

# King's Speech (7 November 2023): On-the-Day Briefing

His Majesty The King today (7 November 2023) set out the Government's agenda for the next Parliamentary session. This briefing details the new Bills of relevance to local government and outlines our local government priorities.

**07 November 2023**

## Introduction

On Tuesday 7 November, during the State Opening of Parliament, His Majesty The King opened the 2023-24 Parliamentary session, [setting out the Government's legislative plan ahead of the next general election](#), which must take place by January 2025.

The speech - which was divided under three headers — “strengthening society,” “growing the economy” and “keeping people safe” — contained many measures that will be of relevance to councils and this paper provides details on the key proposals affecting local government and the LGA's initial response to them. The speech can be [found on the Government's website](#). You can also read about our work engaging with Parliament in our [LGA in Parliament 2022/23 report](#).

The LGA has circulated a [number of media statements](#) responding to today's announcements.

## Key messages

- **Automated Vehicles:** autonomous vehicles can dramatically improve people's quality of life especially in areas where bus services struggle to support them. Councils are already leading the way in digitalising their Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to manage their streets more effectively and efficiently while preparing the ground for autonomous vehicles – new changes need to end an outdated and expensive requirement for TROs to be published in local newspapers.
- **Smoking and vaping:** smoking remains one of the leading causes of preventable ill health, disability, and death in England. We believe this is a progressive piece of legislation that would undoubtedly impact on smoking prevalence, and ultimately reduce rates of smoking-related disease. It is essential that councils receive multi-year public health grant settlements and more long-term certainty around public health funding for all councils.
- **Renters reform:** The Renters (Reform) Bill, which was carried over from the previous parliament, will help to achieve better standards in the private rented sector by increasing the rights of tenants and enabling them to better hold landlords to account. The measures will also increase councils' oversight of and ability to enforce against the small minority of landlords guilty of criminal behaviour. The removal of 'no fault' evictions, also known as Section 21 notices which allow landlords to evict tenants without providing any explicit reason, is a significant step towards tackling our national homelessness crisis. We remain concerned by the delay to its implementation as a result of backlogs in the court system, and the Government should consider publishing the evidence base for the delay and bring forward the abolition of Section 21 at pace. We will continue to work with government to ensure that councils have the right powers, skills, capacity and resources to undertake effective enforcement activity associated with the Bill.

- Football governance: the announcement of a Football Governance Bill to introduce an independent regulator for professional clubs in the English football pyramid (IREF). Councils are already working in partnership with football clubs to protect their heritage and assets. Long-term sustainable funding for local government is needed to enable councils to support local sports clubs and sporting facilities and help get the nation moving.
- Terrorism: councils want to work with government to protect local places from attacks. We are pleased the Government has acted on the LGA's concerns around ensuring the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill is proportional and not unduly burdensome on local communities. It is good there will be further consultation on balancing this with keeping people safe.

## Legislation:

For further information on any of these Bills, please contact the [LGA public affairs team](#).

### **Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill**

- *Legislation will be introduced to strengthen the United Kingdom's energy security and reduce reliance on volatile international energy markets and hostile foreign regimes. This Bill will support the future licensing of new oil and gas fields, helping the country transition to net zero by 2050 without adding undue burdens on households.*
- *The Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill will make the UK more energy independent by increasing investor and industry confidence with regular annual oil and gas licensing. The Bill's emissions tests will ensure that future licensing supports the transition to net zero.*
- *The Bill will enhance the UK's energy security and reduce dependence on higher emission imports from overseas, including from countries like Russia - protecting the domestic oil and gas industry that supports more than 200,000 jobs as we grow the UK economy and realise our net zero target in a pragmatic, proportionate and realistic way.*
- *The UK has cut emissions further and faster than any other major economy and is proud to be a world leader in reducing emissions, but we can and must go further. This is why we have one of the world's most ambitious 2030 emissions targets and why the Government is taking the necessary long-term decisions to put us firmly on track to deliver net zero in 2050.*

### **LGA view**

- Government's specific commitment to continue working to secure record amounts of investment in renewable energy sources is important. Plans to reform grid connections and improve the energy efficiency of homes whilst boosting investments in clean technologies will grow the economy and create jobs.
- Net zero can only be achieved with central government working with local government and with business to establish a deliverable plan for achieving net zero in an affordable and inclusive way. The plan needs to include multi-year place-based funding allocations stimulating the market to respond on skills, workforce, and materials supply chains. [Local Climate Action would achieve net zero by 2050 while saving taxpayers around £140 billion](#) when compared to national approaches and returning an additional £400 billion in wider co-benefits.

## **Automated Vehicles Bill**

- *The Automated Vehicles Bill is intended to be one of the world's most comprehensive legal frameworks for self-driving vehicles. It will set a rigorous safety framework for self-driving vehicles, with safety at its core. It will:*
  - *Set the threshold for self-driving vehicles in law*
  - *Hold companies firmly accountable once vehicles are on roads*
  - *Introduce processes to investigate and learn from incidents*
  - *Require local authorities to send the legal orders they make (for example, to set speed limits, close roads and designate parking bays) to a central publication platform*
  - *Create new organisations responsible for self-driving and protect users from being unfairly held accountable.*

## **LGA view**

- [Autonomous Vehicles have potential to dramatically improve people's quality of life](#) especially in areas where bus services struggle to support them. It is important that the law keeps up with new technology and trends in the way we travel.
- Councils will continue to prioritise safety and public health, regardless of mode of travel, alongside plans to keep roads congestion free, buses moving and make walking and cycling the first choice for short journeys to reduce carbon emissions and improve health and wellbeing.
- Councils are already leading the way in digitalising their Traffic Regulation Orders to manage their streets more effectively and efficiently while preparing the ground for autonomous vehicles. It is important that these changes end a long overdue, outdated and expensive requirement for TROs, and other council notices, to be published in local newspapers.
- Government also needs to act to help pedestrians and road users today by regulating the estimated 750,000 private e-scooters already on our roads, the majority of which are used illegally and by banning pavement parking, which would make footpaths accessible to all parts of society.

## **Tobacco and Vapes Bill**

- *The Bill will create the first smokefree generation so children born on or after 1 January 2009 (turning 14 this year or younger) will never be able to be legally sold cigarettes. This will mean effectively raising the age of sale by one year each year for this generation, to prevent them and future generations from ever taking up smoking in the first place.*
- *The Government is looking at new regulations to reduce the appeal and availability of vapes to children – while ensuring that vapes remain available for adult smokers to quit. Proposals include restricting the flavours and descriptions of vapes so they are no longer targeted at children; regulating point of sale displays so that vapes are kept out of sight of children; regulating vape packaging and product presentation, ensuring that neither are targeted to children and closing loopholes in the law which allow children to get free samples and buy non-nicotine vapes.*
- *The Bill will strengthen enforcement activity with new powers to fine - on the spot - rogue retailers who sell tobacco products or vapes to people underage.*

- *The Government is also considering measures to restrict the sale and supply of disposable vapes (including considering prohibiting their sale) and action on the affordability of vapes, including exploring a new duty on vapes.*

#### **LGA view**

- Smoking remains one of the leading causes of preventable ill health, disability, and death in England. We believe this is a [progressive piece of legislation that would undoubtedly impact on population level smoking prevalence](#), and ultimately reduce rates of smoking-related disease.
- Raising the legal age for tobacco purchase has been shown to reduce the likelihood of young people starting to smoke. To make such a policy effective, we support strict enforcement measures and tough penalties for selling tobacco and e-cigarettes to those underaged.
- To help Trading Standards teams in the long term, the LGA continues to call on the Government to boost the future pipeline of qualified trading standards officers through a dedicated apprenticeship fund, investing in regional support networks, and enabling councils to recover more of the costs of running regulatory services. It is also essential that councils receive multi-year public health grant settlements and more long-term certainty around public health funding for all councils.
- With over 260 million disposable vapes thrown away each year, single use vapes blight our streets as litter, are a hazard in our bin lorries, and are expensive and difficult to deal with in our recycling centres. Their colours, flavours and advertising are appealing to children and their long-term health impacts are unknown. Young people who have never smoked should also be discouraged from using vapes.
- We believe a ban on disposable vapes is the next crucial step toward protecting our planet and our children.

#### **Leasehold and Freehold Bill**

- *The Bill will improve home ownership for leaseholders in England and Wales, by making it cheaper and easier for more leaseholders to extend their lease, buy their freehold, and take over management of their building.*
- *The Bill will introduce the following measures:*
  - *Make it cheaper and easier for existing leaseholders in houses and flats to extend their lease or buy their freehold - so that leaseholders pay less to gain security over the future of their home.*
  - *Increase the standard lease extension term from 90 years to 990 years for both houses and flats, with ground rent reduced to £0.*
  - *Remove the requirement for a new leaseholder to have owned their house or flat for two years before they can benefit from the above changes.*
  - *Increase the 25 per cent 'non-residential' limit preventing leaseholders in buildings with a mixture of homes and other uses such as shops and offices, from buying their freehold or taking over management of their buildings – to allow leaseholders in buildings with up to 50 per cent non-residential floorspace to buy their freehold or take over its management.*
  - *Make buying or selling a leasehold property quicker and easier by setting a maximum time and fee for the provision of information required to make a sale (such as building insurance or financial records) to a leaseholder by their freeholder.*

- *A requirement for transparency over leaseholders' service charges – so all leaseholders receive better transparency over the costs they are being charged by their freeholder or managing agent in a standardised comparable format.*
- *Replace buildings insurance commissions for managing agents, landlords and freeholders with transparent administration fees.*
- *Extend access to “redress” schemes for leaseholders to challenge poor practice. There will be a requirement for more freeholders to belong to a redress scheme.*
- *The presumption for leaseholders to pay their freeholders' legal costs when challenging poor practice will be scrapped.*
- *Freehold homeowners on private and mixed tenure estates will be granted the same rights of redress as leaseholders – by extending equivalent rights to transparency over their estate charges, access to support via redress schemes, and to challenge the charges they pay by taking a case to a Tribunal.*
- *Protect leaseholders by extending measures in the Building Safety Act 2022 to ensure freeholders and developers are unable to escape their liabilities to fund building remediation work.*
- *A ban on the creation of new leasehold houses so that - other than in exceptional circumstances - every new house in England and Wales will be freehold from the outset.*

## **LGA view**

- We support the broad intention of the Bill to make leasehold ownership fairer and more affordable for leaseholders, as well as the proposal to ban the creation of new leasehold houses.
- We will work with government and councils to understand and address any unintended consequences of the measures on councils in their role as registered providers of social housing.
- We welcome the proposal to require more freeholders to belong to a redress scheme, so that leaseholders have a clear route for challenging poor or illegal practice. We also support the proposal for freehold homeowners on private and mixed tenure estates to be granted the same rights of redress as leaseholders. It will be vital that the redress scheme has the appropriate set of powers and resources to effectively and efficiently tackle poor-performance and prevent reoccurrence of issues.
- It will be vital that any new requirements on councils to ensure compliance with the legislation is fully funded through new burdens funding.
- The LGA has long argued that [leaseholders should not have to pay the costs of making their homes safe](#) and has supported the provisions in the Building Safety Act 2022 designed to protect leaseholders. Measure to extend the protections for leaseholders are a positive step.

## **Renters (Reform) Bill – carried over**

- *The Renters Reform Bill [published](#) in May 2023 with an accompanying briefing [paper](#) aims to provide greater security and certainty of quality accommodation for renters,*

while helping landlords get their property back swiftly when needed.

- *The Bill will introduce the following measures:*
  - *Abolition of Section 21 'no fault evictions'. This will not commence until stronger possession grounds and a new court process is in place.*
  - *Strengthened landlord grounds for possession, adding new mandatory grounds for possession; for example, if landlords wish to sell property or for repeated serious rent arrears, as well as expanding grounds for when close family members wish to move in. If a tenant breaches their tenancy agreement or damages the property, landlords will be able to evict them in as little as two weeks.*
  - *Stronger powers to evict anti-social tenants. The Bill will seek to halve the delay between a landlord serving notice for anti-social behaviour and eviction, with landlords able to make a claim in the court immediately. The criteria for disruptive and harmful activities that can lead to eviction will be broadened.*
  - *Blanket bans on pets will be ended. Tenants will have the right to request a pet, which landlords cannot unreasonably refuse. Landlords' properties will be protected by allowing them to require insurance to cover potential damage from pets.*
  - *Creation of a digital Private Rented Property Portal to bring together key information for landlords, tenants, and councils. Landlords will quickly be able to understand their obligations and demonstrate compliance. Councils will be able to use the Portal to target enforcement where it is needed. Tenants will be able to access helpful information when entering tenancies.*
  - *Support for quicker, cheaper resolution when there are disputes - preventing them escalating to costly court proceedings – with a new Private Rented Sector Ombudsman that will provide fair, impartial and binding resolution, reducing the need to go to court.*
  - *Blanket bans on renting to tenants in receipt of benefits or with children will be made illegal, with landlords retaining the final say on who they rent to.*
  - *Protection of the student rental market in recognition that this market is largely cyclical, and landlords must be able to guarantee possession each year for a new set of tenants. A new ground for possession will be introduced to facilitate this.*
- *Alongside the Bill the Government is also taking forward wider measures to support landlords:*
  - *Speeding up the courts process so landlords can quickly regain possession of their property if a tenant refuses to move out. This work includes an initial commitment of £1.2 million to begin designing a new digital system for possessions.*
  - *Proposals to require landlords to meet Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C from 2025 in their private rented properties will be scrapped.*

#### **LGA view**

- This Bill will help to achieve better standards in the private rented sector through increasing the rights of tenants and enabling them to better hold landlords to account. It will also increase councils' oversight of and ability to enforce against the small minority of landlords guilty of criminal behaviour.
- The removal of 'no fault' evictions is a significant step towards tackling our national

homelessness crisis, but the proposed delay to implementation, while the Government addresses court backlogs is very concerning. The Government should urgently publish the evidence base for the delay and bring forward the abolition of 'no fault' evictions, also known as Section 21 notices which allow landlords to evict tenants without providing any explicit reason, at pace.

- We also support measures that will enable councils to keep the proceeds of financial penalties to reinvest in enforcement activity. However, this funding won't cover the costs of the new duties in the Bill or the scale of the proactive work that is needed to improve standards for tenants.
- We will continue to work with government to ensure that councils have the right powers, skills, capacity and resources to undertake effective enforcement activity. This includes removing the requirement for Secretary of State approval for larger selective licensing schemes.
- The LGA issued a [briefing for the committee stage of the Bill](#).

### **Football Governance Bill**

- *“Legislation will be brought forward to safeguard the future of football clubs for the benefit of communities and fans.”*
- *The Bill will extend to England and Wales. It will strengthen the governance and financial resilience of football clubs to protect the national game and clubs' link with communities and fans. It will do this by;*
  - *Establishing a new independent regulator for English football clubs to address issues of financial sustainability and ensure fans' voices are listened to.*
  - *Creating a new, strengthened owners' and directors' tests to make sure a club's custodians are suitable.*
  - *Setting a minimum standard of fan engagement, which clubs will need to meet, and requiring the support of a majority of fans for any changes to the club's badge, name, home shirt colours.*
  - *Requiring clubs to seek the Regulator's approval for any sale or relocation of the stadium and demonstrate how they have consulted their fans as part of this.*
  - *Preventing clubs from joining breakaway or unlicensed leagues.*
  - *Intervening as a last resort to ensure financial sustainability through the redistribution of broadcast revenue.*
  - *Establishing a compulsory 'Football Club Corporate Governance Code'.*

### **LGA view**

- It is positive to see a new bill to introduce an independent regulator for professional clubs in the English football pyramid (IREF).
- Local football clubs are community assets that play an important social, civic [and cultural role in local communities](#). Many councils are already working in partnership with their local football club to protect their heritage and assets and are partnering with them to support more people to be active through football. This is resulting in many clubs being used as community hubs to deliver health and wellbeing classes and services especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Long-term sustainable funding for local government, including for sporting facilities is needed](#) to enable councils to help get the nation moving and to expand and build

upon its vital work with local sports clubs.

- The Bill is an important opportunity for the Government to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in clubs and parity for women's football. Doing so could help contribute to the Government's specific targets to improve the activity levels of women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, disabled people and individuals from lower socio-economic groups which are significantly lower following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We call on football authorities and the Government to urgently put measures in place to better protect the welfare of players exiting the game particularly for younger players which for many can result in severe mental health issues or involvement in crime. This would help to improve individuals' life chances as well as reducing the burden on the public purse.

### **Pedicabs (London) Bill**

- *The Bill will enable Transport for London (TfL) to regulate London's pedicabs and protect passengers by conferring powers on TfL to bring forward a licensing regime for pedicabs, in a similar way to local authorities throughout the rest of England and Wales. Enforcement action against those operating without a licence or outside their licence conditions, including civil sanctions and criminal offences, will be enabled.*
- *The Bill will also provide TfL with the ability to introduce fare control to combat overcharging on pedicab services and protect consumers. TfL will be allowed to set standards for operators, drivers and their vehicles to improve the safety of pedicabs, as well as introducing insurance requirements and ensuring vehicles are road worthy.*
- *TfL will be given powers to take steps to improve congestion and tackle issues such as highways obstruction. TfL will be able to restrict the presence of pedicabs in certain areas, at certain times. This will help improve road safety and traffic-related issues in central London.*
- *Pedicab drivers will undergo criminal record and right to work checks before being allowed to carry passengers in the same way that drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) must do, allowing passengers to use pedicabs with confidence.*

### **LGA view**

- We welcome regulating pedicabs and improving the safety of passengers. A similar Bill has also [previously had the support of many councils in London](#).
- Councils play an important role, alongside police and other partners, in protecting their communities and ensuring that they are safe places to live. We would urge TfL, as the named licensing authority in the Bill, to consult with the relevant London boroughs to ensure that the work already being done by councils to tackle pedicab-related anti-social behaviour and safety concerns is taken into consideration when deciding the regulatory framework.
- It is also crucial that this new licensing framework is in line with the Department for Transport's taxi and PHV statutory standards, which seek to ensure that licensing authorities have robust safeguarding processes in place to protect vulnerable passengers. We also believe, when enacted, a pedicab licensing regime should fall within the scope of the National Register of Licence Revocations, Refusals and Suspensions (NR3S) database, as its use is mandated in other areas of taxi/PHV licensing.
- The LGA has consistently called for urgent reform to the outdated legislation that governs taxi and PHV licensing, and the provisions in the Automated Vehicles Bill



make the need for reform even more pressing. We continue to urge the Department for Transport to bring forward a comprehensive Taxi and PHV Licensing Reform Bill to replace the current outdated legislation and make the licensing system for taxis and PHVs fit for the 21st century.

### **Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill – carried over**

- *The Bill seeks to remove the possibility for public bodies, including councils, to campaign against, boycott, seek divestment from, or sanction a particular territory internationally, unless endorsed by the Government's own foreign policy.*
- *The Bill repeals the long-standing restriction set out in the Local Government Act 1988 which prevents local authorities from taking territory of origin into account in procurement decisions.*
- *Instead, the Bill introduces a new restriction: "The decision-maker must not have regard to a territorial consideration in a way that would cause a reasonable observer of the decision-making process to conclude that the decision was influenced by political or moral disapproval of foreign state conduct."*
- *The Bill bans making statements in support of boycotts and prohibits public bodies from making statements that clearly indicate that they would engage in boycotts if it were legal to do so.*
- *The Bill enables restrictions imposed by the Bill to be enforceable via judicial review and restricts the court to only accept cases where the applicant "has sufficient interest in the subject matter of the proposed application". The Bill goes on to specify that such an applicant is someone "affected by the decision in question."*
- *The Local Government Pension Scheme is the only UK pension scheme affected by the provisions of the Bill.*

### **LGA View**

- Awarding public contracts based on non-commercial considerations, such as the territory of the supplier or supplies has for many years not been [permitted](#) under Section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988.
- We are concerned that this Bill could stifle appropriate and proper discussion at pension committee meetings about concerns relating to investments' risk factors. Geopolitical and territorial factors are relevant to the risk of making, or retaining, certain investments.
- If a member of a pensions committee says that they, as an individual, would support a boycott, then under the new legislation publishing this in minutes could constitute an offence. Where the individual councillor's view is not supported by the committee collectively, then it shouldn't be a breach of the law for them to express their views.
- The LGA will be seeking clarifications and amendments to protect local authorities from uncertainty, and at worst, vexatious legal actions being brought simultaneously with potential enforcement action from the proper regulator.
- Usually, judicial review is a last resort, but as currently drafted it could potentially be the first resort that an individual could use to complain about a decision or statement of a local authority. This could put courts and judges in the difficult position of having to establish whether there has been a potential breach of the law where there may have been no investigation into the facts of the case by the proper regulator.

- A lack of clarity around what constitutes “sufficient interest” for an applicant to make a complaint exacerbates the problem.

### **The Criminal Justice Bill**

- *The Bill will protect the most vulnerable by introducing a mandatory duty on those who work with children to report concerns relating to Child Sexual Abuse, doing more to expose this hidden crime.*
- *The Bill will tackle violence against women and girls by introducing a statutory aggravating factor at sentencing for offenders who murder their partner at the end of their relationship; criminalising the sharing of intimate images and expanding the offence of encouraging or assisting serious self-harm.*
- *The Bill will crack down on the crimes and anti-social behaviour that blight communities by increasing the maximum penalty for sale of dangerous weapons to under 18s.*
- *The Bill will crack down on the crimes and anti-social behaviour that blight communities by tackling persistent, nuisance, and organised begging.*

### **LGA view**

- We support the introduction of a duty on those who work with children to report concerns relating to child sexual abuse (CSA). However, if this is to be effective in protecting children, it is vital that the duty is introduced alongside a significant expansion in specialist support for victims and survivors of CSA, as both the Independent Inquiry into CSA and the Centre of Expertise on CSA have identified a significant shortfall in support and long waiting lists. Training for those working with children is also vital to ensure confidence in identifying and responding to abuse, while consideration must be given to ensure safe spaces for children to disclose abuse.
- Evidence from other jurisdictions suggests that introducing mandatory reporting can lead to a significant increase in both substantiated and unsubstantiated reports. The children’s social care system is already under significant strain, and must be appropriately resourced to cope with any increase, to ensure that all children receive the help they need as soon as they need it.
- [Councils work closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners](#) to reduce violence against women and girls. As well as addressing new forms of abuse and harassment the LGA believes there must be as much focus on prevention and early intervention to reduce the number of potential victims and offenders, and encourages the government to work with schools and academy chains to educate young people about these offences alongside ways of identifying and protecting against predatory behaviour.
- Local authorities are working hard alongside partners such as the police to make their communities safe and tackle anti-social behaviour. Measures to reduce the ability of young people to buy dangerous weapons are welcome. However, these measures will only work if councils have the resources to take robust enforcement action. Consideration urgently needs to be given to the cumulative impact of additional duties on councils’ regulatory services as well as measures to ensure regulatory services are appropriately funded for example through measures which allow cost recovery for enforcement action.
- [Begging is often the result of street homelessness which is linked to the shortage of affordable housing across this country](#), leaving those unable to afford a place to live with very few options. Local authorities and other agencies need to work together to

identify and provide support to people living on the streets. Some organised beggars are victims of modern slavery needing support, so we would welcome the targeting of the criminal gangs behind this. To eradicate begging and street homelessness, the focus should largely be on the wider context such as support into accommodation, prevention, multi-agency working and housing supply.

### **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill**

- *Known as Martyn's Law, the Bill will introduce a new duty to protect public premises from terrorism.*
- *The Bill will require certain venues to take proportionate steps according to capacity to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack and reduce harm.*

#### **LGA view**

- We broadly support the introduction of the legislation and further efforts to consider what more can be done to help protect local people and places from attacks. Local authorities take threats from terrorism extremely seriously and work hard alongside wider partners to keep their communities safe.
- We expect that councils will be impacted in a number of ways by the legislation. This will require substantial resourcing, and must consider the significant existing pressures on resources, capacity and expertise that councils already face. A New Burdens assessment to consider the financial impact on local government must be completed as soon as possible.
- We are pleased that the Government has listened to our concerns, shared by the Home Affairs Select Committee, about the potential impact of the legislation on local communities, community groups and small businesses. We therefore welcome the announcement of a further consultation to ensure requirements for standard tier premises (public premises with a capacity of 100–799 people) within scope are proportionate and not unduly burdensome. The legislation must not inhibit our freedoms to enjoy the places that are a critical and much-loved part of local life, nor threaten the viability of community events and sports. An appropriate balance must be sought that enables community facilities, groups and events to remain financially viable and continue to operate.
- Further clarity is required in a number of areas, including where the enforcement and regulation role will sit, the premises and events within scope and how the duty will operate in practice. This should also include a national programme of support and guidance as the detail is confirmed.
- There must also be sufficient lead in time for the implementation of the new duty, including a national communications campaign to raise awareness, to ensure that those within scope are alert to their responsibilities and which allows a reasonable period to prepare.

### **Victims and Prisoners Bill – carried over**

- *The Bill proposes that Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), health bodies and local authorities will be required to work together when commissioning support services for victims of domestic abuse, serious violence and sexual violence, to deliver a more joined-up support offer.*

#### **LGA view**

- We support the Government's ambition to improve the service and support that

victims receive, and hope that the Victims and Prisoners Bill and related non-legislative measures will help to improve victims' confidence to report crimes and seek justice, as well as to rebuild their lives.

- A [sustainably funded, locally-led approach](#), which provides areas with the flexibility and resources to identify local priorities and take action on them, will be the most effective way to improve collaboration and deliver on the priorities of the Bill. Alongside that, the Government should focus on preventing crimes occurring in the first place by investing in vital early intervention and prevention services, many of which are provided by local authorities.
- Further clarity is needed on how the enhanced role of the PCCs to review compliance with the Victims' Code will operate. We urge both PCCs and the Secretary of State to take a proportionate approach that minimises the burdens on youth offending teams and other local criminal justice bodies.

## White Papers, Green Papers, and policy measures

### Inflation

- *The Government will focus on increasing economic growth and safeguarding the health and security of the British people by continuing to take action to bring down inflation, to ease the cost of living for families and help businesses fund new jobs and investment.*

### **LGA view**

- Recent spikes in inflation, the National Living Wage and energy costs have placed substantial pressure on council finances. Local government received additional funding in 2023/24 and there is a commitment to a further uplift in 2024/25. Despite this, our analysis shows [councils face funding gaps of £2.4 billion in 2023/24 and £1.6 billion in 2024/25](#). These gaps relate solely to the funding needed to maintain services at their current levels.
- We are calling for the Government to ensure that all councils have sufficient funding to meet needs and balance their 2023/24 budgets, set balanced budgets for 2024/25 and develop medium-term financial strategies that are not characterised by substantial funding gaps. Government also needs to recognise that greater funding is needed to prevent the ongoing decline in local service provision.

### Mental Health

- *Record levels of investment are expanding and transforming mental health services to ensure more people can access the support they need.*
- *At least £2.3 billion of additional funding a year by March 2024 will be invested so that an extra two million people can get mental health support.*
- *Mental health support teams will continue to be rolled out in schools and colleges across the country so that 50 per cent of pupils are covered by 2025.*

### **LGA view**

- The LGA [supported the reform of the Mental Health Act](#), and we are disappointed that this is not in the King's Speech.
- We support investment into expanding and transforming mental health services to ensure more people can access the support they need. Investment must also include mental health support delivered by local authorities, as well as NHS services. This is particularly important as statutory local authority adult mental health services are funded from the social care budget.

- We welcome the continued roll out of mental health support teams in schools and colleges across the country so that 50 per cent of pupils are covered by 2025. We need to ensure that all children and young people have prompt access to mental health support that works for them.
- We urge the Government to ensure that the forthcoming major conditions strategy gives mental health services the consideration they so clearly need in order to give them parity with physical health services, and address the inequalities that exist for communities and individuals that were highlighted by the Mental Health Act Review.

### **NHS Workforce Plan**

- *The Government will work with NHS England to deliver its plans to cut waiting lists and transform the long-term NHS workforce, including delivering on the NHS workforce plan to train the doctors and nurses the country needs.*

### **LGA view**

- The NHS and adult social care workforce are interdependent. Training and recruiting additional doctors and nurses is important, but so too is ensuring that local health and care systems have sufficient social workers and domiciliary and residential care workers to support people who need help to live in their own homes or in their communities.
- The Government provided additional funding for adult social care in 2023/24, but it is likely this will do little more than allow councils to stand still given their ongoing cost and demand pressures. Budgeted spend on adult social care increased by £2.5 billion (12.8 per cent) in 2023/24. [Department of Health and Social Care \(DHSC\) data](#) shows that average fee rates for external home care increased by 9.6 per cent and supported living by 8.4 per cent from 2022/23 to 2023/24. A key driver is likely to be the 9.7 per cent increase in the National Living Wage in 2023/24.
- We note the Government's recommitment to cutting waiting lists in, and transforming the long-term workforce of, the NHS. Adult social care continues to play an important part in mitigating demand pressures on acute hospitals through effective discharge and preventative work to keep people out of hospital in the first place. However, adult social care faces its own significant waiting lists and has no comparable plan for its own workforce.
- Improving the pay, conditions and development opportunities of the care workforce is crucial for addressing long-standing recruitment and retention challenges for the benefit of people who draw on care and support, workers and our health service.
- [Clear priorities which must be included in a national workforce strategy for adult social care](#) are: staff recognition, value and reward; investment in training, qualification and support; career pathways and development; building and enhancing social justice, equality, diversity and inclusion in the workforce; effective workforce planning across the whole social care workforce; and expansion of the workforce in roles which are designed in coproduction with people who draw on care and support, and in roles which enable prevention, support the growth of innovative models of support.

### **Illegal Migration Act**

- *The Government will deliver on the Illegal Migration Act passed earlier this year and on international agreements, to stop dangerous and illegal Channel crossings and ensure it is the Government, not criminal gangs, who decides who comes to this*

country.

### **LGA view**

- Councils have a proud history of welcoming new arrivals, stepping forward at times of crisis to offer homes and support so families and individuals can build new lives in the UK. There is an urgent need for joint planning across central and local government in advance of implementation of the Act, based on realistic projections in terms of arrival numbers and a shared understanding of the [potential impacts on councils of the Act](#).
- This needs to include how best to increase capacity to accommodate, support and ensure long-term planning for unaccompanied children, clarifying the interface with the Children Act 1989 and other existing legislation.
- As required by the Act, the Home Office currently is consulting with councils on a cap on safe and legal routes to the UK, with the LGA outlining some of the [challenges and complexities that might impact on local responses](#).
- We are keen to continue discussions on the commitment to a place-based approach to asylum and resettlement as outlined as part of the current consultation on the cap. This needs to take account of the cumulative impacts on local areas and be based on a cross-cutting and sustainably funded approach to all asylum and resettlement schemes.

### **Apprenticeships**

- *Proposals will be implemented to reduce the number of young people studying poor quality university degrees and increase the number undertaking high quality apprenticeships.*

### **LGA view**

- We welcome the Government's continued commitment to increasing the number of people undertaking high quality apprenticeships, but they will need to look at ways of [reforming how the apprenticeship levy](#) works if they want to achieve this.
- The LGA has consistently called for employers to be granted greater flexibility over how they can spend apprenticeship levy funds – including on administration costs, salaries and pre-apprenticeship training – as well as for councils to have greater input into how unspent levy funds are allocated and spent in their areas. These changes would help to create more apprenticeships and give local government greater flexibility to tackle our own skills shortages and bring more young people into the sector.