

# **Sector-led improvement in 2019/20**

End of year report



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**This paper highlights achievements  
from the sector-led improvement  
programme for 2019/20**

It explains how the Local Government Association (LGA) has used the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) grant in 2019/20.

# Introduction and background

Sector-led Improvement (SLI) is an approach put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement.

The approach was implemented in 2011, providing an alternative to the former, centrally-led, national performance framework.

SLI takes the view that the responsibility and regulation of improvement in local government should stay with councils and is underpinned by the following key principles:

- councils are responsible for their own performance and improvement
- councils are primarily accountable to local communities
- councils have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole
- the role of the LGA is to maintain an overview of performance of the sector and to provide tools and support.

The support offer itself is based on what we have learnt works for improvement – strong political and managerial leadership, challenge from one’s peers, the ability to benchmark performance against others through the use of comparable data and the sharing and spreading of good practice.

The shape of these needs has evolved in recent years, and our offer has adapted accordingly to continue to deliver what councils have told us they need. We have introduced new forms of support, such as our Climate Change Support offer launched last year. As this reporting period drew to a close, we also implemented a wholly refocused programme of support in response to COVID-19 for 2020/21.



**94% of leaders** and  
**98% of chief executives**  
say support from  
the LGA has a positive  
impact on their authority  
(most recent LGA perceptions  
survey)

As we are coming up to nearly ten years since the SLI offer was first developed, this year we also commissioned an independent evaluation and review of SLI and its underlying principles. The final report, which is due to be published at the end of July 2020, will evaluate the support delivered to councils and provide reflections that will inform future iterations of this framework. The LGA has also carried out a comprehensive internal review of the peer challenge programme which will be published alongside the SLI review. This report focuses on the SLI programme delivered between April 2019 and March 2020.

SLI has continued to prove a successful approach this year within the context of councils performing well, despite a number of national challenges and with good and rising levels of resident satisfaction. The number of councils which required formal intervention from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) remains extremely low – only one council was in special measures in 2019/20 – and public satisfaction with local authorities has continued to rise. The most recent resident satisfaction survey<sup>1</sup> (June 2020) records resident satisfaction with councils at its highest level since polling began,<sup>2</sup> spanning six key indicators,<sup>3</sup> despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak. The survey results show that 87 per cent of residents are ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with their councils – and there is general feeling that people can trust their councils and are satisfied with the way they run things. These are all signs of a local government sector that is performing well. While this cannot be attributed to any one factor, the SLI offer outlined in this report provides councils with a strong foundation to continuously improve.

The support we have provided to local authorities through our offer alongside partners, including MHCLG, has helped councils to build strong leadership, confront challenges, drive improvement and support areas at risk of underperformance. Sector-led improvement has also enabled councils to generate income and

savings, through innovation and commercial activity. During 2019/20, the LGA supported savings and income generation in excess of £46 million through the Productivity Experts programme<sup>4</sup> and other programmes, while the Shared Services Map identified efficiency savings in excess of £1.34 billion from 626 partnerships.

The total cost of providing this support in 2019/20 was £19.2 million. The costs relating to the previous national regulation framework was estimated to be in excess of £2 billion a year. SLI is therefore not only effective but extremely good value for money compared to the predecessor framework.

**87% of residents are ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with their councils** (according to the resident satisfaction survey from June 2020)



**Two-thirds of a raft of performance indicators** commonly used to assess council performance have improved according to SLI data analysis

1 [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research/research-publications/residents-satisfaction-surveys](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research/research-publications/residents-satisfaction-surveys)

2 This polling exercise has been carried out on quarterly basis over a period of five years at the time of writing. This is the 26th poll to take place as part of this exercise.

3 These are: satisfied with local area as a place to live; satisfied with way local council runs things; trusts the council; feel well informed about council’s services and benefits; agree council acts on residents’ concerns; agree council provides value for money.

4 [www.local.gov.uk/productivity-experts-programme](http://www.local.gov.uk/productivity-experts-programme)

# Programme access and delivery

Further details about our support offer are available on our website:  
[www.local.gov.uk/our-support](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support)

Local authorities can gain access to this programme of support via our team of regionally based principal advisers (PAs), who help connect the LGA and councils. PAs provide a focal point for discussions with councils about their improvement needs and, in turn, relay the support that we can provide. The programme for 2019/20 encompassed four key themes:

- peer challenge and support
- leadership and capacity
- efficiency and productivity
- strong communities with excellent public services.

This report highlights key programme achievements and deliverables from each theme. It also provides a brief outline of the additional support put in place in response to in-year developments, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Overall highlights

## During 2019/20

**129 peer challenges delivered** to a wide range of local authorities, in support of leadership, governance, corporate capacity and financial resilience (including 60 corporate peer challenges).

**958 councillors developed** through participation in our leadership programmes.

**100%** of councillors say they feel **more confident** in their role having participated in our leadership academy programme

**5000 applications** to the national graduate development programme (ngdp) in 2020, the highest number of applications to date; **149 graduates placed** in councils in 2019.

**£38.5million** saved by helping councils through the deployment of our productivity and income generation experts in 43 councils.

**£1.34 billion** cumulative efficiency savings for councils from 626 partnerships through the shared services map update (this is an improvement on £971m/559 partnerships the previous year).

**Transformation and Innovation Exchange** successfully **launched and delivered** providing councils with a central hub for information and efficiency.

**Climate Change Support offer** successfully launched and delivered, providing councils wide-ranging tools and support to address the current climate crisis.

**16** councils supported through the **Design in Public Sector** programme to provide them with design skills to address key challenges.

**90** councils supported on **24 specific housing projects**, helping to address challenges around housing, planning and homelessness.

# Improvement through peer support and challenge

The LGA's peer-based offer is a cornerstone of the SLI offer and helps councils to develop their capabilities in leadership, governance, corporate capacity and in financial resilience.

The LGAs peer-based offer provides councils with a unique opportunity to engage with peers who have current or previous experience in the sector<sup>5</sup> and provide challenge, support and guidance on specific areas or issues. This programme includes universal forms of support (eg peer challenges<sup>6</sup>, which are available to all councils) and tailored and bespoke packages of support (which are available to councils facing more specific challenges) depending on a council's individual needs. Achievements and feedback from our peer-based offer are outlined below.

## Developing and deploying highly skilled peers

This year's programme was supported by the deployment of more than 784 officer and member peers. Peers are individuals with current or previous experience in sector or other relevant public bodies.<sup>7</sup> In each case, the composition of the team depended on the nature of the area seeking improvement or redress. Peers were carefully selected to meet those needs to ensure that councils were receiving the support they required most.

We have continued to recruit and train peers throughout 2019/20, with 16 training sessions held during this period (including for the Corporate Peer Challenge programme).

Training sessions were held in metropolitan and regional areas across England, from Mid Devon to Preston. The ability to access this training in a range of localities helped to attract 123 new peers to the programme and ensured that each peer was consistent and robust in the delivery of corporate peer challenges. The training also helped to grow and develop new peer talent, with over a third of the newly trained peers delivering their first corporate peer challenge this year.

## Supporting enhanced council performance

Peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector and involve embedding a small team of peers within a council for up to five days.<sup>8</sup> During this time, the peer team works with the authority on a particular 'challenge' area (eg finance or children's services) and help colleagues by:

- supporting them to understand key challenges and get to the heart of the issue
- supporting them to counter misunderstandings and/or unrealistic expectations held locally
- providing practical advice based on real experience
- offering advice in a way that is sensitive to local dynamics.

5 This includes individuals with practical knowledge and experience of working within local authorities or other relevant public bodies. Depending on the nature of the area seeking improvement or redress, this may include persons from the NHS, police or central government.

6 [www.local.gov.uk/peer-challenges](http://www.local.gov.uk/peer-challenges)

7 Peers may, for instance, draw from the NHS, police or central government.

8 Throughout this reporting period, peer teams have been made up of average of 4.55 peers plus an LGA peer challenge manager.

Part of what makes peer challenges so effective is that they are delivered by individuals known by participating councils to have genuine local government and/or other relevant public sector experience. This lends credibility to any advice or guidance provided, as compared to advice offered through a consultant, who may have little or no local government experience. In receiving feedback from colleagues, peer challenges have the effect of holding up a mirror to the council so that they are better able to identify and understand what is working well and what could be improved.

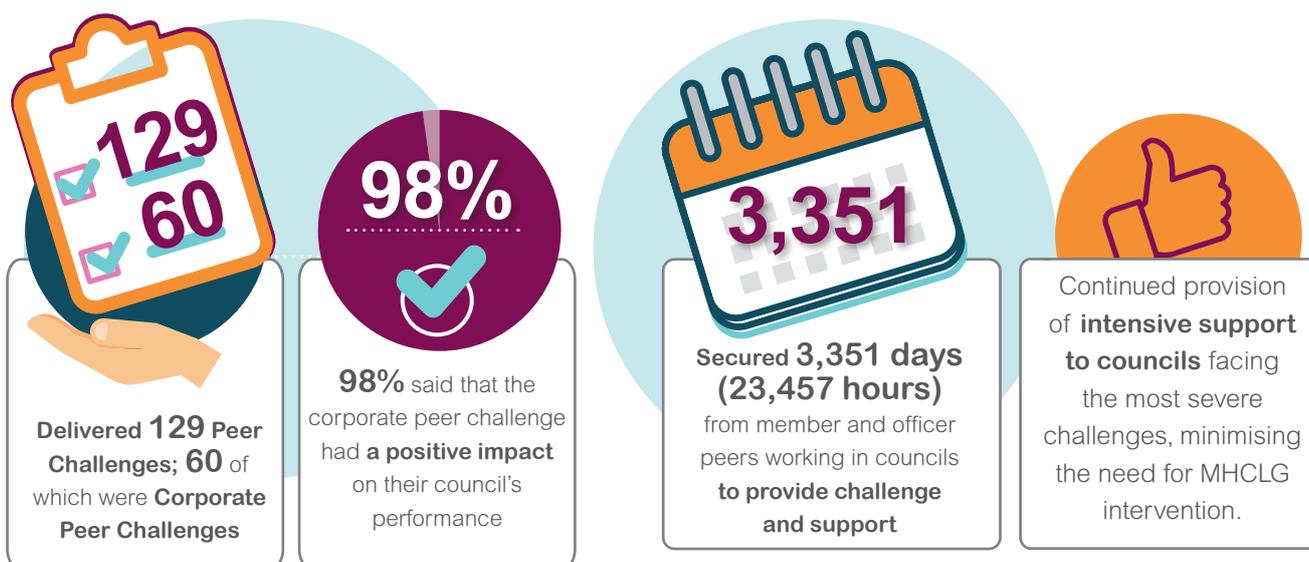
A range of peer challenge offers were available in 2019/20:

- corporate
- children's services
- health and wellbeing
- service specific (including for housing, planning, highways, and community safety)
- financial peer reviews
- communications 'healthcheck' and peer reviews.

Corporate peer challenges are an integral item on this list. Whereas some peer challenges focus on a specific area, corporate peer challenges encompass multiple themes: understanding of place and priority setting; leadership of place; financial planning and viability; organisational leadership and governance; and capacity to deliver. This approach helps councils to improve across the board. The challenges are fully funded and there is an expectation that all councils (and fire and rescue authorities) will complete a corporate peer challenge or finance peer review every five years. Reducing the number of councils that have not had a corporate peer challenge is a strategic priority of the LGA, so it is positive we have seen a significant reduction in that number over the past five years.

In 2019/20, 129 peer challenges were carried out. Of those peer challenges, 60 were corporate peer challenges and 22 of that total involved councils which had not completed a corporate peer challenge before. Reducing the number of councils that have not had a corporate peer challenge is a strategic priority of the LGA, so it is positive we have seen a significant reduction in that number over the past five years.

## Some highlights for 2019/20



The feedback from councils demonstrates that peer challenges continue to be widely endorsed as a tool for improvement within local government, with very positive feedback from chief executives and leaders alike, particularly in relation to the impact. A feedback survey sent to the leaders and chief executives in councils that received a corporate peer challenge between April and December 2019 (numbering 32 in total), revealed that all respondents were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the corporate peer challenge that their council had received. All respondents said their confidence about their council delivering its priorities had increased, through their participation. Additionally, 98 per cent of respondents said that the objectives they had for taking part were 'fully' or 'largely' achieved;<sup>9</sup> and all respondents said that they would be 'very' or 'fairly' likely to recommend this process to other councils if asked. The survey also captured comments from council chief executives, including those outlined below.

## Stories of impact from the sector

### Peer challenge

"A peer challenge does what it says on the tin – uses the expertise and experience of fellow local government officers and members to be a critical friend. It is also a two-way learning experience for the authority and the team. The recommendations should be taken seriously and an action plan developed in response. Learn from the challenge and treat its outcomes positively." Leader

"The peer challenge was the first experienced by myself as Leader and I found it invaluable. It helped cement ideas that I brought to the authority and it was so pleasing to receive a very positive report on the actions of the council and the leadership role." Leader

"The whole experience was a sound 'health check' of the council's governance, structure and organisational processes. We have a sound report with clear recommendations for us to improve our services to the public." Chief executive

"The peer challenge is an excellent means for councils to test their plans and strategy with a group of practitioners. As a result of the associated culture, and the fact that the inspectors are drawn from people doing similar jobs in other councils, it is a positive inclusive experience, which encourages openness and honesty. Consequently, it gets to the issues quickly and into discussions about solutions." Chief executive

"Councils should be open and request an honest 'warts and all' feedback. This will get the most constructive and worthwhile outcomes, which have the potential to achieve tangible outcomes." Leader

"Peer challenge provides an opportunity for your organisation and its partners to step back and reflect, with the help and support of colleagues who can bring a new and different perspective. The peer challenge process has helped us to challenge ourselves, refocus our priorities and develop our delivery plans and improve what we do." Chief executive

Source: Peer challenge, Feedback surveys 2019/20

9 The remaining four per cent said that their objectives for participating in the corporate peer challenge were partially achieved.

The LGA also surveyed those councils that received a corporate peer challenge between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 (42 in total) to assess the impact after one year. Of those surveyed:

**98%** said that the corporate peer challenge had a positive impact on their council's performance (this is compared to 85% on this same item in the previous year's survey).

**98%** said that that the corporate peer challenge had a positive impact on the council's understanding of the local context and priority setting.

**100%** said that the corporate peer challenge had a positive impact on the council's leadership of place.

**98%** said that the corporate peer challenge had a positive impact on the council's organisational leadership and governance.

**86%** said that the corporate peer challenge had a positive impact on the council's financial planning and viability.

**98%** said that the corporate peer challenge had a positive impact on the council's capacity to deliver.

## Supporting councils to address specific challenges and needs

During 2019/20, we supported 134 councils with tailored member and/or officer peer of support. In addition, bespoke support was provided to several councils facing the most severe challenges. As mentioned, tailored and bespoke packages of support are available to councils with specific and heightened challenges or needs. The 'change of control' offer, for instance, is free and available to all authorities which have experienced a change in political control or leadership, and involves support from member peers for up to five days. Following elections in May, 75 councils were contacted with an offer to access this support. Of those contacted, 68 councils (90 per cent) took up the formal change of control offer, and all 75 have been provided with advice and support. We have also provided support to 18 councils to manage and resolve issues between the political and managerial leadership, for example, through mediation or restructuring advice and guidance. The extent of this support in part reflects the significant number of councils that saw a change of control.

We have sought to prevent issues between political and managerial leadership in councils firstly by providing mentoring support from experienced member peers for new leaders and cabinet members; and, secondly, by acting as a trusted partner to resolve complex disputes between senior members and managers. The provision of mentoring supports councils to resolve these issues quickly and discreetly and in doing so, helps to minimise the potentially harmful impacts of unresolved conflict on service delivery or reputation. The feedback from the Peer Mentoring programme has also been positive. The 2019/20 feedback survey for this programme showed that 83 per cent of participants surveyed were satisfied with their mentoring experience and felt more confident in their ability to carry out their role as a result. All survey participants who had an agreed set of learning objectives at the outset said these were fully or largely achieved. Everyone surveyed said it was 'very likely' that they would recommend mentoring support to fellow councillors if asked about it.

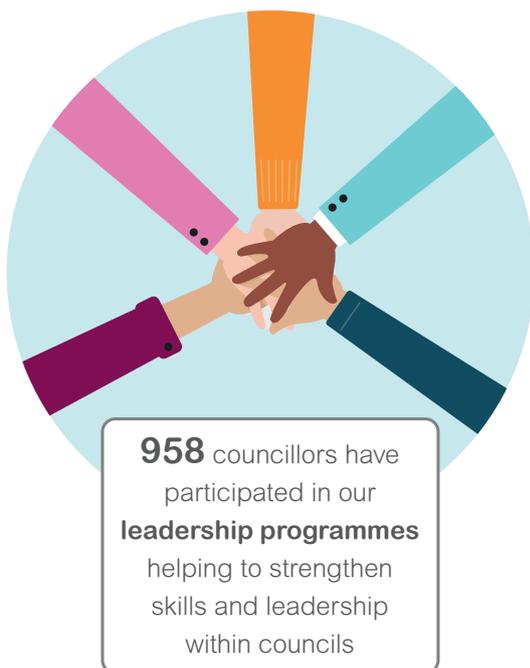
# Leadership and capacity

The LGA's Highlighting Political Leadership offer helps councils to meet challenges by providing training to build leadership capacity within local authorities and by talent spotting and developing political leaders of the future.

The Highlighting Political Leadership offer includes a range of programmes, events and resources to people working in or aspiring to local government to help build local democracies that are effective, relevant and vibrant.

The programme outlined ensures that support and development opportunities are available to councils of all levels, so that councillors can progress their skills and experience at all stages of their political careers. Achievements from some of the above are highlighted on the following pages.

## Some highlights from 2019/20



**70** councillors participated in the Next Generation programme, which amounts to five more participants than the previous year.

**59** councils supported to help them transform their workforces and modernise the way they are managed.

**8** new policy-specific Leadership Essentials programmes introduced: audit committees; building safety; climate emergency; county lines; licensing; housing; creating better streets and town centres; and homelessness.

**17** councils were supported through the Be a Councillor programme

**350** leaders, cabinet members, chief executives and their senior management teams received top team development work, in a total of 60 councils, to develop their leadership roles.

**5000** applications for the national graduate development programme (ngdp) in 2020 – this is the highest number of applications to date.

Further details about our political leadership offer are available here: [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership)

Further details about our managerial leadership offer are available here: [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-managerial-leadership](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-managerial-leadership)

## Attracting new political talent

The 'Be a Councillor' campaign encourages new talent into local government and supported 17 councils this year. This included providing access to a toolkit and resources to support councils to deliver local activities (including during Local Democracy Week); helping councils to run full local campaigns and supporting and speaking at council events; and jointly delivering events for under-represented groups, with expert partners – such as Rutland Council's women's event, with the Democratic Society (a young people's event with the London Borough of Waltham Forest attended by 60 young people from the borough).

Our political leadership programmes offer councillors a unique opportunity to network with other members from different tiered authorities and, in most cases, from across the political spectrum.

## Supporting the development of emerging political leaders

The Next Generation programme offers ambitious and talented councillors an unparalleled political development opportunity, which is uniquely developed within party political traditions and with party political experts. The programme equips emerging political leaders with the skills and confidence to be bold champions of local government and progress in their political careers. The most recent impact survey from this programme indicates it is broadly successful in this objective:

**94%** of respondents said Next Generation had helped them improve the way they carry out their role, to either a great or moderate extent.

**63%** of respondents had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities. Of these, all said the programme had positively impacted on their ability to do this.

Next Generation helps members to develop in their roles as community leaders, facilitators and advocates.

## Supporting development for councillors in leadership positions

The LGA's **Leadership Essentials** programme includes a series of events designed as themed learning opportunities for councillors. Each event focuses on a specific portfolio area, such as licensing (launched in 2019/20) or specific themes, such as fire and rescue. The content and themes of the Leadership Essentials modules are regularly refreshed to reflect the most pertinent topics to local government and councillors. During 2019/20, new courses included: Being an Effective Cabinet Member, Creating Better High Streets and Town Centres, Homelessness, Housing, Audit Committees, Building safety, climate emergency and licensing. The feedback provided around Leadership Essentials training courses has been very positive. According to the 2019/20 feedback survey 100 per cent of respondents were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with the course they attended; felt more confident in their ability to carry out their role, having participated in the course; and would be likely to recommend the course to fellow councillors if asked.

Several months following training sessions, participants are asked to reflect on the impact the programmes have had on their development. According to the results of the most recent impact survey results, Leadership Essentials have helped councillors to improve or progress in their by delivering 'increased understanding and knowledge', 'networking and sharing experience and good practice', 'confidence building', 'scrutiny and challenge' and 'communication skills'.

The LGA's Focus on Leadership series provides seminars and events to help councillors in their existing roles and provide a bridge to more senior leadership positions. These programmes are particularly aimed at supporting councillors from underrepresented groups to develop in their leadership roles. During 2019/20 49 councillors attended our BAME programme, 30 delegates attended our programme for young councillors and 20 attended our

programme for women councillors. During 2019/20 we also had 21 councillors attend our Effective Opposition programme for opposition leaders and deputy leaders to help them get a better understanding of how they can enhance the effectiveness of their role in leading an opposition group on their council. Our Leadership Academy is another of the LGA's flagship development programme for councillors in leadership positions. Refreshed and updated for the current challenges faced across local government, the Leadership Academy delivers for local leaders a step change in leadership behaviours, strategies, skills and mind-set.

Additional feedback from across these programmes is included below.

## Stories of impact from the sector Leadership

### Leadership Academy

**"A must for all councillors."**

"The best course I've been on."

**"This is an excellent course for leaders and aspiring leaders. Very informative, inspirational and transformational."**

"A vital programme of self-development that anybody in a council leadership role should attend."

### Leadership Essentials

This is a 'must do' course for all Members in a leadership role..." Leadership Essentials, Working with the media

**"Excellent course for beginners and experts in the field to learn and improve all our experiences about local government finances." Leadership Essentials Finance**

"Fabulous course for a new cabinet member – plenty of knowledge and experience to learn from. Every session had something I can take back to my authority and put into practice." Being an effective cabinet member

### Next Generation

"The biggest help has been the opportunity to work with experienced mentors and other members of the cohort on issues. The programme increases your confidence

and helps you think more strategically as a politician. If anything, I have put myself out there more and I know that I can do my role well."

**"It gave me context as a councillor, ie that there were councillors across the UK who were new to the role, it gave me tools for considering how I can be a better councillor, it gave me confidence to progress, to do more, to step up for my residents and electors."**

"The Next Generation course is an excellent course that encourages the individual to examine 'self' and also gives the individual a better understanding of how councils work and how to become a more effective councillor. The other main benefit from the course was being able to meet other people who are councillors in different areas of the country and to be able to benefit from the shared experience."

Anonymous responses to leadership programme impact surveys 2019/20

## Growing the next generation of local government managerial leaders

The national graduate development programme (ngdp) is the LGA's flagship management trainee programme and the only national graduate programme specifically for local government. It presents graduates with a unique pathway into local government and offers councils high-quality graduates who are prepared to work on strategic projects that contribute to council goals.

The ngdp end of programme survey, which is completed by graduates of the programme, reveals a high level of satisfaction with the programme. Of those surveyed, 97 per cent were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with the ngdp overall and 92 per cent felt that the ngdp had made them more confident in their ability to gain a management role in local government to a 'great' or 'moderate extent'. The most common objective for taking part in the ngdp was to gain experience (mentioned by 85 per cent of respondents) and overall, 85 per cent felt that their objectives had been 'fully' or 'largely'

achieved. Of all the ngdp graduates that responded, 99 per cent felt that the programme had had a positive impact on their ability to further their careers, to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent and that portion said they would be 'very' or 'fairly likely' to recommend the ngdp to others if asked about it.

The ngdp placed 149 graduates in local government during 2019 – 26 more than during the previous financial year – and continues to gain interest, with the total number of applications rising to a hallmark 5000 during 2020.<sup>10</sup>

## Developing executive leaders and managers

Our managerial leadership development programme starts by growing future talent with the ngdp, through to opportunities for senior officers in collaboration with SOLACE. During 2019/20, 21 chief executives were developed through the Ignite programme. Our work with SOLACE also aims to create a pipeline of talented managerial leaders and this is achieved through our successful Total Leadership programme for aspiring chief executives and Springboard, a 'fast-track' programme for head of service level managers who have been identified as 'rising stars'. In 2019/20, we delivered one cohort of Total Leadership and two of Springboard, with 56 delegates in total. Alongside these flagship programmes for aspiring leaders and chief executives, we recognise the importance of developing and supporting aspiring talent from a diverse range of backgrounds and ran our first inclusive leadership event for managers during 2019/20.

## Supporting a strong workforce, able to respond to major changes within the public sector

The LGA has played a major role in supporting councils to adapt to changes including the introduction of the Local Government Services 2018-20 pay deal (which covers more than a million local government employees) and a

remodelled national pay spine. Such a major change to the framework necessarily required substantial support from the LGA to councils implementing the changes. Building on our positive engagement with the main trade unions, we hosted regional briefings, provided support to regional workshops and local support to facilitate the transfer to the new pay spine with minimal disruption.

We have continued to provide councils with a range of support, including the above, to help councils develop flexible and productive workforces. Our workforce offer has helped to ensure an affordable and flexible pay, reward and conditions system for local government and work with different public sector employers to address the challenges and opportunities in the local workforce. In 2019/20, we worked with 162 councils to help them transform their workforces and modernise the way they are managed.

Another area of support provided is in the realm of guidance and advice. In 2019/20 we delivered monthly updates, briefs and advice on employment law cases, legislative developments and the impact for local authorities and subscribers (with lists of 5,000 subscribers). We also launched a national support offer for councils in England and Wales, which provides new and revised guidance on workforce planning, and have provided councils with ongoing support in the context of complex employee relations casework specifically in relation to senior managers.

The LGA has dealt with complex cases in its role as the Employers' Secretariat of the JNCs for Chief Executives and Chief Officers. We have continued to provide JNC-approved Independent Investigators to resolve sensitive and sometimes complex disciplinary issues relating to senior officers in about a dozen councils over the past year. In addition, Independent Investigators have assisted councils, schools and MATs in grievance cases brought against senior staff members and have continued to manage and train, the cohort of independent investigators.

<sup>10</sup> Assessment centres for the ngdp were placed on hold due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Assessment centres are now ongoing at the time of writing. Once complete, the ngdp will seek to place a similar number of graduates as the previous year.

## Supporting council recruitment and employee engagement

We have supported councils to grow their workforce in support of strategic goals. In partnership with the Department for Education (DfE), Social Work England and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), we launched a 'Social Work Together' campaign to encourage people back into the profession to deal with COVID-related pressures. We have continued to operate our Apprenticeship Support programme, which provides a range of practical support and advice for local authorities and their maintained schools on developing and enhancing their apprenticeship programme. Our apprenticeships programme has helped councils to meet their public sector apprenticeship target through a range of activity including regional workshops and network events, running a Knowledge Hub group, with over 250 active members, best practice guidance, and mapping progress to identify barriers and work with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to provide targeted support where necessary. There is a new addition to this offer, called the Apprenticeship MOT, which provides a framework for local authorities to develop and grow their apprenticeship programme and offers best practice ideas to help councils put their programme on a sustainable footing. By the end of March, 23 local authorities had been supported through a MOT review.

The LGA has also supported councils to help improve employee engagement with insights gained from an employee engagement diagnostic survey tool<sup>11</sup> and has worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and councils to raise awareness of the Disability Confident Scheme (90.88 per cent of councils are now signed up).

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11 This diagnostic tool was developed by the LGA with support from Edinburgh Napier University and Dr Martin Reddington. [www.local.gov.uk/enhancing-productivity-through-employee-support](http://www.local.gov.uk/enhancing-productivity-through-employee-support)

# Efficiency and productivity

The LGA continues to help councils to innovate, save money and generate income through the range of support available through our efficiency and productivity offer.

Councils manage a complex balancing act in seeking to ensure quality service delivery at the same time as reductions in costs and savings. This is achieved through several main approaches:

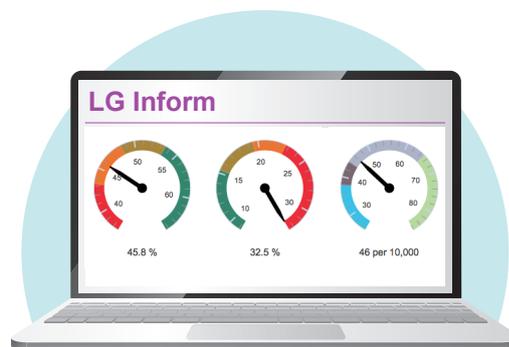
- by transforming services to make them more efficient and less wasteful or to find more effective ways of delivering to local people's needs
- by implementing smarter sourcing arrangements to commission and buying the goods, works and services that support local outcomes more efficiently and effectively
- by generating income, which involves generating a greater proportion of funding locally (eg by commercialising the authority's existing skills, assets or commodities or investing to grow the local economy to generate wealth for the area).

The LGA has supported councils with these approaches by providing the support outlined below.

## Some highlights from 2019/20



Helped councils save in excess of **£38.5 million** through the deployment of our productivity experts and income generation experts in **43 councils**



**LG Inform**, our comparative data service, reached **1.5m** views, including over **90,000** sessions and **328,000** page-views this reporting period

**£1.34bn** of efficiency savings generated from 626 partnerships through our shared services map.

### **Transformation and Innovation Exchange**

was successfully launched and delivered, providing councils with a central hub for information and efficiency.

**1,106** people registered for contract management training (run by the Cabinet Office) from 161 councils and authorities.

**3** cohorts of commercial skills training delivered for officers and 4 cohorts of commercial skills training for councilors.

**Climate Change Support** offer successfully launched and delivered, providing councils with wide ranging tools and support to address the current climate crisis.

**16** councils supported through the Design in Public Sector programme to provide them with design skills to address key challenges.

**£585,390** in cost avoidance and £145,000 in actual savings for the 8 councils who took part in our Behavioural Insights programme to reduce service demand.

**4** masterclasses for elected members on the theme of data and digital transformation.

**£369m** in capital receipts, £64m in reduced running costs, 23,483 jobs created and land for 14,352 homes released through One Public Estate projects.

**18** local authorities supported by Local Partnerships across England to retrofit properties.

Further details about our efficiency and income generation offers are available here: [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation)

## Supporting councils to increase savings and income generation

Our Productivity Experts programme provides an opportunity for councils to access expertise that will give them the skills they need to realise ambitious efficiency savings and income generation. During 2019/20 productivity and income generation experts have worked with 43 councils contributing towards efficiency savings and/or income generation of £38.5 million over the next four years. The experts provided support around areas such as economic growth, procurement, asset management and specific service efficiency reviews. As part of this programme, additional work is being carried on projects in the area of internal council processes, children's services, income generation, environment and waste and regulatory services, the voluntary and community sector and digital.

Local government continues to lead the way in the public sector with collaborative service delivery and implementation through shared service arrangements. We have continued to encourage councils to consider the potential benefits of shared service arrangements, including through the shared services 'matchmaking' service<sup>12</sup>, which provides assistance to councils who wish to share services and/or management teams with other councils. During this financial year, the Shared Services Map update evidenced £1.34 billion of cumulative efficiency savings from 626 partnerships, up from £971 million and 559 partnerships in the previous year.

We have continued to provide a range of support in the areas of commercialisation and income generation, by helping councils to pursue appropriate and well considered commercial opportunities. In 2019/20, we convened four meetings of the LGA's Advanced Commercial Group, covering topics including council owned energy companies, social value, public relations advice for councils, governance and scrutiny of commercial activities as well as councils sharing learning from their own commercial projects. Meetings were attended by commercial lead officers from 25 councils.

<sup>12</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/shared-services/shared-service-expert-programme](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/shared-services/shared-service-expert-programme)

We held four commercial skills masterclasses for elected members. These sessions were very popular and oversubscribed, with 78 councillors attending. We also delivered three cohorts of Commercial Skills Training for programme officers, with 50 officers attending, and held our first learning conference for the alumni of our commercial skills programme.

A further milestone arrived with the launch of Profit with a Purpose<sup>13</sup>, our guidance to help councils build social value into their commercial activities, which was shared at the LGA Annual Conference in July 2019. This publication includes case studies of the innovative work that councils are doing to adopt commercial activity to stimulate local economies, increase jobs and apprenticeships, build houses and reduce fuel poverty in their local communities. This guidance, and the LGA's updated commercial good practice map, featured at the CIPFA conference, also in July.

## Supporting effective local government procurement

In 2018, we launched a new National Procurement Strategy (NPS18), which reflects local government priorities for the subsequent four years and includes a maturity model to help councils identify areas for improvement. As part of this model, councils were asked to take part in an initial benchmarking exercise to self-assess their performance against the new NPS18 and identify areas for improvement. Contract management and embedding social value in procurement practices were both cited as priority areas.

We carried this further in 2019/20 with the launch of the final report on the NPS18 initial diagnostic; and continuing work with MHCLG, Cabinet Office and Government Commercial Function (GCF) on contract management. More than 1000 council employed staff (drawn from 161 different authorities) were registered for foundation level contract management training as a result. We also supported the National Social Value Conference, which had more than 800 people attending over the two days. In addition, we have provided input into the development of further reporting measures

(the National Themes Outcomes and Measures or TOMs<sup>14</sup>) for social value relating to climate change and more recently COVID-19.

We have also supported the NPS18 through the Strategic Supplier Relationship Management (SSRM) programme, which has enabled local government to develop better strategic relationships with key suppliers and to be better sighted on issues affecting the industries in which they operate. The SSRM programme has identified those key suppliers, by spend, in the main spend categories for local government (nursing homes, children's services, construction and information and communications technology) and commenced meetings with three to five of those suppliers in each category to help bridge relationships and understanding between local government and private sector organisations; to determine what local government does well or poorly; how these effects impact on strategic suppliers; and to identify how all parties can work better together. Effective management of strategic supplier relationships can deliver a range of benefits including improved outcomes for the public, added social value, reduced cost, reduced risk and more innovation.

There is an information-sharing aspect to this programme. In 2019/20 we continued to capture and share supply chain intelligence with councils. We arranged a local government version of the Cabinet Office 'Knowledge Drop' and continue to promote central guidance where relevant via our National Advisory Group newsletter. We have worked with Cabinet Office on those suppliers who have a Crown Representative and have cascaded guidance that was published alongside the 'Outsourcing Playbook' from central government. We have also supported local authorities to make informed decisions about procurement by supplying weekly updates with the most recent information on major suppliers. Feedback from councils has highlighted the value of this work and the list of subscribers to these updates has continued to grow throughout the year.

<sup>13</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/profit-purpose-delivering-social-value-through-commercial-activity](http://www.local.gov.uk/profit-purpose-delivering-social-value-through-commercial-activity)

<sup>14</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/achieving-community-benefits-social-value](http://www.local.gov.uk/achieving-community-benefits-social-value)

## Supporting councils to address financial challenges – Finance Improvement and Sustainability programme

Our Finance Improvement and Sustainability (FISA) programme uses LGA advisers – all of them former local authority chief finance officers – who provide advice and insight to councils facing financial challenges. Support provided in 2019/20 has ranged from the delivery of financial peer reviews, financial health checks and budgeting and planning, capital accounting and commercialism. The support was targeted on councils with escalating financial issues and the greatest needs. Since financial issues rarely stand on their own, this work is often part of a wider package of sector-led support. Additionally, our team of finance improvement and sustainability advisers enhance our capacity to support councils on financial matters. Advisers work alongside our principal advisers to ensure we are able to be proactive in supporting councils with financial challenges.

## Supporting local government innovation

In 2019/20, 16 councils were selected for the Design in the public sector programme. Delivered in partnership with the Design Council, the programme equips councils with design skills and techniques to apply to their toughest service challenges. This year, challenges addressed by councils have included reducing serious youth violence, addressing climate change and delivering sustainable growth, reducing the waste levy and improving recycling rates and improving care for victims of domestic violence.

Innovation offers local government a pathway to fulfil its core aim to improve the lives of the people in our communities. We supported councils to achieve this objective by collecting and sharing examples of innovative practice

taking place within local government, including via the Innovation Zone at the LGA's Annual Conference. The Innovation Zone offers a vibrant, creative space and programme, where councils are invited to share the innovations, impacts, lessons and cultures that have contributed to the success of projects. In 2019/20, the Innovation Zone was attended by hundreds of delegates and showcased over 40 examples of innovative ideas from councils and other organisations tackling local issues.<sup>15</sup> Feedback from delegates indicated that the Innovation Zone held in 2019 was the most successful to date.

The public sharing of innovative practice via platforms such as the Innovation Zone provides councils a valuable opportunity to share and learn from each other. Another way this knowledge sharing is carried out is via the LGA website, which as of 2019/20 offered more than 1300 examples of council-led best practice, shared via the general case studies webpage: [www.local.gov.uk/case-studies](http://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies)

The LGA's Behavioural Insights programme is part of our wider support to council innovation. Working with a range of Behavioural Insights experts, we have supported 34 councils on a range of innovative projects. In 2019/20, we awarded funding to councils taking forward projects on a diverse range of areas including sustainable travel, public health and financial management. The 2019/20 Behavioural Insights funding round (Phase 5) was hugely popular and the following eight councils were selected for support.

Councils in their third phase of the programme have delivered substantial savings. Worcestershire Council have increased their revenue from adult social care charges by £42,000. Through improving the effectiveness of its decision-making arrangements around undertaking statutory assessments issuing new Education, Health and Care plans Warrington Metropolitan Borough Council have saved £145,000 and avoided costs of £585,390. This year also saw the launch of our Behavioural Insights podcast series, titled Nudges for Social Good<sup>16</sup>. This podcast series provides councils

<sup>15</sup> Sessions included a story from Darlington City Council who worked with Blue Cabin CIC to help Harewood Hill Lodge to become a creative care home by training their staff to be Arts Award Advisers and act as mentors and facilitators for the young people; lessons from Leeds for recycling 'on the go'; and Bracknell Forest's partnership with Dogs for Good, which is bringing animal-assisted intervention into mainstream social care provision

<sup>16</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/behavioural-insights/lga-behavioural-insights-podcast](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/behavioural-insights/lga-behavioural-insights-podcast)

with Behavioural Insights informed tips to help them to design and run projects and was launched to better ensure all councils have access to the knowledge available through this programme.

In addition to these programmes, our Transformation and Innovation Exchange (TIEx)<sup>17</sup> provides councils with access to self-assessment tool and performance data, along with a range of other resources within a single space. Launched in May 2019 at the LGA's Annual Conference, this online tool and efficiency hub, saw additions of over 300 items such as blogs, case studies, reports, training and tools, including direct links to LG Inform and LG Inform Value for Money reports. TIEx is an interactive space where councils can come together to learn and support each other. The resources and relationships gathered via this platform help local government to continue to deliver value for money and better outcomes for communities. By the end of the year, a total of 187 unique users had registered and tried the tool from 104 councils and the number of users has since continued to grow.

## Providing local government with benchmarking data and information via LG Inform

LG Inform is our free online data and benchmarking service, which provides all councils and fire and rescue services access to training along with contextual and performance data for their local area. This year, the LGA ran five face-to-face training events and 92 online training events. A total of 80 delegates attended the face-to-face training and an additional 269 attended online. A total of 749 new metrics were added to the database this year, bringing the total number of metrics to 6,715. LG Inform published reports on personal wellbeing, children in need and care, the gender pay gap and the indices of multiple deprivation, and produced updated reports on crime and disorder, workforce and special educational needs and disabilities. In addition, a Cohesion and Integration Report<sup>18</sup> for consultation, was developed with MHCLG.

LG Inform achieved 3,300 registered users by the end of the 2019/20 period and the website had received 90,000 sessions and 328,000 page-views. This reporting period also saw LG Inform reach a landmark 1.5 million page views since its launch.

Separately, a programme of support was established and delivered to support councils around use of better data, including four masterclasses on data and digital transformation. Four Masterclasses were run in London, Manchester, Bristol and Newcastle in January and February 2020. These involved 55 individuals from 41 councils and covered presentations and discussions in the area of digital transformation, use of data, cyber security, designing services around customer need, examples of good practice and pitfalls and tips on project management, procurement and modern IT techniques including social media. The classes were well received, with 79 per cent of attendees stating that they were 'very satisfied' with the course and how it has developed their knowledge and role.

## Supporting councils to develop safe digital solutions

Our Digital Transformation programme was set up is being run to help fund councils to develop digital solutions to support their wider work on national programmes of transformation including, the integration of health and social care, Troubled Families, welfare reform and public health. The aim of this work is to develop digital tools and solutions that can be reused by other councils and support the wider work to transform local public services. As part of this, the LGA hosted a showcase of digital programmes in November, which was also a success and oversubscribed. The event brought together councils to share learning on topics including; project management, collaboration on a regional scale, digital leadership and using governance as an enabler.

The LGA has continued to promote and support the safe use of digital tools, data and systems through its Cabinet Office funded Cyber

<sup>17</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/transformation-and-innovation-exchange](http://www.local.gov.uk/transformation-and-innovation-exchange)

<sup>18</sup> <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/lga-research-cohesion-and-integration?mod-area=E92000001>

Security programme. In 2019/20, this included supporting the response and recovery of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council after they were the victim of a major ransomware incident. This offer involved: directly financially supporting over 90 per cent of English councils to improve cyber leadership, governance, awareness and training; delivering a monthly newsletter to distil relevant news, making it easier for councils to navigate the policy space; promotion of learning at the LGA Annual Conference; delivering a self-assessment tool for councils; delivering two cyber tools workshops; and engaging with councils and other stakeholders from SOLACE, Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM), CIPFA, the Warning, Advice and Reporting Points (WARPs), MHCLG, Cabinet Office and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to promote good practice. Cyber security is an integral part of local government's wider work to digitalise services and improve productivity.

## Supporting councils to develop strategies to address climate change

Alongside the majority of councils, we have declared a climate emergency. Councils are taking collective action to reduce carbon emissions and are working with partners and local communities to tackle climate change within their areas. We are supporting councils to do this with our Climate Change Support offer, which was launched last year.

We have worked collaboratively across policy and improvement teams to gather intelligence on the challenges that councils face in responding to the climate emergency and putting forward a wide range of support for councils. In 2019/20, this included the launch of a climate change web hub; two well attended Leadership Essentials courses to equip councillors with the knowledge required to address these issues; and specific support via Local Partnerships, including on energy efficiency, waste, and finance.

## Supporting councils to receive support from expert partners

Sometimes organisations with specialty skills and expertise, are better equipped to provide councils with practical support. With this understanding, we have continued to support the delivery of the Land Release Fund through One Public Estate. One Public Estate projects have delivered £369 million in capital receipts, cut running costs by £64 million, created 23,483 jobs and have released land for 14,352 homes. Delivery has seen good value for money in terms of cost per home enabled (average £6,000).

We have continued to support the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), which have provided at least 50 days of improvement support to councils during this financial year. Additionally, CfPS have provided helpdesk assistance to 49 councils during 2019/20 (with multiple requests for support from 18 of these), which has included the development of a consistent support model of advice and guidance to councils on governance change. Our support for CfPS has enabled them to provide direct help to councils and councillors in developing scrutiny skills and expertise and holding both local government and the wider public sector to account as democratically elected local representatives.

We have also continued to support Local Partnerships to provide practical support to help councils deliver efficiency savings and/or improve performance. In 2019/20, this involved supporting 18 local authorities across England (outside London) with the development and procurement of Re:fit projects; supporting a number councils to meet housing growth aspirations; and supporting local authorities to deliver over £6.5 million of savings in operational PFI/PPP contracts through refinancing and resolution of insurance issues. We also provided initial guidance and advice to local authorities on procurement and contracting issues resulting from COVID-19.

# Strong communities with excellent public services

A principle role of both central and local government is to develop and maintain the right conditions to develop strong local economies with local authorities, while delivering high quality, value for money services. This is best achieved where there is greater devolution to local powers, as is the basis of the SLI approach. This is a continuing journey that seeks to bring power close to local communities.

Our offer is to help councils on this journey, including by supporting councils to develop meaningful partnerships and by providing support on thematic or service specific issues, including improvement support for housing, licensing and community cohesion.



## Some highlights from 2019/20

Provided a range of support to councils on the local growth agenda, including research and action sets for council officers leading on economic and inclusive growth.

Provided significant support to councils to improve early help services, with a focus on the use of data for preventative service design and delivery.

Ran a number of events to share best practice on tackling serious violence.

Supported councils and worked with Whitehall to ensure that preparations for the UK's exit from the European Union fully consider the needs of local places and councils.

Provided support and guidance to help councils embed strengthened approaches to civil resilience and mutual aid.

**£369m** in capital receipts, **£64m** in reduced running costs, **23,483 jobs** created and land for **14,352 homes** released through One Public Estate projects.

Provided a range of support to councils and counter extremism groups to help counter extremism in communities.

## Supporting greater devolution and more inclusive, clean local growth

English devolution is one of the most fundamental changes to the way decisions are made for local areas and how public services are funded. We have provided direct support to and worked with all combined authority/devolution deal areas and aspiring areas. The LGA has facilitated meetings of the following combined authority (CA) networks: governance and scrutiny, communications, employment and skills, HR and finance. We have also concluded two published pieces of commissioned research: one, into transport governance and scrutiny in CAs, conducted by the CfPS on behalf of the CA Governance and Scrutiny Network; and another on best practice in devolution communications, conducted by Newgate Communications on behalf of the CA Communications Network. In addition, the LGA have published a report for CAs on collaboration in housing and planning. We have also now finalised a commissioned case study report on the evolving combined authority skills and employment commissioner role which will be shortly be published.

During 2019/20, the LGA has also provided a range of support to councils on the local growth agenda. In January, the LGA published research<sup>19</sup> into the lessons learned from the Local Industrial Strategy trailblazer areas and the implications for future development of local economic strategies. The LGA commissioned the delivery of action learning sets for council officers leading on economic and inclusive growth following the success of similar approaches in our Local Industrial Strategy work. Two in-person sessions were held in the reporting period and a final remote session was hosted and provided an opportunity for officers to share emerging responses to the COVID-19 crisis and the implications for economic development teams.

The LGA commissioned Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) North to engage with national and local stakeholders to understand the activities currently being undertaken by

councils and their partners to drive inclusive growth across local areas. The resulting outputs will help councils apply evidence-based, practical approaches to ensure the benefits of growth are shared across communities and places see the benefits of economic growth shared more equally between people and places.

We also provided support to eight local and combined authorities' who wanted to work with local partners to address skills and employability challenges and opportunities. This support has been useful for the areas, and as COVID-19 makes collaboration essential, further support may be explore to support the wider sector.

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<sup>19</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/local-industrial-strategies-online-hub](http://www.local.gov.uk/local-industrial-strategies-online-hub)

LGA commissioned research to project low carbon jobs by local authority and by sub-sectors in 2030 and 2050 has now been completed. It shows that in 2018 there were 185,000 full-time workers in England's low-carbon and renewable energy economy. In 2030 across England there could be 694,000 direct jobs employed, rising to over 1.18 million by 2050. In the context of the current COVID-19 crisis, this analysis has been significant in identifying future job growth potential to weave into their recovery plans.

## Supporting councils to address housing challenges

Our Housing Advisers programme has helped to provide support to an increasing number of councils. In 2019/20, we supported 24 projects and providing bespoke support to help councils deal with the housing, planning and homelessness challenges and all councils have received their grants. This support reached over 90 councils (up from 60 councils in the previous year). The projects are diverse and wide ranging covering common challenges of homelessness, housing supply, overall housing strategy and planning. According to the Housing Advisers programme impact survey (2018/19), most councils believe their participation in the Housing Advisers programme had a positive impact on their desired outcomes to either a 'great' or 'moderate' extent (between 63 per cent and 100 per cent, depending on the desired outcome). All survey participants said it was 'very likely' (15 councils, 79 per cent) or 'fairly likely' (4 councils, 21 per cent) that they would recommend the Housing Advisers programme if asked about it.

## Stories of impact from the sector Housing

**“The funded research work has helped to move towards a shift of policies in planning and housing to look more broadly at the range of housing required for people as they age.”**

“The support we were able to procure through the grant was invaluable in supporting us to develop our Adult Social Care Accommodation Strategy. The expertise helped ensure that we are clear on the needs and challenges we face and help identify an approach to meeting these needs through a range of accommodation options.”

**“The work was to explore the concept of the local authority and how it could direct deliver housing, with a practical case study to focus on a particular area within the local area. The completed work has served as a background document in a subsequent master-planning study for the area in question, which is underway. It has also significantly informed the development of a commercial strategy.”**

“Brought all the thinking together into a single report and provided a route forward for delivery.”

**“[We now have] a better understanding of specialist housing needs and models for delivery.”**

Source: Housing Advisor programme – survey feedback

## Supporting greater community cohesion

We have continued to provide a programme of support to help councils strengthen community cohesion and to counter extremism. We delivered a successful Leadership Essentials course for elected members on cohesion and integration in March (2020) and have been proactive in offering a broad range of support to help local authorities with their counter extremism activities, taking account of the Government's Counter Extremism Strategy.

With this, the LGA has supported councils by way of the following:

- Continuing to support the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism (SIGCE) colleagues at Leeds and Luton councils to deliver their work programme (including advice and guidance to the Far Right Working Group to support local engagement campaigns, including by helping to develop plans and fund some community dialogue pilots in one local authority area.
- Organised a joint roundtable with the Commission for Countering Extremism to explore some of the harms from extremism with a group of local authority officers, to both inform the commission's October 2019 report, and help explore shared challenges and approaches amongst councils.
- Provided other support to Islamist Extremism Working Group.
- Holding a plenary session at the LGA Annual Conference on leadership in tackling extremism and terrorism.
- Launching two new SIGCE regional leadership networks for councillors and senior officers in the East of England and North of England regions and supported SIGCE seminars on religious conservatism, Islamist extremism and misogyny in extremism.

We also worked closely with Leeds Council to deliver (and co-sponsor) a two-day Northern Communities conference in November, bringing together councils and other sector representatives from across the north to explore common cohesion challenges and approaches.

## Strengthening councils licensing and regulatory functions

To help build capabilities in this area, we held our first Leadership Essentials programme for licensing committee members, which received extremely positive feedback. This builds on guidance published earlier in the year, including a new handbook for councillors on the Licensing Act, featuring examples of best practice; and further set of case studies on approaches to managing the night time

economy, which brings together examples of initiatives driven by councils and their partners which have sought to address the issues they have faced locally.

In addition, we published updated guidance on licensing and public health and have launched an online knowledge hub for local authorities to share best practice and experiences of building safety issues and reform. We also launched a Leadership Essentials programme focusing on building safety with new dates to be announced for 2020/21. We have been working with councils to help secure integrated communities and have provided input to two integration working groups, the first on developing an apprenticeship for working with communities, and the second on integration and sport.

## Supporting stronger strategic leadership in the fire and rescue sector

We have provided a range of support to the Fire and Rescue Sector across 2019/20, with an emphasis on providing support for new members. We ran a Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials for recently appointed members and published a Fire Authority Members guide to support new members' induction into fire and rescue authorities. The guide provides a short introduction to the role of fire and rescue authorities and the legislation under which their duties functions. Feedback on both accounts was positive.

We also produced a guide to oversight of performance in fire and rescue services with training around this and ran further training sessions as part of the Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials programme and a culture, diversity and inclusion masterclass. In addition, the LGA Annual Fire Conference in March 2020 was well attended and provided further opportunities to learn from experts in the sector.

## Supporting the Modern Slavery Act

We have continued to support the voluntary publication of annual transparency statements under Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act based on the issues around reputation and ethical governance. An independent review of the Modern Slavery Act (MSA) was undertaken and the submitted a formal response<sup>20</sup> to the Home Office consultation on the findings Independent Review. The LGA was supportive of many of the recommendations including formally backing the decision to include councils with budgets over £36 million to be included in provisions of Section 54 of the Act. Research was also carried out to determine how many councils would fall in-scope (budget over £36 million) of any changes to the Act and how many were already compliant found there were; 150 councils have a budget over the £36 million threshold and would be in-scope, 70 in-scope councils have transparency statements and in total 132 councils (in-scope/out of scope) have a Modern Slavery transparency statement putting the sector in a healthy position for any changes to the Act. The LGA also published it's Councillor's Guide to Modern Slavery and Tackling Modern Slavery: council case studies.

## Supporting councils to prepare for the UK's exit from the European Union

During 2019/20, we supported councils and work with Whitehall to ensure that preparations fully consider the needs of local places and councils. This is only achievable by ensuring the Government provides clear, cross-departmental communications, tailored to councils, through a single communications hub.

The preparations had increased up to December 2019 and the weekly key issue reporting from councils through the nine chief executives continued. We continue to report concerns of councils to Government through the EU Exit Ministerial Delivery Board and the nine chief executive's network. The LGA has been supporting councils to prepare for the UK's exit from the implementation period and identify council priorities for any future Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. This work commenced when the UK exited the EU on 31 January in line with Government developments. Since the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions were put in place, preparations have been put on hold and will resume as Government progress talks with the European Union.

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<sup>20</sup> [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/lga-submission-home-office-transparency-supply-chains](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/lga-submission-home-office-transparency-supply-chains)

# Annex A

## Supporting councils to respond to COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak and challenges associated have had a profound impact on our communities and on local government.

The LGA has rapidly refocused its support to councils to ensure its resources are best placed to help with immediate challenges presenting now and in the future. With this impetus, the vast majority of the LGA's operation in March 2020 shifted to focus on supporting local government and communities to address COVID-19 and its consequences. A summary of our refocused programme of support around COVID-19 is available on our website: [www.local.gov.uk/olga-covid-19-support-offer](http://www.local.gov.uk/olga-covid-19-support-offer)

This swift changing of gears demonstrates the flexibility of the SLI approach and the responsiveness of the LGA. As councils confront the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak, the repositioning of SLI has helped to provide councils with support that is both current and necessary.

# Annex B

## Accessing the improvement offer: the role of LGA principal advisers

Principal advisers are the LGA's focal point for discussions with councils about their improvement needs and the support we can make available – working with existing sector-owned improvement bodies at sub-national level and with regionally based colleagues supporting other programmes, such as the Care and Health Improvement Programme.

Principal advisers also have a key role in identifying good and innovative practice, which is fed back into the LGA to inform the wider improvement offer to the sector.

Each principal adviser is responsible for one or more regions. Principal advisers have extensive experience of working at a senior level in local government and the wider local public sector.

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