a rapid acceleration in national efforts to adapt to climate change, as set out in our 'Accelerating adaptation action' report.

Public preparedness remains low. Polling shows that only 5 per cent of people feel ready for how climate change will impact them. We know that the public are most likely to trust their local authority to lead the local effort to prepare for these impacts.

Helping communities to be resilient and



understand and prepare for the risks is a key task for the whole sector.

Partnerships between local authorities, emergency services, and non-statutory partners, including faith groups and the voluntary sector, continue to be vital in building local resilience and preparedness.

We also believe there is an urgent need for a renewed relationship between national and local government, building greater coordination at the national level across government departments and agencies.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is responsible for land management and promoting wildfire mitigation and adaptation planning to land managers.

Since April, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has had responsibility for fire policy and safety, and there is a range of other government agencies – including Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency – that have a role.

Government departments and agencies should coordinate to look at the potential impact policies around land management and conservation may have on flood or wildfire risk, and the effect these could have on the environment and communities.

Government needs to work together to understand the impact of policies, and ensure that land management, planning and emergency response policies are aligned and support local resilience.

As members, we are wholly committed to working together, and with government, to ensure that councils have the tools, resources and clarity they need to protect communities.

It is time for a joined-up, long-term approach to managing the impacts of extreme weather, one that empowers local government to lead the way in building a safer, more resilient future. ●

See [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications) for 'Accelerating adaptation action: councils preparing for climate change'



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

# Mobile phone theft

## Councils are essential partners in prevention

**M**obile phone theft has surged in the UK, particularly in urban centres, such as London.

This fuels organised crime and targets vulnerable groups, including women, young people and those with disabilities. But this isn't a hopeless story.

Across government, policing, councils and industry, there are strong green shoots of action. The right blend of technology, enforcement, public awareness and international cooperation can turn the tide.

Phone manufacturers have stepped up with powerful anti-theft tools. Apple's Activation Lock and Google's Factory Reset Protection make phones useless without the owner's credentials.

Biometric security, two-factor authentication, encrypted storage and secure payment systems mean thieves face major hurdles in accessing data or accounts.

Apple's new Stolen Device Protection adds time delays to deter quick resets, making stolen devices less attractive.

These tools don't just protect individuals – they make phone theft a worse investment for criminals.

Law enforcement is sharpening its response.

The Metropolitan Police recently arrested more than 230 people and recovered more than 1,000 phones through targeted operations. Hotspot policing, plain-clothed officers and the smart use of tracking data are proving highly effective.

A proposed legal change – allowing police to enter properties without a warrant when tracking suggests that stolen phones are inside – could supercharge recovery

efforts and disrupt criminal networks faster.

While councils lack powers to arrest or search, they are proving essential partners in prevention.

Westminster has teamed up with police to target moped and e-scooter snatches.

Camden and Islington use local data and safer neighbourhood boards to respond to street crime.

Manchester's city centre wardens help to spot suspicious activity and support vulnerable residents.

Councils can lead on awareness campaigns, youth diversion, improved lighting, CCTV and designing out crime in public spaces.

The most effective response blends technology, policing, councils and community.

There's a real opportunity for government to back councils with funding for public awareness campaigns, especially in schools.

Coordinated campaigns can promote safer phone use, better personal security settings, and discourage young people from getting involved in phone theft.

The Government is rightly urging manufacturers to go further, too, by making it easier for users to remotely block or 'brick' stolen devices. While tech firms warn of civil liberties risks, progress is being made towards more seamless, secure options that deter resale without opening the door to abuse.

The message is clear: phones should become worthless in the hands of thieves.

Many stolen phones are shipped abroad or stripped for parts. UK law enforcement alone can't fix that. International cooperation and pressure on global resellers are needed to choke off overseas markets.

The LGA was invited to the Home Secretary's mobile phone theft summit, along with the Mayor of London and others.

Following a decision by the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, the LGA will be gathering and sharing best practice, lobbying for funding, and working closely with councils and Whitehall to play our part in tackling mobile phone thefts. We are sharing our report and views with the Home Secretary. ●



**i** To find out more about the LGA's community safety work, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/community-safety](http://www.local.gov.uk/community-safety)

# Thirty years of the Nolan Principles

A reflection on councillor standards today



Councillor Marianne Overton MBE is Chair of the LGA's Civility in Public Life Steering Group

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life, chaired by Lord Nolan, introduced the Seven Principles of Public Life – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

These principles are more than just guidelines; they are the ethical foundation on which modern local government is built, setting out the explicit commitment of our public servants to the public interest.

Thirty years on, the Nolan Principles remain central to public life, but the context in which councillors operate has evolved. Social media, loss of trust and rising public expectations have reshaped the landscape.

In this environment, we must do more than describe good conduct – we must also actively support councillors to embody these principles in their public service. Without good standards, the public can lose faith in their local institutions and those elected to represent them.

At the LGA, we recognise the importance of this covenant between the

**“We must actively support councillors to embody these principles in their public service”**



public and their elected representatives. The LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct was developed in 2020 and is designed to support councillors in aspiring to the highest standards in public office, thereby safeguarding trust in local government.

Five years on, almost two-thirds of councils use the model code, moving the sector towards a common standard and understanding of conduct in public office.

Alongside clarity on the standards councillors should expect to uphold, a well-rounded standards system is essential to maintaining high levels of behaviour and conduct. It must do more than respond to misconduct: it must foster a culture in which ethical behaviour is expected, supported and celebrated.

Public trust is fragile and must be continually earned. That trust depends on embedding the Nolan Principles into everyday practices and culture.

We recognise that the current standards framework for councillors may not always

be robust enough to meet the expectations of today's public. Limited sanctions, inconsistency in codes and ways of enforcing them, and a perceived or real lack of independence may weaken public confidence in councils.

To address this, the LGA has proposed a set of reforms grounded in the values of clarity, consistency, fairness, transparency and independence.

To reduce inconsistency, we support the Government's proposal to introduce a national code of conduct, setting a consistent standard for councillors, complemented by a complaints-handling process that upholds fairness, proportionality and independence.

Standardisation of the approach to complaints handling, and appropriate sanctioning by an independent body, with early intervention as a strong pillar, could support fair and consistent decision-making.

Equally important is prevention. The LGA continues to champion training, guidance and support for councillors, recognising that ethical leadership must be nurtured and developed.

Councillors need the tools and confidence to navigate complex situations with integrity and to model the behaviours expected of them.

As we mark three decades of the Nolan Principles, let us recommit to a standards system that honours these principles, fostering public trust in our elected members and the public bodies we lead. ●

See [www.local.gov.uk/local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct-2020](http://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct-2020) for the LGA's model code of conduct for councillors

## COMMENT



**Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Lab) is Leader of City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council**

**Bradford is having** a great year as the prestigious UK City of Culture 2025; the district is proudly taking centre stage nationally and globally.

This landmark year has brought with it a boost in tourism and investment, as Bradford's rich cultural heritage, creative industries and diverse communities are showcased. An estimated 1.1 million people have already experienced Bradford 2025 projects, and that's before the peak summer season begins.

Culture has always played a significant role in the history of Bradford.

It is the birthplace of David Hockney, J B Priestley and the Brontë sisters. Its attractions, from the Brontë Parsonage Museum to the National Science and Media Museum – newly opened after a recent £6 million renovation – and many more besides, are well-renowned.

This transformative year is a springboard to driving Bradford's economic growth, creating better-connected and creative communities.

The investment in a new platform at Bradford Forster Square station means there are now seven direct trains a day to London, and the Brit School for performing arts and technology has decided to make



# In the spotlight

## Bradford is UK City of Culture 2025

Bradford its northern location for its planned expansion.

With a multimillion-pound regeneration pipeline of transformational projects in leisure, housing and transport, and a young dynamic, entrepreneurial population, Bradford is transforming at pace as a place of opportunity, growth and innovation.

The city centre has undergone a radical £45 million change, reducing through-traffic and creating more green space, including Norfolk Gardens. Alongside modern, new office space at One City Park, the centre has been opened up as a prime

location for continued investment.

With the stunning refurbishment of the Bradford Live entertainment venue, and the recent launch of the new Darley Street Market, there is unprecedented change at every turn.

These pivotal schemes have paved the way for the ambitious 'City Village' development, where up to 1,000 new homes will be built in the centre, alongside new green spaces.

There is ongoing work to deliver a new 'through' rail station. An investment total of £4.5 billion will be needed to secure both a mass transit tram system and the new rail station. The area around the new station – known as the Southern Gateway – has been earmarked as one of the biggest regeneration sites in the UK, and would effectively double the size of the city centre.

This is an exciting time for Bradford. Its location in the heart of the North of England means that its successful regeneration economically benefits the whole of the region.

Sustained investment through the mayoral West Yorkshire Combined Authority and positive working relationships with government mean that Bradford has the best opportunity it has had in decades of creating a better future for all. ●

## Adding value in times of change

Cllr Hinchcliffe will be one of the speakers at the LGA's annual culture, tourism and sport (CTS) conference in Bradford from 10-11 September.

Taking place during a period of extraordinary change and challenge, the conference is a chance to get together in person, examine the opportunities for the future in the context of devolution and local government reorganisation, hear some best-practice examples, and ask questions of sector leaders and funders.

See Bradford for yourself and learn

how the council has maximised its cultural and heritage assets to drive the local economy and its own renaissance, through a series of exciting study tours.

Other speakers include: Darren Henley CBE, Chief Executive of Arts Council England; Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire Combined Authority; Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive Officer of the National Lottery Heritage Fund; and Shanaz Gulzar, Creative Director of Bradford City of Culture.

See [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events) to find out more and book your place.



**Oliver Coppard (Lab) is Mayor of South Yorkshire Combined Authority**

**Six years ago**, South Yorkshire's ability to shape its own future was limited.

While our local leaders and MPs have long been strong advocates for the region, the tools and powers needed to make real, place-based decisions were often out of reach.

Too many of the choices that affected our economy, our infrastructure and our communities were made far from the people they impacted most.

That's changing. The new English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and the Government's renewed focus on empowering mayors reflect a growing recognition that local leadership is key to national renewal, including more funding flexibilities through the integrated settlement.

But devolution isn't just about shifting power from Whitehall to mayors, it's about giving communities more agency over the decisions that shape their lives.

It's about trusting local people to know what's best for their places and giving them the tools to act on that knowledge.

South Yorkshire is no longer just a line on a Treasury spreadsheet or a footnote in a national strategy. We're becoming a key partner in shaping the future of the UK economy – bringing local insight, ambition and accountability to the table.

We're not there yet, but we're on the right path, and we're walking it alongside other regions across the North and beyond.

From bringing our trams back under public control to launching the Beds for Babies scheme – which has supported nearly 2,000 children, so that every child aged five and under has a safe place to sleep – we're showing what devolution can do when it's rooted in the lived experiences, hopes and fears of our communities.

We've secured £1.5 billion in public transport funding for new buses and trams, launched the South Yorkshire Music Hub,



# Taking our future into our own hands

opened new junior parkruns, supported people back into work, and brought health closer to communities through Health on the High Street.

These aren't just policies; they're proof that change is happening and making a difference to the lives of our communities.

In May 2023, I took on responsibility for policing and crime in South Yorkshire – an important step that means we can now connect the dots between community safety, economic development, skills and transport.

It's also why I stepped up to be the first mayor in the country to chair our region's integrated care partnership (ICP).

In complex systems like health and care, the convening power of mayors is critical. We can bring partners together, cut through bureaucracy, and focus on what really matters: better outcomes for people.

But it's never just about the mayor. Our mayoral combined authority (MCA) is a partnership. Our local authorities aren't just stakeholders; collectively we are the combined authority.

I've always said that strong MCAs rely on strong councils, which is why I've consistently backed a fair local government finance settlement. We work together, we back each other, and we build on each other's strengths.

To those developing their own MCA proposals: be bold, but stay grounded.

Devolution isn't about power for power's sake, it's about delivering real, meaningful change in our communities. It's about reducing competition between places, convening partners, and taking tough decisions when needed.

Together – as mayors and MCAs – we have the chance, and the responsibility, to work closely with our communities and bring opportunity, growth and a shared sense of agency to every corner of the country. ●

**i** To find out more about the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, see [www.southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/](http://www.southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/)

## GROUP LEADERS



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

## Transforming health and wellbeing

Moving power out of Westminster and back into our communities was a key manifesto pledge of this Labour Government, and the NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England does just that.

Our NHS is full of dedicated staff, working hard to provide the best care for our residents. However, persistent hollowing out and a lack of ambition from the previous government has resulted in people being stuck on waiting lists for years, causing huge suffering to families, a surge in unemployment and strain on other services.

Positive steps have been taken, delivering four million extra appointments, recruiting 1,500 GPs and investing in upgrades to hospitals – but there is so much more to do.

Transforming the health and wellbeing of our nation – one of the sickest populations in Western Europe – won't be done in hospitals.

It will be done in communities, on the back of new partnerships between our health and local public services and, crucially, by creating agency and empowerment for residents.

We know that social determinants of ill health account for 80 per cent of the challenge.

That's why forward-looking local councils such as mine have been leading the charge on prevention and the integration of local community care for years now.

Three shifts are at the heart of the NHS plan, with a key role for local government in each.

The first, from hospital to community,

## “Social determinants of ill health account for 80 per cent of the challenge”

acknowledges the crucial role that local healthcare providers play.

The second, from analogue to digital, is familiar to many councils across the country that have embarked on digital transformation journeys to make services more accessible and efficient.

The third is from sickness to prevention – as I've touched on, we have been championing the importance of preventative care in building healthy communities for decades.

The Government can rely on Labour Local Government to engage with the plan and continue to play their part for their residents.

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

## Conference catchups



Councillor Louise Gittins is Chair of the LGA

The LGA's annual conference is always a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old political friends, make new ones, and grow our support and information networks to help in our work as councillors.

So, spending time with my fellow enthusiasts for local government – of all political colours and none – in Liverpool, in my native North West, has been one of the highlights of my year.

But annual conference is also a place where the LGA does vital external engagement, on behalf of our member councils, with our counterparts in the

UK's other nations and with national politicians. For example, it was my great pleasure to meet colleagues from the Welsh LGA, the Northern Ireland LGA and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities at our conference in early July (pictured).

We discussed the many issues we have in common – including funding, multi-year settlements, tackling violence against women and girls, and abuse and intimidation of councillors – and how we can work collectively with all UK governments to make a difference on behalf of all our communities.

A plethora of UK Government ministers spoke publicly at conference's plenaries and workshops, and their attendance in Liverpool allowed us to have one-to-one catchups on key issues for councils.

These included: the practical delivery of the NHS 10-year plan; the local impact of cuts to integrated care boards; the



© LGA/Joe Outterside

Casey review into adult social care; reform of support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities; and net zero.

These and many other conversations remain ongoing all the time at the LGA, sometimes behind closed doors. But they help us make a difference.

They ensure the LGA remains a trusted, credible and authoritative voice, allowing us to lobby and influence on behalf of our members and our shared aim of strengthening local government so our communities thrive.



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

## Road tax should be going to councils

National Highways maintains just 2 per cent of England's roads, while our local authority highway departments maintain more than 90 per cent.

So why is it that National Highways retains 100 per cent of road tax that is collected by government?

Motorists dread the V11 reminder letter from the DVLA landing on their doorsteps every six months or each year.

After paying DVLA's demand, motorists rightfully question what they get in return. Is it any wonder that in opinion polling the condition of our roads is becoming an ever-increasing concern among voters?

## "Not a single penny of road tax goes to maintenance of local roads"

What most motorists probably don't realise is that not a single penny of that road tax goes to their local authority for the maintenance of roads.

The LGA rightfully identified in its Spending Review submission the £16.3 billion backlog in road maintenance currently facing the sector, and that 35 per cent of its budgets could be saved if all potholes could be fixed as part of a planned programme.

Giving councils certainty on highways funding is, in part, the answer.

According to an answer in a recent Parliamentary Written Question, the Treasury received £7.8 billion in road tax in 2023/24.

If local authorities were able to retain just a small proportion of that each year, our highway departments could do so much more on road resurfacing, fixing our streets and sorting out potholes.



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

## SEND system needs cross-party reform

Change is sorely needed for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

But this reform must be honest, ambitious, and have children at its heart. It cannot see children's rights rolled back.

Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey and Education Spokesperson Munira Wilson have received my full support for the way they challenged Keir Starmer to tackle the crisis in SEND.

In their joint letter, they set out five principles for long-overdue SEND reform, and I welcome their offer of working on a cross-party basis to address the issue.

The principles include maintaining the right to SEND assessments for children, boosting special school capacity, improving early identification and cutting waiting lists.

The Liberal Democrats are also calling for more support for local authorities to provide SEND services and better training for school staff.

## "SEND reform must be honest, ambitious and have children at its heart"

For too long, a broken system has forced children and families to fight long battles to get the support they need. Outcomes for those children haven't improved, while council deficits have ballooned, leaving many on the brink.

Many parents are deeply worried that the forthcoming reforms will leave their children worse off, with an erosion of the rights that underpin the support they need.

The lack of clarity from government is leading to worry and confusion. Families are being deprived of the certainty they need to live their lives.

## GROUP LEADERS



Councillor Hannah Dalton is Leader of the LGA's Independent Group

## Championing public services

It is an honour to be writing my first magazine article (no pun intended!) as the new LGA Independent Group Leader – and following the LGA's annual conference in Liverpool, I want to reiterate my commitments as the new group leader.

I want to actively engage all members across our group because I believe that our strength lies in the diversity of perspectives, experiences and ideas that we have.

In an era when local government is facing unprecedented challenges, it is more important than ever that we are heard loud and clear across the LGA and in Westminster.

## "We will continue to push for policies that empower local authorities"

My first priorities will be to establish an Independent Group Executive that is effective and accountable to you, and to refresh and reinvigorate our representation on the LGA's new policy committees.

If you are interested in sitting on either, please complete and return the expression of interest form, which you have received by email, before 31 July.

Finally, I am committed to building on our track record of shaping national government policy.

Against local government reorganisation, we will continue to push for policies that empower local authorities, champion public services and ensure that local communities are not left behind.

We are an amazing group, full of talent and ambition, and I look forward to working with you all to shape the future of our group and local government. ●

# Early support to get ahead of homelessness

Like many councils across the UK, Chelmsford City Council faces rising homelessness and not enough social and affordable housing.

Additionally, the cost of each home for temporary accommodation has been rising, creating huge financial pressures.

Chelmsford's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focuses on what we can control: early intervention, collaborative working and honest public messaging.

Our 2024 consultation to inform the strategy revealed that perception is far from the truth. When most picture a homeless person, they think of a single man sleeping rough. In fact, families with children make up two-thirds of our caseload. Top factors contributing to homelessness are eviction by friends and family, domestic abuse, and no-fault evictions by private landlords. Our officers frequently advise young people who have little idea of how few social homes are available.



**Councillor Stephen Robinson (Lib Dem) is Leader of Chelmsford City Council**

Using the survey results as a foundation, we developed an upcoming public campaign. A series of news-site articles and Instagram posts encourage residents to see homelessness not only as rough sleeping, but as complex and preventable.

Rather than judging or waiting until crisis strikes, we are asking people to come to us as soon as they are threatened with homelessness.

While working to create more social homes, we can often help people stay in their homes, when safe and appropriate, through family mediation, landlord engagement and even grants.



No communications campaign can fix a housing shortage – but if we can help more people to avoid the upheaval of emergency accommodation, this campaign will be worthwhile.

Councils must be brave enough to speak clearly and compassionately about what support we can reasonably offer and why early contact matters.

In the current climate, prevention is sometimes the most practical and humane tool we have. ●

# Improving early years education



**Councillor Victoria Cusworth (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council**

When I first became a cabinet member, I attended the LGA's enhanced children's services training at Warwick and learned just how important the early years are.

I knew we had a childcare sufficiency plan, and was aware that our public health team had the 'Best start for life' initiative and was prioritising the first 1,001 days.

I was keen that we develop a standalone education and childcare strategy that



furthered our improvement journey in early years, as we had too many children in years 10 and 11 who were disengaged with education because their needs weren't met early enough in school.

We reviewed existing published early years and childcare strategies, and found that Essex County Council had produced a document in a format and style that we liked.

Although it was broader than early education and childcare, its priorities aligned with ours, and using this as the basis for our strategy document saved a significant amount of time.

Consulting with the sector at an early stage, articulating the work as it developed and sharing the completed strategy widely was really useful for confirming our priorities, as well as for increasing awareness of and support for them.

Rotherham's strategy focuses on providing high-quality early childhood education and care, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all children, regardless of their background.

Key components include investing in well-trained educators, fostering strong partnerships with parents and the community, and integrating health and social services to support holistic child development.

Additionally, the strategy emphasises the importance of play-based learning and early literacy and numeracy skills, while also addressing the social and emotional wellbeing of children.

By prioritising these elements, Rotherham can lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success for its youngest residents. ●

# Change in prospect



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

**The Reform UK** surge in local government continues.

The party gained 10 additional seats in June-July, from a total of 32 contests, with the Conservatives, Labour and even Independents on the receiving end. It was second in 17 others.

For both Labour and the Conservatives, their share of the vote – compared with the relevant previous May elections – dropped almost everywhere, sometimes quite dramatically.

In the Stocksbridge and Upper Don ward in Sheffield, for example, those two parties each experienced a fall of more than 20 percentage points as electors variously opted instead for Reform or the Liberal Democrats.

But, as always, statistics may not tell the whole story.

There was indeed a near 60 percentage point fall in the Labour vote in the Eastfield division of North Yorkshire between the 2022 all-out elections and June's by-election. However, the Labour councillor elected in 2022 resigned the whip a year later and easily won a subsequent by-election as an Independent, with Labour limping into third place with 16 per cent of the vote.

So, Labour's initial collapse here can be dated back two years, though there can be no



denying that Reform hoovered up this time.

However, Nigel Farage's party needs perhaps to be aware of so-called buyer's remorse, as Reform did lose two seats that it had won in May. In Benfieldside, County Durham, the elected councillor turned out to be an employee of the council and was therefore automatically disqualified. The Liberal Democrats were the grateful beneficiaries among voters asked to go to the polls again rather unnecessarily.

In the Newark West division of Nottinghamshire, the Reform councillor resigned just a week after the election citing personal circumstances.

The party's vote held up surprisingly well on a reduced turnout, but the Conservatives prevailed by eight votes to register just their second gain since May.

It has long been thought that London is another country in electoral terms and two recent results bear that out.

The Conservatives easily retained their Fulham Town seat in Hammersmith & Fulham, with Labour falling back and Reform polling its lowest share of the vote in any by-election it has contested since 1 May.

In the Shooters Hill ward in Greenwich, Labour's vote more than halved, enabling the Greens to leap to victory from a distant second place.

Those outcomes may be indicative of the kind of change in prospect at next year's London borough elections, when Labour defends its 2022 high-water mark, but elsewhere in England Reform will be in the spotlight.

The elections held over from May 2025 until 2026 in counties such as Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk (witness the Reform win in the Tower division) could see more long-standing Conservative administrations toppled, while Reform's direct threat to Labour is also more serious than it was this year. ●

Only results where a ward changed hands are shown here. For more information on all recent by-elections, please visit [lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections](https://www.lgafirst.co.uk/local-by-elections)

## By-election results

### Basildon, Wickford Park

REF GAIN FROM CON  
3.6% over Con | Turnout 25.3%

### Bassetlaw, Ranskill

REF GAIN FROM CON  
37.0% over Lab | Turnout 30.5%

### Chorley, Buckshaw and Whittle

CON GAIN FROM LAB  
2.8% over Ref | Turnout 22.4%

### Durham, Benfieldside

LIB DEM GAIN FROM REF  
0.8% over Lab | Turnout 37.0%

### Gedling, Calverton

IND GAIN FROM CON  
48.3% over Ref | Turnout 29.6%

### Greenwich, Shooters Hill

GREEN GAIN FROM LAB  
4.5% over Lab | Turnout 32.6%

### Hartlepool, Throston

REF GAIN FROM LAB  
9.8% over Lab | Turnout 20.4%

### North Tyneside, Killingworth

REF GAIN FROM LAB  
6.6% over Ref | Turnout 30.3%

### North Yorkshire, Eastfield

REF GAIN FROM LAB  
48.6% over Lab | Turnout 16.6%

### Nottinghamshire, Newark West

CON GAIN FROM REF  
0.4% over Ref | Turnout 22.0%

### Rossendale, Whitworth

REF GAIN FROM COMMUNITY FIRST  
18.4% over Con | Turnout 26.2%

### Rotherham, Keppel

REF GAIN FROM LAB  
12.5% over Ind | Turnout 27.3%

### Sheffield, Stocksbridge and Upper Don

REF GAIN FROM LAB  
3.6% over Lib Dem | Turnout 36.8%

### Spelthorne, Ashford Town

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
4.1% over Ref | Turnout 32.6%

### Suffolk, Tower

REF GAIN FROM CON  
3.8% over Green | Turnout 27.2%

### Tewkesbury, Northway

REF GAIN FROM IND  
10.5% over Lib Dem | Turnout 25.3%

# Are officers in your council up for the LG Challenge?

Now recruiting its 14<sup>th</sup> cohort, the LGA is looking for **10 contestants** to participate in the Local Government Challenge 2026, in which a diverse cohort of local government officers tackle real-life challenges, hosted by five councils around the country.

Nominate an officer in your council to apply.

**The application deadline is 12pm on Monday 22 September.**

**Problem solvers who are passionate about delivering the best for the residents they serve, LG Challenge contestants will come up with innovative solutions to the challenges faced by local government. With the £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart Scholarship awarded to the winner, contestants have an opportunity to make a real and long-lasting impact in their area.**

Find out more and watch last year's challenge films:

[local.gov.uk/lg-challenge](https://local.gov.uk/lg-challenge)

[lgchallenge@local.gov.uk](mailto:lgchallenge@local.gov.uk)

