

No.626 August 2018

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# first

the magazine for local government



## Annual conference

Pepper the social humanoid robot – **helping people with dementia and autism**

13



8

**Ministers announce...**  
Brexit delivery board and digital funding



10

**Closing the funding gap**  
Councils will be short of £7.8bn by 2025



23

**Sexual exploitation**  
Vulnerable adults need protection

# LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition

2-4 July 2019  
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International  
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## Review of conference



We had an amazing LGA annual conference in Birmingham, and thank you to everyone who organised, attended, spoke and exhibited for making it such a success.

We revealed our latest £7.8 billion estimate of the funding gap facing councils by 2025 – and this is just to maintain current service levels (p10).

We also published a series of reports on funding, housing, schools, Brexit, non-metropolitan England and adult social care, as part of our new 'Moving the conversation on' campaign ahead of the 2019 Spending Review (see [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)).

We heard from a range of politicians, including Communities Secretary James Brokenshire MP, Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP, and Brexit Minister Suella Braverman MP (p8); Shadow Communities Secretary Andrew Gwynne MP, Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner MP (p9) and Hilary Benn MP, Chair of the Exiting the EU Select Committee (p8); Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Vince Cable MP and LGA Vice-President Lord Best (p9).

Conference's Innovation Zone once again inspired delegates with the latest good ideas from councils (p13).

I look forward to seeing many more of you in Bournemouth next year!

**Lord Porter** is Chairman of the LGA

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**Local Government Association**

# contents

## news

- 4** Banning cladding  
Brexit White Paper
- 5** LGA Social Care  
Green Paper  
Children's services  
'improving'  
Sleep-ins ruling

- 6** High streets  
Betting stakes  
Shared services
- 7** Funding gap  
Health and care  
LG Challenge

- 8** Brexit delivery board  
Digital funding  
Leaving the EU
- 9** School improvement  
National education  
service  
Funding and housing



4



21



12



16



26



29

## features

- 10** Running on empty
- 12** Women in politics
- 13** Innovation Zone
- 14** Housing and devolution
- 15** Non-metropolitan England
- 16** Conference in pictures
- 18** #FutureComms
- 19** Childhood obesity
- 20** Taxi licensing
- 21** Design in the public sector

## comment

- 23** Vulnerable adults
- 24** LGA chairman and group leaders
- 26** DCN toolkit  
Autism strategy
- 27** Welsh council mergers
- 28** Domestic abuse

## regulars

- 29** Parliament – funding and social care
- 30** Councillor – five questions
- 31** Local elections



## 'Extend ban on combustible materials'

**MPs have called for the Government to take "urgent and wide-ranging action" to ensure the safety of people living in high-rise buildings, including extending a proposed ban on combustible cladding.**

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee said it agreed with Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety that there is a need for a fundamental change of culture in the construction industry.

But in a new report, it says there are also measures that can and should be introduced now – including extensive changes to building regulations and extending the ban on dangerous cladding beyond new high-rise buildings to existing buildings and residential homes hospitals, hotels and student accommodation.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: "The tragedy that unfolded at Grenfell Tower must never be allowed to happen again and we must ensure that those who live, work and visit high-rise and high-risk buildings are safe.

"There is increasing evidence that the BS8414 test – which tests the fire performance of external cladding and insulation systems – cannot be relied upon. Flaws with the testing process have been exposed time and again since the Grenfell Tower fire.

"The evidence from real fires in real tower blocks shows that using combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise

buildings kills people. We continue to strongly urge the Government to ban the use of any combustible materials – including cladding panels, insulation and other materials – on the external walls of high-rise and high-risk buildings.

He added: "Implementation of the recommendations from Dame Judith's final report, and the culture change she seeks in the construction industry, will take time. However, building owners, the construction industry and regulators need clarity now about what they can and cannot put on the side of the buildings.

"The safest and most unambiguous way of providing that clarity is to ban the use of combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise and high-risk buildings without delay."

● Thousands of empty properties across England could be brought back into use if councils are allowed to increase the rate of extra council tax on empty homes, the LGA has said. It supported an amendment to the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Bill to give councils the power to increase the empty homes premium thresholds on council tax bills for homes left empty for between two and five years from 50 per cent to up to 100 per cent, with bigger increases on homes left empty for longer than five years.

## EU regional funding in White Paper

The importance of replacing EU regional funding has been acknowledged by the Government in its recently published Brexit White Paper, 'Blueprint for Brexit'.

Following debate in Parliament, the White Paper will now form the basis of the UK's negotiations with the EU.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Task Force, said: "The publication of the White Paper gives us a clearer understanding of what the Government's vision of post-Brexit Britain will look like.

"This includes the acknowledgement from the Government of the importance of replacing EU regional funding, currently worth £8.4 billion, with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (USKPF), following extensive lobby by the LGA.

"Brexit cannot leave local areas facing huge financial uncertainty as a result of lost regional aid funding. This funding has been used by local areas to create jobs, support small and medium enterprises, deliver skills training, and invest in critical transport and digital infrastructure and boost inclusive growth across the country.

"To help ensure we have an economy fit for the future, we are urging the Government to act immediately to consult on the detail of what the fund will look like. Councils need to know quickly how they will be able to bid, receive guarantees that the UKSPF will at least match the funding from the current European Structural Fund, and receive their funding allocations by the time we leave the EU.

"Without action there is a risk that billions of pounds of investment into our communities will be lost and local areas and economies will be denied desperately needed funding.



**i** For the LGA's current position on Brexit, please see 'Brexit; moving the conversation forward' at [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)



# LGA to publish social care Green Paper

**Council leaders are to publish their own response to the adult social care funding crisis, in response to the latest delay to the Government's Green Paper.**

As first went to press, the LGA was expecting to publish its Green Paper by the end of July, with the Government's version not now expected until the autumn.

At its annual conference in early July, the LGA published new figures showing adult social care services face a funding gap of £3.5 billion by 2025 – part of an overall shortfall for all council services of nearly £8 billion.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "The funding crisis cannot be ignored any longer.

"We are writing our own Green Paper in a bid to engage the public, politicians and the adult social care sector to shape official legislation to best help people of all ages with care needs access the wide range of reliable and high-quality care they deserve.

"We need an amnesty on the politics of care funding reform. All options should be

on the table to solve the funding crisis and enable councils to meet growing demand with high-quality and safe services that help people live their lives."

One of those options should be national taxation – seen as part of the solution to securing the long-term financial stability of adult social care by 89 per cent of council leaders and adult social care cabinet members surveyed by the LGA.

The survey, of all 152 councils providing social care in England, also found that almost all (96 per cent) believe there is a major national funding problem. More than two-thirds of councils (70 per cent) agreed with the LGA's view that further increases in council tax should not be part of the solution to plug growing funding gaps.



### **'A sustainable adult social care support system for the long term:**

moving the conversation on', see [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)

## Children's services 'improving'

The proportion of council children services departments in England judged good or outstanding has increased from 36 per cent in October 2017 to 38 per cent in March 2018.

The new data, published by Ofsted, also shows that the proportion judged inadequate has fallen from 19 per cent to 15 per cent.

Responding to the data, Cllr Antoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Protecting children and helping them to get the very best in life is one of the most important things that councils do and it is positive that the proportion of children's services departments rated good or outstanding has increased.

"Despite this, many are being pushed to the brink by unprecedented demand and increasing financial pressures, with an average of more than 270 children taken into care or placed on a child protection plan every single day to keep them safe from harm.

"Councils have pulled out all the stops to protect children's budgets, but are now being forced to cut funding for vital services – such as early intervention support – leaving some children having to reach crisis point before they get help.

"The funding the LGA has received from government to improve children's services and deliver a programme of sector-led support to councils will provide a number of benefits such as sharing good practice and expertise.

"But this alone will not plug the funding gap facing children's services, which will reach £3 billion by 2025. If government is serious about protecting and supporting children, it needs to provide the funding needed."

## news in brief

### Sleep-ins ruling

A tribunal ruling that social care staff should be paid the National Living Wage for sleep-in shifts, which would have cost providers an estimated £400 million in back-dated pay, has been overturned by the Court of Appeal. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "This ruling will come as a relief to care providers and councils. We strongly support care workers being paid a fair wage for their valued work, but if this appeal was upheld it would have increased the risk of a sinkhole in adult social care."

### Liberty safeguards

A new, simpler and less bureaucratic system for safeguarding individuals who have been deprived of their liberty for their own safety (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards) has been set out in the recently published Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill. Cllr Linda Thomas, Vice-Chair of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "These reforms, which the LGA has long called for, are much needed to help councils fulfil their statutory duties and ensure the rights of vulnerable people are protected. We are keen to work with government on further details so councils can ensure that people who lack mental capacity are at the centre of decisions made about their care."

### Delayed transfers

The latest NHS England figures on patients stuck in hospital when they are ready to go home show that delays due to social care fell by 9 per cent between April and May. Since July 2017, delays due to social care have fallen by about 39 per cent, while delays due to the NHS have fallen by 13 per cent. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "The further reduction in delays due to social care is testament to the fantastic work by councils. Councils need urgent funding to invest in effective prevention work to reduce the need for people to be admitted to hospital in the first place."

## Delayed reforms could cost gamblers £3bn

A lack of urgency in lowering fixed odds betting terminal (FOBT) stakes could result in people losing more than £3 billion on the high-stakes machines, the LGA has warned.

Following concerns raised by councils about the harm caused by the high stakes available on FOBTs, the Government pledged to reduce them from £100 to £2. However, the LGA is urging the Government to resist any “unacceptable” betting shop industry pressure to delay the change for up to two years, and instead to ensure the stakes are cut by spring 2019.

Gambling Commission statistics indicate that, on average, £5 million a day is being lost on FOBT machines, meaning a two-year delay could see £3.6 billion lost before the stake is cut.

The LGA said any moves to delay or block a cut in maximum stakes risks exacerbating the financial and mental problems FOBTs pose to vulnerable individuals and the associated costs to other public services, such as health, housing and the justice system, estimated at around £200 million a year.

The LGA is supporting a parliamentary Early Day Motion calling for early implementation, and has published a new guide for councils on tackling problem gambling, see [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications).

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: “The LGA and others have campaigned for a number of years for a reduction in maximum stakes on FOBTs and are delighted the Government has rightly acted on our calls.

“Councils are extremely concerned about reports that the betting industry is blocking an early implementation. This is hugely worrying and frankly unacceptable. The Government needs to resist any pressure and move quickly to implement these changes to prevent further harm in our society.

“Failing to reduce the stakes will mean that problem gamblers and taxpayers continue to experience significant costs linked to FOBTs.”



## Rethink needed on ailing high streets

**Struggling retailers should no longer be relied on to prop up ailing town centres, with 100,000 shops predicted to be empty within a decade.**

The independent Grimsey Review 2, launched at the LGA's annual conference, makes 25 recommendations for turning around local high streets, including giving local authorities more powers to have the final say on granting planning permission, preventing land banking and encouraging landlords to fill empty shops.

It also calls for an overhaul of business rates and a ban on out-of-town developments.

Bill Grimsey, former Wickes and Iceland CEO and author of the report, said: “The first six months of 2018 have seen the highest rate of retail closures, administrations and company voluntary arrangements [debt agreements allowing companies to carry on trading] for more than a decade and there is no sign of a slowdown.

“Our cities, towns and communities are facing their greatest challenge in history – which is how to remain relevant, and

economically and socially viable in the 21st century.”

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Economy Spokesman, responded by saying: “Many councils throughout the country are already leading the way in transforming the future potential of their town centres in the face of unprecedented changes in shopping habits and the retail landscape.

“We are pleased that the report backs our calls for councils to have more powers and flexibility, particularly in relation to planning, to help shape and deliver vibrant town centres. The LGA stands ready to work with the Government, councils and other stakeholders to help secure a prosperous long-term future for our high streets and town and city centres.”

Since the launch of the review, High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP has announced a task force on town centres. The panel will look at what consumers and communities need from their high streets and will be chaired by Sir John Timpson, boss of shoe repair service Timpson.

## Shared services 'saving millions'

The latest shared services map published by the LGA shows that nearly a billion pounds of taxpayers' money has been saved by councils.

There are now 559 individual shared service arrangements across the country, resulting in £971 million of cumulative efficiency savings.

Shared services are driving the collaborative transformation agenda – delivered ‘in place’, within larger local authority boundaries, creating new, better, lower cost ways of working that put the resident or patient at the heart of the service.

Sometimes that directly saves money, but more frequently it reframes the relationships between councils and blurs departmental boundaries. Camden, Haringey & Islington Shared Digital showcases collaborative transformation with really good outcomes for homeless people.

Co-procurement ranked highly across all the cash savings through shared services arrangements, followed by shared back office services and management teams.

Analysis also shows there has been a rise in councils sharing their counter fraud provisions, pooling their resources and widening their focus in the prevention of fraud resulting in huge savings.

Cllr Paul Bettison, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, said: “Our latest shared services map shows once again that when it comes to making efficiency savings there is none better than local government. Shared services are now the norm while still saving money in times of significant change, reinforcing councils' reputation as the most efficient part of the public sector.”

# conference news

## £7.8bn funding gap by 2025

**Local services in England face a funding gap of almost £8 billion by 2025 and are “on the brink of collapse”, the LGA has warned.**

It has launched a campaign ahead of next year’s ‘make or break’ spending review to build the case for investment in local services, and published a series of documents outlining the huge funding pressures facing local government at its annual conference in early July.

By 2020, local authorities will have faced a reduction to government core funding of nearly £16 billion since 2010. Councils will have lost 60 pence out of every £1 the Government had provided to spend on local services, with 168 councils receiving no more core central government funding at all from next year.

In a new report, published at conference, the LGA estimates councils in England face a funding gap of £7.8 billion by 2025 – just to maintain current levels of services.

Councils have responded to the financial challenges they face by finding new and innovative ways of operating, such as sharing services. Despite their best efforts, the LGA is warning that this is no longer enough to protect local services facing huge and increasing demand pressures,

particularly for adult and children’s care services, and from rising homelessness.

In his 2018 Spring Statement, Chancellor Philip Hammond committed to increasing public spending if public finances continue to improve. The LGA says the Government’s spending review must recognise the urgent need to focus on fairer funding for local services.

LGA Chairman Lord Porter said: “If the Government allows the funding gap facing our councils and local services to reach almost £8 billion by the middle of the next decade then they will be damaged beyond recognition.

“The impact on society will be hugely damaging. Millions of people will be deprived of the vital local services that help improve quality of life and bind communities together.

“But by properly funding local services and giving councils the powers to work on behalf of their communities, local government can be the driving force for a new chapter in our country’s history. It would ensure residents can live with dignity, achieve their goals and aspire to do more than just get by, as well as helping to reduce pressures on the rest of the public sector.”

● See p10

## Health and care cash ‘struggle’



Collaboration between social care and the NHS will struggle without both services being treated equally and held in the same esteem, delegates at the LGA’s annual conference were told.

Referencing the £20 billion long-term settlement for the NHS, Sir Amyas Morse, Comptroller and Auditor General at the National Audit Office, said: “If you want this to work and want really close collaboration it’s got to be from a position where there’s some degree of equality, and it’s difficult to achieve equality when one of you is getting a quite large birthday present and the other isn’t getting a birthday present and hasn’t had one for years.”

Niall Dickson, Chief Executive of the NHS Confederation, said more money needed to be invested in social care than the NHS: “The health bit will not do well with the 3.4 per cent [yearly NHS funding increase for the next five years] unless there is a significant increase in social care spending that goes alongside that.”

Jonathan Marron, Director General of Community and Social Care at the Department of Health and Social Care, said that two of the priorities for spending the NHS’s extra £20 billion were better integration of health and care, and greater investment in prevention.

In a different conference session, Public Health England Chief Executive Duncan Selbie told delegates that there is no 10-year NHS plan “that doesn’t have prevention in the heart of it and... that doesn’t have local government in there leading it”.

But he warned that, while the sector is good at talking about the importance of prevention in keeping people healthy and out of hospital, councils have got to “learn how to win the argument” about investing in public health.

Stating that 40 per cent of all illness is preventable, Mr Selbie added: “The NHS has no sustainable future without thinking about how we keep people well for longer, and in their homes when they’re not well for longer. That’s where public health meets social care. That’s where local government has an inseparable and completely necessary contribution to make.”

### Meeting the challenge:

Wiltshire Council’s Kartar Singh was named the winner of the 2018 Local Government Challenge to find the brightest and best council officers (see [www.local.gov.uk/lg-challenge](http://www.local.gov.uk/lg-challenge)). Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak (pictured, left) presented him with his trophy and he also receives a £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart scholarship to spend on his own project.



© ANDREW BAKER/LGA



## Leaving the EU: care concerns

The economic impact of Brexit could stretch to all areas of local government, the Chair of the Commons' Exiting the EU Select Committee has warned.

In particular, Hilary Benn MP (pictured) highlighted issues with employment and migration with reference to social care, telling the LGA's annual conference: "One in five care workers is from outside this country. Who do we think will look after us when we get older?"

"Let's be honest with each other, whether we voted leave or remain – it is a mess, and we are running out of time."

Mr Benn highlighted the importance of getting Brexit right: "It is, without any question, the single most important decision we've had to make since the end of the Second World War... it's important that we come together and try and help the people we are here to represent."

In the same conference session, Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Task Force, welcomed the announcement of a Brexit delivery board (see right), saying this would mean local government being able "to negotiate directly with national government in a way we haven't been able to before."

Procurement remains a key issue for councils with projects dependant on EU structures, but most pressing is the need for £3.5 billion of EU funding currently provided to the UK's regions to be replaced by central government, he told delegates.

"This whole Brexit issue is about real people, real jobs, real livelihood, and real wellbeing. No-one, but no-one, deals with that better than local government," he added.

The conference also heard from Stefaan de Rynck, Senior Adviser to Michel Barnier, Chief EU negotiator. He noted that 80 per cent of the withdrawal agreement has been agreed, adding: "It's in all our interests to put an end to the uncertainty around Brexit and move on."



**For more on the LGA's policy positions on Brexit**, please read 'Brexit: moving the conversation on' at [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)

# Brexit delivery board for local government

**The Government is setting up a delivery board with local government to support the implementation of changes linked to Brexit within the sector.**

Making the announcement, Communities Secretary James Brokenshire thanked the LGA for its valuable work in "identifying the issues at stake and also in recognising the opportunities that will be available".

"Brexit will, undoubtedly, generate different opportunities and challenges for different areas," he told delegates at the LGA's annual conference.

"Regardless of our political differences, we all have a duty to ensure that every community can benefit as we build a modern, outward-looking Britain after Brexit. In this context, it's even more essential that we renew our focus on local growth and higher productivity through not just the devolution deals already under way, but the other growth opportunities – housing deals, local industrial strategies and the LEP (local enterprise partnership) review – that are open to local areas."

Mr Brokenshire told conference he was "under no illusions" about the challenges councils face, and that there are "no easy answers" to issues such as the difficult financial environment, changes in demographics, lifestyles and technology, and growing pressures on services.

"I know that money has been extremely tight, that you've gone the extra mile to deliver efficiencies and help reduce our country's debts, and that significant financial pressures remain," he said.

The Government had responded, with this year's local government finance settlement providing a boost in funding and extra money for adult social care. But he reassured delegates he would continue to "listen and respond to what you're telling me".

Brexit Minister Suella Braverman MP (pictured) gave more details of the delivery board, telling delegates that local authorities will be key to helping local people reap the benefits and unique opportunities offered by the UK leaving the EU.

"We recognise how vital it is to listen to your concerns and your advice and to take that into account as we work to make Brexit successful for all people in all our regions," she said.



## Digital infrastructure fund revealed

A 'Digital Declaration' between local and national government and £7.5 million to boost councils' digital offer was announced at the LGA's annual conference by Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP.

Mr Sunak pledged to focus on three priorities when it comes to local government technology: the needs of its citizens; "fixing digital plumbing"; and what government can do to help effective digital projects happen.

The minister asked delegates to consider a day in the life of two council employees – one with access to app-based services and digital support, and one without, and argued that technology is already transforming public services and is essential to the future of local government.

"An understanding of digital is not just something we can leave to the IT department," Mr Sunak said. "It belongs in the boardroom, not in the basement."

He continued: "Getting this right has a huge impact, both in saving people's time, and in saving councils money. The question you, as council leaders, should be asking IT departments is this – are we thinking about what our residents do in their own lives?"

Mr Sunak argued for councils to "fix their digital plumbing" by looking at what "lego blocks" can be put together to help shape councils' offer for digital services. These blocks, built on common standards, and therefore cheaper and easier to share, are ways to build more digitally-enabled services.

He also said the £7.5 million for boosting council services could be used to train future leaders and shape councils' digital delivery, noting: "Some of you are at the cutting edge already, others are beginning their journey. This couldn't and shouldn't be a one-size-fits-all fund."

# Councils successful at improving schools

**Councils are better at turning around failing schools than academy chains, according to new analysis launched at the LGA's annual conference.**

The analysis looked at more than 300 council-maintained schools that were judged inadequate in 2013.

It found that 115 (75 per cent) of the 152 schools that remained under council control had been turned around to become a good or outstanding school by December 2017.

This compares with 92 (59 per cent) of the 155 schools that converted to a sponsored academy.

The LGA says its new findings provide "compelling" evidence that councils should be allowed to intervene and turn around all types of school found to be inadequate. Under current rules they are barred from helping, even in cases where a struggling school cannot find an academy sponsor.

Cllr Roy Perry, Vice-Chairman of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "These findings clearly demonstrate the excellent track record councils have in turning around failing schools and

the compelling need for councils to be recognised as effective education improvement partners, ready and able to support schools of all types."

Separately, MPs have warned that the Government is not learning from high-profile academy failures.

The Public Accounts Committee says it is concerned about levels of support for struggling schools and that the Department for Education is failing to give a clear sense of direction for maintained schools, academies, local authorities, pupils and parents.

Responding to the committee's report, Cllr Perry said: "The report also raises concerns over the impact of academisation on councils' ability to provide school places, which is why councils need to be allowed to open schools and to direct academies to expand where necessary."



**'Improving schools: moving the conversation on'**, see [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)

## Local services 'change lives'

A national politician has described how local services transformed her life as a teenage mum, and has promised to empower local government.

Angela Rayner MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, spoke about Labour's plans for a national education service, and returning responsibility and accountability for education to local areas, at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham.

"The services you provide change lives. I don't say that as a politician but as someone who was a young mum, whose life was turned around by the support I received," she told delegates.

As a 16-year-old mother, she received support from her local Sure Start centre, and later – as a care worker and trade unionist – argued for investment in staff to improve services to vulnerable residents.

"It was the first time a lot of us – predominantly women who had not done well at school – got an academic qualification... Investment in services pays dividends and adds value to people's lives," said Mrs Rayner.

Councils have been given responsibilities but no resources, she added. As part of its plans for a national education service, a Labour government would give councils the powers and funding necessary to deliver the school

places they need, would invest in Sure Start, and provide real devolution, handing down power along with accountability.

"A national education service... is not code for massive centralisation or top-down reorganisation," she told delegates.

"Our communities are at their best when they are empowered, and that means empowering local government with the resources and support you need."



## news in brief

### Call for end to 'stopgap' funding

The pattern of stopgap funding for local government needs to end, Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Vince Cable MP told the LGA's annual conference.

"It's very clear that local government is the most efficient part of the public sector, and it's had to be," he said in the conference's closing plenary.

Citing the LGA's new analysis, which shows there will be a £7.8 billion funding gap for local government by 2025, he added: "We need to deal with funding in the longer term, not just a stopgap."

If it were not for political ideology, funding for local government would be increasing in line with economic growth, he added.

Sir Vince also highlighted the political dilemmas around solving the adult social care funding crisis, with national politicians terrified of reigniting debates about 'dementia tax' or 'death tax'.

Government had "bottled" Dilnott, and "showed very little evidence of the courage you need to have a sensible sharing of costs and risks in social care".

### Housing: more chances to build

LGA Vice-President Lord Best OBE used his conference speech to share concerns about the quantity and quality of house building and the pressure this places on renters and buyers.

He noted a recent reversal in government policy on housing, with the previous reliance on the major house builders to build enough homes for the country falling out of favour.

"House builders only build at a speed that makes sure house prices don't fall," he told delegates.

On a positive note, he highlighted that the Government's "crazy plan" to force local authorities to sell off high-value council homes to fund Right to Buy for housing association tenants had been kicked into the long grass.

And he suggested ministers, having "lost patience" with the big house builders, would respond more positively to councils taking up opportunities to build.

● 'Housing, planning and homelessness: moving the conversation on', see [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)

# Running on empty

The LGA has warned that councils face a funding gap of £7.8bn by 2025, as it campaigns for a new and sustainable settlement ahead of next year's spending review



Councillor **Nick Forbes**  
is Senior Vice-Chair of the LGA

In an increasingly polarised and fractured political landscape, it is important that we in local government come together and work to create a better future for the people we serve.

As I said to colleagues at the LGA's annual conference, it doesn't matter whether you play for the red team or the blue team or any of the other teams in the LGA family; what we all want are empowered communities, individuals who are supported to live independent lives, and economies that support prosperity and inclusion.

The last 12 months have seen some great successes but they have to be framed in terms of just how much more there is still to be achieved. Thanks to our campaigning, housing is a top priority for the Government. The Local Housing Allowance won't apply to supported housing or the wider social rented sector, an extra £2 billion has been added to the Affordable Homes Programme, and we are moving at last in the right direction on borrowing to build.

Our voice was also loud and clear in the battle to protect people from the danger



and addiction that can come from fixed odds betting machines. The LGA saw how these were ruining people's lives and we fought hard to secure from government a new £2 maximum stake.

That's the sort of real-world victory that makes local government a life-changing force. But as we make clear in our new research (see [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)), some councils are beginning to crumble and we have reached the point where councils will no longer be able to support our residents as they might expect.

At its annual conference in early July, the LGA revealed the figures that prove the bank of local government is running on empty. Just to stand still and deliver the same services we are currently providing, councils need an additional £7.8 billion by 2025.

This money isn't to re-open the libraries or the Sure Start centres that have closed in recent years, and it won't fill the pothole backlog. This £7.8 billion would only allow us to keep applying the sticking plasters.

It is what we need to support our older and disabled residents, ensure our children have a bright future, and that no person is without a roof over their heads.

For too long, central government has relied on local government to deliver the world-class public services our residents rely on, but forced us to do this on a shoestring.

As is always the case in local government, we have stepped up to the plate. Councils have innovated, reimagined and reinvented themselves in every way they can – delivering significant savings and efficiencies.

But, despite our best efforts, the scale of government funding reductions and increasing demand for services means there is only so much more we can do. We are now reaching the point where some councils will no longer be able to deliver for government, businesses, and residents.

*“It is simply not acceptable for the public to pay more and more in council tax and feel they are receiving less and less in return”*



This is an edited version of LGA Vice-Chairman Cllr Nick Forbes' speech to the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham. For the full version, please visit <https://bit.ly/2KUVBxW>. To find out more about the LGA's 'Moving the conversation on' campaign, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)

I suspect, though, that Whitehall will realise this too late. Right now, national government appears to be devoting its entire political bandwidth to Brexit, and is simply unable to engage with us actively on the big policy and financial challenges.

While rightly we focus on supporting the vulnerable, it is very clear that the patience our electorate has with this approach is wearing thin. It is simply not acceptable for the public to pay more and more in council tax and feel they are receiving less and less in return.

Most people don't realise that councils with social care responsibilities spend around two-thirds of their budget on supporting vulnerable adults and children. One of our nation's priorities has to be to put social care on a long-term, sustainable financial footing.

That is how we ensure not only that councils meet the needs of the vulnerable, but the expectations of the rest of the population. The role of our councils must not be reduced to merely an underfunded care provider.

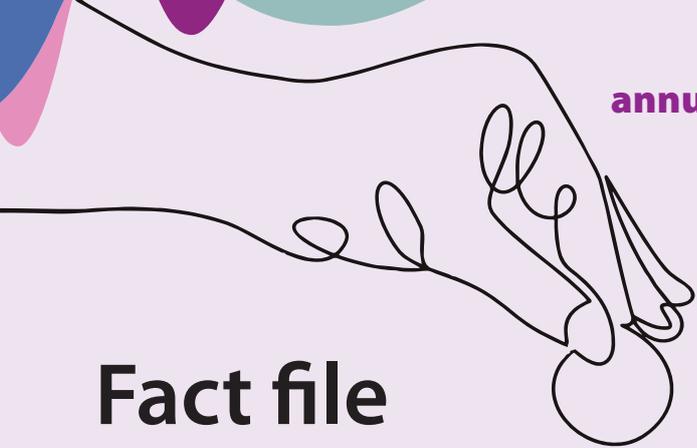
So whether it's the tools we need to build more homes, or the funding we need to keep services on track, we are all clear about what needs to be done. But the same cannot be said about the challenge of Brexit.

By this time next year, Britain will have left the European Union. People will expect things to be different; they voted for change, and will expect to see a difference in their area, to see more housing and better public services.

We didn't paint these claims on the side of a bus, but they are the expectations we will have to deal with, nonetheless. I don't think these changes can be delivered by any central government, because they never have been. It will be us that has to act on them.

To do that, we as local government need a new settlement from central government, one that devolves powers and finances down to communities. By properly funding local services and giving councils the means to work on behalf of their communities, local government can be the driving force for a new chapter in our nation's history.

We stand ready to play a leading role in supporting our nation through uncertain times. But, to do that, we need a new compact with government – one that treats councils and councillors with dignity and respect, values the local leadership we bring, supports us in achieving all we can for our communities, and sets us free to deliver, rather than seeking to bind our hands.



## Fact file

Total council tax raised by councils in England 2017/18 was

**£23.082bn**

This is less than the net adult and children's social care budget in England in 2017/18 which is budgeted as

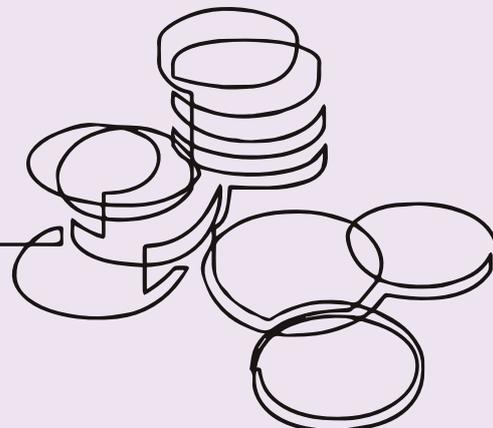
**£23.651bn**

**1 in 10**

The National Audit Office warns that if social care authorities continue to use reserves at the rates they did in 2016/17, **1 in 10 will not have anything left in three years' time.** We estimate that if all councils used reserves only to fund the funding gap, they would run out of reserves by 2022.

**£624m**

Public Health England estimates that **the cost to the NHS of poor housing lived in by older people (55+) is £624 million annually;** and in 2014 health charity The Kings Fund estimated that every **£1 spent on improving homes saves the NHS £70.**



# A century of suffrage

What next for women in politics and local government were key questions at the LGA's annual conference

Baroness Jenkin



Sophie Walker



Cllr Ruth Dombey



Cllr Georgia Gould



The "toxic" culture of current political debate and the need to encourage more women to stand as councillors and MPs were among the issues raised by speakers in two sessions on women in politics.

Baroness Anne Jenkin of Kennington, who in 2005 co-founded with Theresa May the Conservative Party's Women2Win campaign, highlighted her party's poor record in selecting and electing female MPs, with just 13 elected in 1997 (67 women were elected in 2017, making up 21 per cent of Conservative MPs).

"It still remains poor. Only 10 per cent of people coming forward are women. I just ask you, particularly in your local communities, to look out for women who have what it takes," she told delegates.

"It matters because women's life experiences are different from men. They are not superior or inferior but we need to have that difference around decision-making tables, and particularly at Westminster."

Sophie Walker, Leader of the Women's Equality Party, told delegates she never wanted to be a politician, but that it was a terrible thing "for a woman with a vote to feel they can't use it usefully".

"I put together a party for women by women, and we are having the time of our lives. We are writing policies in ways that can materially change women's lives," she said.

Changing one thing won't make a difference – "we need lots of things, and we need them to be joined up" – but she particularly raised the issue of care.

"I would like us to be talking about care as much as possible. You know this because your social care costs are killing you, because we don't value care in this country. And we know why, because women do it."

Cllr Ruth Dombey (Lib Dem), Leader of Sutton Council, highlighted the need to encourage women to go for senior positions noting she had no intention to stand as leader of the council until

someone "challenged me to spread my wings".

She said she loved being a councillor but warned that the "macho, combative nature" of current political debate is "holding back not just women but many good men".

"There is a dangerous view that this is somehow the cost of being a politician. It's not, it's wrong and it has to stop now," she added, calling for every threat of abuse and act of intimidation against women politicians on social media and elsewhere to be pursued and prosecuted.

Cllr Georgia Gould (Lab), Leader of Camden Council, described how on her way to a leaders' conference in London, a man shouted: "Fancy a shag, love?"

"We have got a long way to go," she noted.

She, too, referenced the toxicity of current political debate and the "everyday sexism that drags us back". But she also highlighted practical issues in local politics – such as that only 4 per cent of councils have a parental leave policy for elected members.

A female perspective is needed to develop policy that meets women's needs, and "we need to change and redefine the way people understand leadership", she told delegates.

Cllr Gould also raised the issue of diversity, as did delegates in questions to the speakers.

Cllr Emina Ibrahim (Lab), Deputy Leader of Haringey Council, said: "I'm really conscious that even here we haven't got a very diverse panel."

She spoke about how black and ethnic minority women are targeted on social media if they speak up: "We are not defined as being strong feminists, we are seen as aggressive and combative."

And Cllr Paulette Hamilton (Lab), Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care at Birmingham City Council, while highlighting that, up to four years ago, the cabinet didn't have any women from ethnic minority communities despite the city's diversity, raised the issue of encouraging younger women into local politics. She suggested they sometimes feel like second-class citizens in a profession full of men with "very negative" attitudes towards women.

Meanwhile, "mansplaining" was available at an early morning session aimed at getting more women into local government, organised by the LGA and Solace, which represents public sector chief executives and senior managers.

Jessica Crowe, Assistant Director of Customers, Commissioning and Governance at the London Borough of Sutton, talked about valuing women and what they can bring to local government leadership.

Without wanting to say certain qualities are 'innate' to women (or men) she highlighted the need for different kinds of skills and leaders when funding is shrinking and "you can only achieve things for our communities by influencing others".

She emphasised the importance of challenging stereotypes, and noted: "I was interviewing some bidding teams and one was entirely male... you can't let these things go. They have got to show diversity."

Similar issues were picked up by Helen Bailey, Interim Chief Executive of North Somerset County Council, who told delegates: "We contract a huge number of organisations. If they think we don't think diversity matters, they won't trouble themselves to do anything about it."

She added: "For those of us in senior roles, we have to be visible and be ourselves. There are as many ways to be a senior leader as there are women doing it. Our job is to provide role models... that there is a great life to be had doing fantastic things in public service. If you enjoy it, other people might enjoy it too."

## Latest innovations

This year's Innovation Zone theme of 'your local place' showed how innovations benefiting individuals' lives also shape wider local communities.

The zone's whole programme illustrated how technology, learning from abroad, behavioural insight, new markets and campaigns are being used to tackle some of society's biggest issues such as homelessness, loneliness and social care.

Sponsored by Newton, the zone's three-day programme was packed, highlighting not only the innovations themselves but how councils can develop positive, proactive cultures that support and encourage ideas, testing, and learning from their experiences.

Highlights included Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's social humanoid robot Pepper, and Knowsley Council's responsive companion cat Tom. They attracted large numbers of delegates, as staff explained how their positive impacts far outweigh their novelty.

They are, for example, engaging those with dementia, Asperger's and autism, helping them to remember previously forgotten memories, smile, laugh and talk to others. One parent highlighted how her son opens up to Pepper in ways that he doesn't with other people.

Knowsley Council showed how Tom can benefit those who can't have real pets but can stroke, talk to and look after companion cats, and how the cats can help them be happy and improve their wellbeing.

Marvin Rees, the Mayor of Bristol,



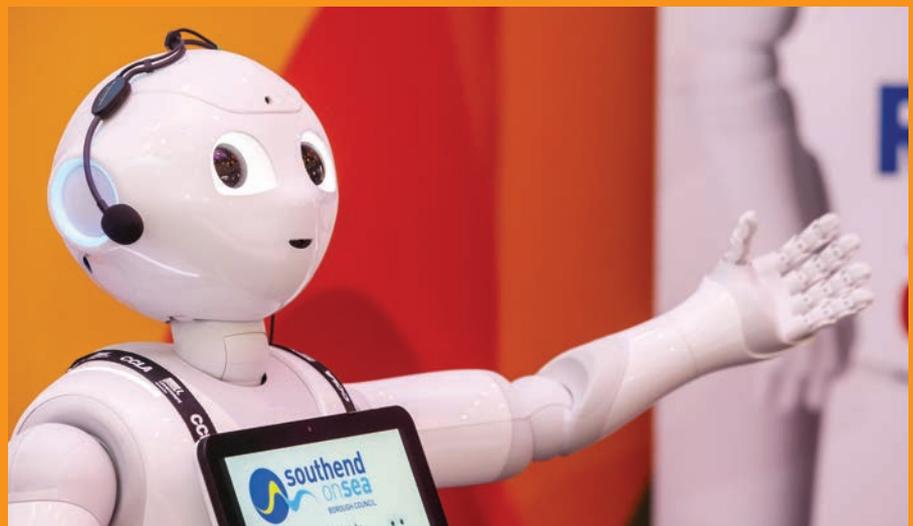
**Councillor Paul Bettison** is Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

and Robin Hambleton, Professor of City Leadership at the University of the West of England, also led a packed session, outlining how the Bristol City Office is developing a new, more inclusive way of governing a city.

The City Office enables city partners to work together via secondments from their usual roles to solve Bristol's challenges, complementing the work of existing networks and partnerships. Task groups form for each City Office project – for example, breakfast clubs to ensure that no child in Bristol goes to school hungry, and releasing additional bed spaces, reducing stigma and inspiring positive interactions with workplaces to tackle homelessness.

These examples formed just part of our varied programme that covered subjects from developing and supporting councillors to city centre growth, and intergenerational living to water safety.

Presentations from the Innovation Zone are being uploaded to [www.local.gov.uk/events/past-event-presentations](http://www.local.gov.uk/events/past-event-presentations), and the LGA's website has a whole section dedicated to council good practice case studies, see [www.local.gov.uk/case-studies](http://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies).



# The right homes in the right places



**T**he Government needs to deliver a “compelling vision for social housing” to help address the multifaceted housing crisis, according to speakers at the LGA’s annual conference.

Melanie Leech CBE, Chief Executive of the British Property Federation, highlighted the need to deliver large-scale housing projects alongside the infrastructure that “allows communities to thrive”.

Local authorities know housing is an engine for growth, and have a key role to play in re-imagining and repurposing town and city centres as part of their housing vision. But we still need a “compelling vision for social housing” from the Government, she added.

Nick Walkley, Chief Executive of Homes England, told delegates the agency would be getting “significant further funding” – but that this would be directed at the totality of

the housing market, not just councils.

Homes England wants to work with places that are clear about what their offer is, on housing, the economy and what looks best to their local communities – and councils are best placed to do that, he said.

But they need to make sure they have a local plan as “a place without a local plan is a place that has question marks about its commitment to growth”. They also need to understand the local market, and their wider powers to support skills, education and small and medium-sized businesses and house builders.

Jan Britton, Chief Executive of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, speaking on behalf of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), highlighted how the coming together of the authority’s seven boroughs, the WMCA’s £350 million housing deal and work with Homes England is

delivering real results in respect of housing quality as well as quantity.

“We’re focusing on a conversation around not just numbers, though numbers are important, but around quality. We have been thinking about the quality of the housing that we want with the urban densities that we need.”



**The LGA continues to campaign for new freedoms and powers to help councils tackle the housing crisis, including being able to borrow to build new homes and to retain all receipts from Right to Buy sales.** You can find out more in our conference publication, ‘Housing, planning and homelessness; moving the conversation on’, see [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)

## Combined authorities – one year on

Devolution to the English regions is allowing “real political change to happen”, according to Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham.

Speaking at the LGA’s annual conference in Birmingham, Mr Burnham said he felt the London-centric system of Westminster and Whitehall “gave us Brexit”, because of its failure to help other parts of the country.

And he argued that the new combined authority city mayors were able to put issues on the national agenda that weren’t there before – including rough sleeping, the dropping of rail electrification schemes in the north, and the ongoing problems facing train passengers in the region.

“Devolution to the English regions is the best opportunity to create a much healthier politics where power is more shared and

people can be part of changing their community for the better,” he told delegates.

In response to a question from Cllr Philippa Hart (Lib Dem, South Cambridgeshire), he acknowledged that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority was “further along” than others because of the way the 10 constituent councils have worked together since the county authority was abolished.

But he rejected a suggestion by Cllr Tom Hollis (Ind, Ashfield) that “you say devolution and I see centralisation”.

“More power close to your residents has got to be better,” responded Mr Burnham, arguing that combined authorities’ power was largely drawn down from Westminster rather than up from their constituent councils.



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# Facing the future

Non-metropolitan areas are facing a ‘perfect storm’ of social and demographic challenges, according to a new LGA report



In the May edition of **first**, I announced the launch of the Post-Brexit England Commission. This new initiative, led by the LGA’s People and Places Board, was set up to identify the challenges facing non-metropolitan England and highlight the opportunity presented by devolution to develop solutions that reconnect communities to the decisions and services that most affect their lives.

Since then, the commission has issued a call for evidence and built a broad coalition of stakeholders up and down the country with an interest in the future of non-metropolitan England.

At a series of roadshows, we have heard from businesses, representatives from the tourism and agriculture industries, health and local government on the issues faced by communities outside our city regions, and the



**Councillor Mark Hawthorne**  
is Chairman of the LGA’s  
People and Places Board

policy levers they need to tackle them.

The commission has now set out its preliminary findings in an interim report, which I was delighted to launch at the LGA’s annual conference in early July.

It outlines the ‘perfect storm’ of social and demographic challenges facing our rural and coastal communities in the coming years. It also details seven key areas in which councils must be given the powers to address local challenges to support the future success of non-metropolitan England.

The key areas include affordable and suitable housing, support services to help maintain health and wellbeing, transport provision and infrastructure, support for businesses, and increasing productivity and securing inclusive growth.

I would, however, like to focus on just two – the growing skills gap and the digital divide.

Ensuring local residents have the right skills to get a good-quality job is the key to building strong and resilient local economies.

However, the commission’s interim report highlights how a top-down employment and skills system is failing to equip people with the skills they need to secure rewarding work and supply businesses with the labour they require to prosper.

This challenge was underlined at the commission’s East Midlands roadshow, where the local Chamber of Commerce reported that 60 per cent of local businesses had struggled to fill vacancies for high-skilled and managerial roles in the last quarter.

The commission is calling on government to work with councils to deliver a devolved and integrated skills and employment system that is more coherent for people and more effective for businesses.

To prosper in the digital age, residents and businesses also need access to fast and reliable digital connectivity. Although the speed and quality of connectivity outside cities has improved in recent years, there is still an unmistakable digital divide in the country between urban and non-metropolitan areas.

At our South West roadshow, stakeholders told us how problems with slow and unreliable digital connectivity are creating significant opportunity cost for both residents and businesses, preventing them from accessing new markets and online public services.

We want to see councils given statutory powers to encourage developers to connect residents’ new homes with future-proofed digital connectivity.

This report is a milestone, not the final destination. The commission will continue to run roadshows and gather evidence and ideas in support of a final report to be published early next year.

Between now and then, we want to hear from councils, public sector agencies, businesses, the voluntary sector and residents in non-metropolitan England on what they see as the long-standing challenges their areas face and how councils and partners can help build a thriving and prosperous country.

**i** ‘The future of non-metropolitan Britain: moving the conversation on’ can be read in full at [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on). For more information about the work of the LGA’s Post-Brexit England Commission, please email [PBECCommission@local.gov.uk](mailto:PBECCommission@local.gov.uk). The commission is organising a series of regional roadshows starting in the South East on 20 September; the North East on 26 September; West Midlands on 4 October; Yorkshire and Humber on 9 October; North West on 16 October; and the East of England on 27 November. To find out more and book your place at an event, visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

# The biggest event in the local government calendar....

Crossbencher Lord  
Best addressed the  
conference on housing



The LGA's annual conference in Birmingham was attended by more than 1,400 delegates, 130 speakers and over 100 exhibitors for three politically charged and action-packed days...



Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, at a drinks reception hosted by the combined authority and sponsored by Kier



Liberal Democrat  
Leader Sir Vince  
Cable MP



The exhibition



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Lord Gary Porter, LGA Chairman (right), and LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd



Conference delegates peruse the programme



Broadcaster Anita Anand and Paralympian Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson at the local government question time



In the zone



On the move



Angela Rayner MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education



Trying out VR in the Innovation Zone



The World Cup...sadly, it didn't come home



James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Thank you to everyone who came to Birmingham this year, and we look forward to seeing you in Bournemouth in 2019, from 2-4 July. To book your place, sponsor an event or arrange an exhibition stand at next year's conference, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

# #FutureComms



Lord Porter  
is Chairman of the LGA

The LGA has designed a new resource to help councils develop stronger relationships with communities and build public services for the future through modern communications

Our new resource, #FutureComms, sets out what an effective, modern communications function should look like in local government today.

It features contributions from members, communicators and chief executives, and was developed in partnership with Solace, the representative body for public sector chief executives and senior managers, LGcommunications, the national voice of local authority communicators, and the Public Relations and Communications Association.

As councillors, we know the importance of communications and have adapted well to the new technologies now available to reach our residents.

But as the relationship between communities and councils changes, and financial pressures mean we need to empower local people to help themselves or collaborate with us to develop effective, long-term solutions, we need to rethink how we inform, engage and listen to people.

We also need to ensure we are both vocal and visible leaders of our places. Adopting a strategic and modern approach to our communications will be key to meeting all these challenges.

#FutureComms, launched at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham in July, explores how we can make sure our communications activity is fit for the future and aligned to what we are trying to achieve. It sets out what 'good' looks like, to help us and senior officers recognise what we should expect from our communications teams.

The resource also includes case studies from more than 35 local authorities. They are already seeing the benefits that



a strategic, evidence-based approach to communications can have, not just on resident engagement, but also on strengthening our finances and improving the everyday services that people rely on.

While the professional communicators in our organisations need to make sure their work reflects this, councillors, leaders and chief executives also have an important role to play to make sure that our communications deliver real impact.

That includes ensuring communications teams are positioned in the right place in our organisations, with the right level of influence and access to the top table, so they can help us deliver our priorities.

We can support them by making sure resources are focused on the issues of greatest importance.

## Modern strategic communications checklist

Research and best practice shows that proper strategic communications have:

- a corporate communications strategy linked to council aims and priorities
- an agreed annual campaign plan linked to all priorities
- a corporate narrative that tells the story of the council's ambitions to local people in a plain and compelling way
- regular resident insight
- rigorous evaluation.

They also:

- support leadership of place
- help change behaviour.

**i** Find out more about #FutureComms at [www.local.gov.uk/future-comms](http://www.local.gov.uk/future-comms). Over the coming months, we will keep refreshing the resource with the latest thinking and best practice from local government, so please let us know what would be useful in your role as a communicator by emailing [directorofcommunications@local.gov.uk](mailto:directorofcommunications@local.gov.uk)



Councillor Izzi Seccombe  
OBE is Chairman of the LGA's  
Community Wellbeing Board

Councils need to be properly resourced to help prevent childhood obesity



## Healthy weight, healthy futures

Childhood obesity is one of the biggest health challenges of the 21st century.

At the start of primary school, one in 10 children is obese and, by the end, that has increased to one in five. If you include those who are overweight, the rates rise to more than a fifth and a third respectively.

Those growing up in the most deprived communities are at the greatest risk. The chances of being obese are about twice that of those who live in the least deprived areas. It is an 'obesity gap' that has been getting wider over the past decade.

Obese and overweight children are more likely to suffer low self-esteem and anxiety. And, of course, as they get older and move into adulthood, obesity leads to a higher risk of a whole host of health problems, from type 2 diabetes and cancer to heart disease.

With the UK already the most obese nation in western Europe, urgent action is needed to prevent today's obese children becoming tomorrow's obese adults.

The data – compiled as part of the National Child Measurement Programme – suggests our approach in local government needs to be two-fold; not only should we be running population-wide interventions, we also need to be intensively targeting those most at risk.

It is undoubtedly a challenge. We are seeing councils up and down the country trying a raft of innovative approaches. The sector is working with colleagues in planning to not only restrict takeaways, but also to

*“We are pleased that the Government’s plan includes clearer food labelling, which the LGA has long called for”*

ensure new developments take into account health and wellbeing.

Some are focusing on getting children physically active – the latest figures suggest less than one in four children are achieving the required levels. Others are concentrating on food and diet. In doing so, they are forging important partnerships with early years settings, schools, community groups and local businesses. But the evidence suggests we should be prepared to be tough too.

The Government's latest child obesity plan sets a bold ambition to reduce significantly England's rate of childhood obesity within the next 10 years. While we were disappointed that some policies did not make it into the plan, we share the Government's approach, while respecting consumer choice, economic realities and the offer of potential fiscal and legislative levers currently not available to us.

As with other public health strategies, such as tackling the harm caused by smoking, we accept that the latest plan represents the start of a conversation, rather than the final word.

We are pleased the Government's plan includes clearer food labelling, which the LGA has long called for, plus measures to introduce mandatory calorie information on menus, improve food standards and physical activity in schools, and the option to introduce further fiscal measures. A specific Trailblazer programme to help support councils develop their existing powers is also good news.

Councils must be properly resourced if they are to carry out their public health responsibilities effectively. This needs to be balanced against their already over-stretched budgets, otherwise the ill health consequences of obesity in our younger generation risks causing NHS costs to snowball.

What comes across loud and clear is that if we are going to make progress as a nation on obesity – and the best we can say at the moment is that rates are no longer rising in the way they were – then the solution lies in developing a whole-system approach. That should be our priority. If we succeed, the benefits will be felt for generations to come. We must act now.



'Childhood obesity: a plan for action, chapter 2' is the latest government update on its plans to reduce childhood obesity, and can be read in full at [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)

# Passenger safety

## The LGA is launching a new national register of taxi licence refusals to help strengthen licensing and protect local residents

Councils have consistently called for our out-of-date patchwork of taxi laws – some of which date back to Victorian times – to be updated with a legal framework fit for the times in which we live.

We have seen numerous cases of drivers abusing their passengers' trust, including serious cases of child sexual exploitation. While the LGA continues to campaign for the legal changes needed to protect our residents, we have also been working hard on alternative measures that will help councils ensure only those fit to drive local taxis and private hire vehicles (PHV) are licensed to do so.

For example, the LGA and others have long called on government to introduce a national database of licences to help address the issue of drivers who don't disclose that their licence has been refused or revoked in one area when they apply to another. There is often no way for a licensing authority to find out about past refusals or revocations if it is not included on a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

This means vital intelligence about an applicant's past behaviour is missed and they might get a new licence in another area, despite having it revoked or refused



**Councillor Simon Blackburn**  
is Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board

elsewhere for reasons that demonstrate they are not a fit and proper person.

High profile instances of this happening have undermined public confidence in the safety of taxis and PHVs, and left licensing authorities open to criticism for something that is currently very difficult for them to control.

So the LGA is launching a new National Register of taxi/ PHV licence refusals and

*“We have seen numerous cases of drivers abusing their passengers’ trust, including serious cases of child sexual exploitation”*

revocations (NR3) to help councils with safeguarding in relation to driver licensing. Authorities will be able to record details of taxi/PHV refusals and revocations and check new applicants against the register. The intention is for authorities to build use of the register into licensing processes.

We have commissioned the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) to develop and host the National Register. NAFN is a local authority-owned, not-for-profit organisation specialising in data and intelligence services, and is hosted by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council.

Access to the register will require licensing authorities to be members of NAFN. About 90 per cent of local authorities are already members, and it is hoped that the others will join, so that the effectiveness of the register is maximised. The annual subscription fee of £1,050 should be recoverable through taxi and PHV licensing fees.

The LGA has developed guidance for licensing authorities that gives a comprehensive overview of the steps they will need to take to use the register in a way that complies with data protection requirements, as well as with human rights law. The LGA sought advice from expert counsel and the Information Commissioner's Office, given likely concerns about the interaction of NR3 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) changes that came into effect earlier this year.

Our hope is that the new register will go some way to addressing the challenge councils have faced in getting a complete picture of someone's licensing history, to the benefit of users and reputable drivers.

However, the register alone cannot address the many and various issues councils are facing with taxi licensing, and we are continuing to call for an overhaul of outdated taxi legislation and for a new taxi reform bill to be brought forward.

I hope that your authority will be able to support this important initiative by adopting NR3 into its licensing processes.



Queries about membership of the National Anti-Fraud Network should be directed to [general@nafn.gov.uk](mailto:general@nafn.gov.uk). For more information about the LGA's guidance for licensing authorities and the National Register, please email [rebecca.johnson@local.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.johnson@local.gov.uk)

# Living better lives at home

An LGA and Design Council programme is helping Epping Forest reduce the number of older residents attending A&E



**Councillor Alan Lion (Con)** is Portfolio Holder for Technology and Support Services at Epping Forest District Council



**A**s part of a wider programme to introduce elements of the 'smart city' agenda, we have been exploring innovative solutions to cut visits to A&E by those aged over 75 at our local Princess Alexandra Hospital.

As Chair of the West Essex and Eastern Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone Board, I was therefore delighted to sponsor our 'Design in the Public Sector' project, led by Epping Forest District Council with the support of the hospital, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and Essex Partnership University Trust.

From the outset, this LGA and Design Council programme has helped our team to better understand the challenge we face in reducing admissions and the impact on the lives of our older residents.

Working with design tools and approaches shared by the Design Council, the team reframed the challenge and put over-75s right at the heart of it – moving away from a focus on waiting times, attendance levels and resource implications to consider how the over-75 population, whether ill or well, could be empowered to live better lives at home.

This widens the scope of the project and means a much larger range of potential interventions, but refocusing was absolutely necessary to ensure any interventions put the person's interests ahead of administrative budgets or targets.

Feedback was gathered through focus groups and interviews. However, the

most powerful research exercise the team undertook was spending a shift on duty with an ambulance crew.

Observing real-life emergency situations as they unfolded, they saw the vulnerability of people and recognised how little background patient information the crews had to hand when attending the patient.

This lack of information sparked the team's key first project – to explore and develop the potential for improved information flow to and from the ambulance crews.

Whether that is more information about the patient in advance, improved

communications between the crew and A&E teams prior to arrival at the hospital, or a feedback loop between all the elements of the emergency care cycle (including GPs), better decisions can be made in emergencies that lead to better outcomes for the patient and reduce their reliance on A&E care.

The team is now working with ambulance crews to better understand what information they need and what connectivity to care partners might be helpful. This will be used to develop a business case for the many stakeholders involved to seek agreement to explore improved information sharing.

## Design in the public sector

The LGA and Design Council have worked in partnership for four years with a shared vision to grow the public sector's capacity to deliver efficient and effective public services that improve people's lives.

Our Design in the Public Sector programme supports councils to think about and address key service challenges in new ways. This year's programme focuses on public health and specifically looks at prevention. The programme is fully funded by the LGA.

Selected councils embark on a 16-week programme led by design experts that includes workshops and coaching sessions. Teams will be introduced to design tools and techniques that will enable them collaboratively to discover and redefine their public health challenge, ensuring residents are at the heart of the process.

The call for applications is now live, and closes on 21 September. For more information and to apply, please visit [www.designcouncil.org.uk/design-public-sector](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/design-public-sector)



For further information about Epping Forest's Design in the Public Sector project, please email project manager Mike Warr at [mwarr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:mwarr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)



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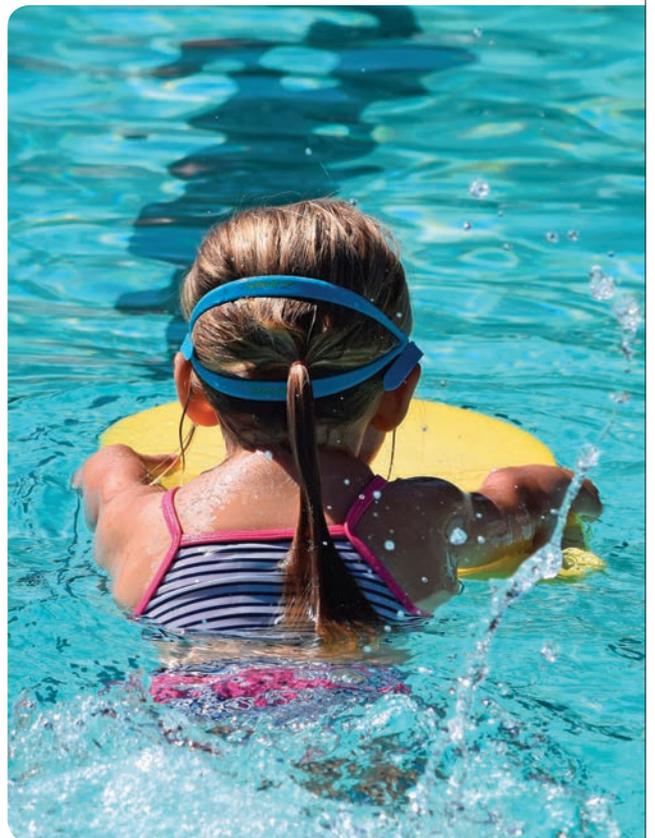
## Sport and Physical Activity Conference 2018

Wednesday 5 December 2018

The Local Government Association is organising the premier sport and physical activity conference for local authorities and their partners. Keynote speakers will talk about the latest challenges, innovations and solutions within the sport and physical activity sector.

Session topics include: sport and physical activity post Brexit, tackling inactivity and engaging new audiences through digital solutions to name but a few, as well as workshops and networking opportunities with like-minded individuals.

To book your place visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)



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# comment

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## Learning to protect vulnerable adults



**Councillor Karen Kilgour** (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care at Newcastle City Council

### Sexual exploitation is a crime that destroys lives.

The physical, emotional and psychological damage inflicted on victims is akin to post-traumatic stress and can last a lifetime. How we deal with it and, more importantly, how we prevent it, is arguably one of the biggest challenges our society faces today.

Like many towns and cities, Newcastle has had problems with sexual exploitation, but what made us different was that most of the victims were vulnerable adults rather than children. Abuse that starts in childhood does not stop at 18 and can carry on for many years into adulthood, making the problem much more complex to tackle.

When we learned of its scale, we were truly shocked. How we rose to tackle it has been recognised as a model of best practice by Ofsted, and we want other local authorities to learn from our experience.

We have learned a great deal over the last four years, but three things stand out.

First, you must act quickly to protect victims and disrupt perpetrators once the problem becomes apparent. In January 2014, when a woman confided in her social worker that she had suffered years of abuse, we listened and believed her. This gave confidence to more victims to come forward and tell their stories.

Amid a blaze of publicity, we launched Operation Sanctuary, a multi-agency investigation into sexual exploitation. Within weeks, Northumbria Police had arrested 30 men. Far from sweeping the problem under the carpet, we actively looked for it.

Second, once the problem had been identified, we threw resources at it. Despite the impact of austerity, we took the decision to make significant resources available to give victims the specialist support they needed.

We applied for, and won, Home Office funding to set up a Sexual Exploitation Hub where children's and adults' social workers, police officers and volunteers work with each other to give comprehensive support to young girls and vulnerable women, no matter how long it takes.

Sexual exploitation is complex. Victims may not even be aware that they are victims and continue their abusive relationships. In these cases, we used the law innovatively, going to the Court of Protection to apply for deprivation of liberty safeguards, ensuring

victims were safeguarded. One woman said she would have "ended up dead" had the council not gone to court to protect her.

Third, we need a better understanding of sexual exploitation, if we are to prevent it. We commissioned the first Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children's Joint Serious Case Review to look at the experiences of women and girls together. Only by listening to the victims can we improve our understanding of their suffering.

Their voices ring out loud and clear through the pages of David Spicer's independent report. Unpalatable as it may seem, we must also engage with the perpetrators to find out what motivates and drives them to commit such evil.

Sexual exploitation is a national issue. It's not just happening in our big cities but also in towns and villages up and down the country. We are planning a national conference in the autumn to discuss what can be done about it. This is the least we can do to pay tribute to the bravery of the women and girls who suffer in silence. Let's work together to put an end to that suffering.

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*“One woman said she would have ‘ended up dead’ had the council not gone to court to protect her”*



Please email [andrea.semple@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.semple@newcastle.gov.uk) for more information about the conference. The joint serious case review can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/2oyDTUj>

### The very best of local government

*“We need our national politicians to treat councils and councillors with dignity and respect, and to value the local leadership we bring”*



Councillor Nick Forbes  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Labour Group

It was great to gather in Birmingham again for the LGA's annual conference in early July. Thank you to all the Labour councillors who attended, and to Birmingham's Labour council for giving us such a warm welcome.

More than 700 councillors attended conference, with more than 100 exhibitors, and plenary sessions and breakouts covering a wide range of issues from social care to the fair funding review to Brexit.

It was excellent to hear Labour councillors from across England and Wales sharing their views and ideas for the future of local government. In my keynote speech to conference, I spoke about the scale of the financial pressure councils are under, the

challenges facing adult and children's social care services, and the bigger role councils must have in building new homes if we are to tackle the housing crisis.

I made it clear that local government stands ready to play a leading role in supporting our nation through uncertain times, but that we need our national politicians to treat councils and councillors with dignity and respect, to value the local leadership we bring, and support us in achieving all we can for the communities we serve.

We were really pleased to be joined at our LGA Labour Group meetings by members of the Shadow Cabinet, including Andrew Gwynne MP, Shadow Secretary of State

for Communities and Local Government, and Jennie Formby, General Secretary of the Labour Party, to speak with councillors about how Labour can support the work of our local Labour groups, both in power and in opposition.

One of the stars of the conference was our Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner MP, who spoke brilliantly to conference about her plans for a national education service, and returning local responsibility and accountability for education.

The conference showcased the very best of local government. Thank you to all those LGA staff who supported the event, both in Birmingham and back at 18 Smith Square.

### chairman's comment

## Reshuffles, social care and housing



Lord Porter  
is Chairman of the LGA

First, I would like to welcome Kit Malthouse MP, a former Deputy Leader of Westminster City Council, as our new Housing Minister. This is good news for those of us who care about housing, and we stand ready to do whatever we can to help him hit the ground running.

Second, it is essential that our new Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock MP gets on with the Adult Social Care Green Paper without further delay.

This paper can't come soon enough, and when it does, it must kick start a

process that will enable all of us to build a stronger, sustainable and fully funded solution to the adult social care crisis for the country.

At our LGA annual conference in early July, we published our latest £7.8 billion estimate of the funding gap facing councils by 2025. Of that figure, £3.5 billion relates to adult social care.

The Government's recent announcement of an extra £20 billion for the NHS should not have been made without investment in adult social care too. Central government needs to see the bigger picture.

These local services, along with many more, such as housing, mental health provision and leisure facilities, help to keep people fit,

healthy and happy, thus reducing the need for people to rely on the health and care system in the first place.

So it was extremely disappointing that once again the Green Paper has been pushed back to the autumn. We are so fed up with this, that we will shortly be publishing our own version.

Finally, it was great to see so many of you at our annual conference in Birmingham, for three days of lively debate and sharing of best practice. Thank you to all our attendees, speakers, sponsors and exhibitors, and particularly our hard-working LGA staff, for making it such a great success.

*“The announcement of an extra £20 billion for the NHS should not have been made without investment in adult social care too”*

## group leaders' comments



**Councillor James Jamieson**  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Conservative Group

### Key issues ahead of the spending review

*“In the run-up to the spending review, we will stress the need to address the funding gap”*

I am honoured to have been elected as the LGA Conservative Group Leader and I am looking forward to working with Conservative colleagues from around the country.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Cllr David Simmonds, for his work. I'm delighted that he will continue to work with us as one of our Conservative LGA Deputy Chairs.

I also congratulate those colleagues who were elected to our group executive. Working with them, I will ensure that the voice of Conservative local government is clearly heard within the LGA.

I was pleased to see many of you at the LGA's annual conference, and to welcome speakers including Communities Secretary James Brokenshire MP and Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP. Key announcements from James and Rishi, respectively, were the creation of a delivery board to support the implementation of Brexit-related changes that affect local government, and a £7.5 million digital innovation fund.

Looking forward, the key issues are adult social care, children's services, housing and planning. We will focus on getting government to recognise the opportunity for greater devolution in these areas to deliver better outcomes, rather than a centrally delivered 'one size fits all'.

In the run-up to the spending review, we will stress the need to address the funding gap, in the context of local government being consistently recognised as the most efficient part of the public sector.



**Councillor Howard Sykes MBE**  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Liberal Democrat Group

### Brexit inaction 'will cost jobs'

*“With national regeneration funding depleted, some areas have become increasingly reliant on EU money”*

Brexit cannot leave local areas facing huge financial uncertainty as a result of lost regional aid funding.

This funding has been used to create jobs, support small and medium enterprises, deliver skills training, invest in critical transport and boost inclusive growth from Cornwall to Northumberland and Cumbria to Kent.

The clock is already ticking for the Government to set out a plan to replace this funding into the next decade and beyond. Failing to do so will cost jobs and impact most on our poorest citizens.

Local government wants to work with ministers to help develop a fully-funded and locally driven successor scheme. With national regeneration funding depleted, some areas have become increasingly reliant on EU money.

To help ensure we have an economy fit for the future, government needs to sort out what the fund will look like. Councils need to know quickly how they will be able to bid, receive guarantees that future funding will at least match current EU funding, and receive their funding allocations by the time we leave.

Without action, there is a risk that billions of pounds of investment into our communities will be lost and local areas and economies will be denied desperately needed funding.

The failure to sort out regional aid funding is just the latest Brexit example that will damage the UK's poorer communities the most.



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

### Supporting and engaging with members

*“Our members thrived on a diet of innovative ideas, discussion and vision to help councils do the best possible job”*

A vibrant buzz filled the ICC in Birmingham during the LGA's annual conference, with an excellent turnout of Independent Group members who thrived on a diet of innovative ideas, discussions and vision to help councils do the best possible job for local people.

Our group held the main stage twice, first chairing a lively, cross-party discussion on getting a better gender balance in our councils, which included Sophie Walker, Leader of the Women's Equality Party.

Crossbencher Lord Best gave 10 reasons why housing could not and should not be left to the private sector. He highlighted the combined efforts that defeated the wrong-headed policy of forcing councils to sell off houses to fund housing associations, called for the lifting of the borrowing cap that prevents councils doing more, and relaxation of Right to Buy.

The LGA's Independent Group chose to focus on visioning future priorities with De Montfort University's Professor Colin Copus, on the rural economy post-Brexit, and on making votes matter.

Two key objectives remain – keeping our high level of activity to engage the maximum number of members, and supporting councillors into the next local elections in May. The group raised 33 issues, picked up by our leadership and our board members at the sharp end of driving LGA work and policy.

Thank you to all our councillors who do great things at the heart of our communities.



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

# Strengthening delivery partnerships



**Councillor John Fuller** is Chairman of the District Councils' Network

**The District Councils' Network (DCN) is putting collaboration at the heart of its work to create better lives and stronger economies.**

Partnership work is vital for districts to protect and improve services for the benefit of their communities, particularly amid long-term funding reductions by central government.

To help achieve this goal, DCN has produced a 'Transformation in localities toolkit', which frames local housing, commuting, health, and economic geographies to provide district councils with a practical evidence base to engage the wider public sector strategically.

As well as demonstrating partnership working between councils, the toolkit also shows how institutions such as local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), the NHS, Department for Work and Pensions, and Homes England can work with districts as the building blocks to strengthen delivery partnerships.

The comprehensive guidance, developed in conjunction with Grant Thornton UK LLP, offers pioneering solutions and examples of best practice from district councils to respond



creatively to funding challenges at a local level.

These include engagement with health partners, businesses and LEPs to deliver more joined-up and cost-effective services for the benefit of local residents and business.

Crucially, the toolkit underlines the vital role that districts have in public health through their role as the planning and housing authorities. It demonstrates to the NHS and sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs) that our unique health prevention role is central to reducing demand for health and adult social care services, and that districts can and must be part of the solution to putting social care funding on a sustainable footing.

Closer work between LEPs and district councils will deliver local industrial strategies that incentivise opportunities and benefits for local businesses and communities. And, collaboration on housing market geographies will create the chance for districts to pool funds for infrastructure and to draw down investment from Homes England.

By seizing compelling, strategic options available for local partnerships, districts can – and are – growing economies, expanding their vital role in public health and prevention, accelerating house building, and protecting and improving the quality of services for communities.

*“Partnership work is vital for districts to protect and improve services for the benefit of their communities”*



To find out more about DCN's and Grant Thornton's 'Transformation in localities toolkit', please visit [www.districtcouncils.info/dcn-and-grant-thornton-transformation-in-localities-toolkit-2](http://www.districtcouncils.info/dcn-and-grant-thornton-transformation-in-localities-toolkit-2)

## Adults with autism

**Autism is much more common than many people think. The National Autistic Society says about 700,000 people are on the autism spectrum in the UK. If you include families, autism is a part of daily life for 2.8 million people.**

I attended the 2018 annual autism strategy accountability meeting, chaired by Care Minister Caroline Dinenage MP. The purpose of the meeting was to review progress against the Government's Think Autism strategy, which was launched in 2014. The vision of the strategy was for all adults with autism to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them.

Many councils are engaged in a range of innovative work to promote the participation of people living with autism in their communities. Initiatives include designated transition workers, local autistic champions, befriending services and one-stop information hubs for families, carers and people with autism.



**Councillor Jackie Meldrum** (Lab) is a member of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board and of Lambeth Council

However, funding challenges continue to have an impact on all councils' services. Local groups supporting people with autism are struggling to find funding; there is a need for more training of frontline staff; and the potential to extend good practice, such as the autism champion's model, is challenging because of financial pressures.

Local councillors have a clear role to play in planning and leadership of services for adults with autism. Health and wellbeing boards have a particularly important role in identifying needs and priorities.

Councils are currently being asked to complete a self assessment (known as a SAF) on their delivery against their statutory responsibilities set out in the autism strategy. This is due to be completed later this year.

I will continue to represent the LGA on the autism strategy programme and would welcome any comments, queries or examples of good practice that can inform the work. Please email [jmeldrum@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:jmeldrum@lambeth.gov.uk)

*“The potential to extend good practice, such as the autism champion's model, is challenging because of financial pressures”*



## More resources, not mergers

**As another local government conference season draws to a close, we have an opportunity to reflect on the current political landscape in which councils find themselves.**

It was good to see colleagues at the Welsh LGA's recent annual conference, held in Llandudno, and I and other Welsh councillors also enjoyed the LGA annual conference in Birmingham.

Despite our policy differences, and all the political differences among the various groups and parties, what is always striking and reaffirming is the common ground within the local government family – there is much more that unites us than divides us.

We all face the same challenges. Lord Porter's excoriating warning of the effect of the UK Government's sweeping cuts to local government budgets in England on the most vulnerable in society brought into sharp focus the harsh realities of shrinking council finances. The UK Government must listen and I am confident that it will, as the case being made is compelling.

Likewise, in Wales, we have been calling on our Government to listen to our arguments for additional resources and against yet more council merger proposals.

We are making some progress, at least on reform. Alun Davies AM, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, formally withdrew his Green Paper plans for forced council mergers in favour of a new inclusive approach to reform.



**Councillor Debbie Wilcox**  
is Leader of the Welsh LGA  
and Newport City Council

We have welcomed this approach, as it offers a return to the more collaborative approach to reform that we had broadly agreed with the Welsh Government last year. A new reform working group will now be established, chaired by Derek Vaughan MEP, a former leader of the WLGA, and with a membership that will include WLGA Group Leaders.

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*“The challenges faced by councillors in an age of austerity cannot be overstated”*

It will set out a shared vision that ensures the sustainability of local service provision through appropriate structures and processes – whether collaboration, shared services or voluntary mergers – all within the framework of democratic accountability, and empowered by additional functions, powers and flexibilities and the necessary financial resources.

The challenges faced by councillors in

an age of austerity cannot be overstated. But councillors and councils are rising to these challenges. We have our critics; some members of the public and the press – and often regulators – are not happy with everything we do, but our partners and the Government should at least recognise and respect what we achieve and deliver on a daily basis, despite the deepest and longest cuts agenda in history.

Councils in Wales have done all the heavy lifting on cuts, but we continue to deliver good and well-regarded services. While we are not expecting thanks or congratulations from our national colleagues, some recognition and mutual respect would be welcomed!

What we have seen over the recent period, however, is a gradual diminution of local democratic oversight in Wales, a circumvention of local accountability and worrying signs of a creeping return of the quango state.

Regional education consortia are increasingly accountable to the Welsh Government and there are proposals to reinvent an infamous organisation under a new guise to oversee post-compulsory education.

The reform working group will seek to recast the central-local relationship in Wales, based firmly on foundations of mutual respect. We are therefore pushing for the Charter on Local Self-Government to be enshrined into Welsh law. If we achieve this, despite the potential ramifications of Brexit, it would be a seminal and lasting European legacy for Wales.

# Helping staff facing domestic abuse



Elizabeth Filkin CBE is Chair of the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse

**One in four women, and one in six men, will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime – ranging from coercive control to murder.**

Any employer will have some people who have faced or are facing domestic abuse, either as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators. Many employers find that domestic abuse reduces performance at work, increases absenteeism, and may lead to mental illness.

When employers demonstrate that they are aware of domestic abuse, and make staff familiar with the services that are available, this can help to reduce the wall of silence about domestic abuse that prevents many from seeking help.

I am the Chair of the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse, a network of more than 200 companies and public sector organisations that have come together to

exchange information about best practice, and to encourage, promote and develop action to help staff who are enduring domestic abuse, or who are perpetrators.

Business in the Community and Public Health England have produced a toolkit on domestic abuse, which is available free to all employers at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england).

A free app to assist HR professionals and managers is available from Bright Sky, free from the App Store.

We encourage employers, including



*“Employers can help to reduce the wall of silence about domestic abuse that prevents many from seeking help”*

councils, to join the initiative and develop a policy on domestic abuse for your staff. You can follow other employers in training managers, staff and ambassadors, putting information on your website and intranet about domestic abuse, and including information in your graduate and apprenticeship inductions.

Please encourage other employers, large and small, to join the initiative, and give introductions to other employers so that steering group members can make contact with them.

Have a detailed register of where members of staff can get help, locally and nationally, and encourage those who are suffering abuse to seek help, and support them in doing so.

## Professional Development



### In-house, open access and online

**With over 50 years of experience, no one has more practical knowledge of autism.**

**Autism and Mental Health Conference** – 12 September, Leeds  
**Autism in Women and Girls Conference** - 30 October, London  
**PDA Conference** - 20 November, Manchester

We also offer:

- Open access training events
- Bespoke training packages
- In-house training
- Online training modules
- Resources, workshops and guides
- Informative professional newsletters

**For more information visit:**

**[www.autism.org.uk/professionals](http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals)**

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427)



Until everyone understands

# parliament

## Mind the gap

**The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has published a welcome report into the financial sustainability of local authorities, following evidence given by councils and LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd on behalf of local government earlier this year (see first 624).**

The committee has rightly recognised the significant funding pressures and huge financial uncertainty facing all councils over the next few years, as evidenced by the LGA.

The report reiterates our funding gap analysis, with the committee's MPs calling on the Government to understand and tackle these challenges and place local government on a sustainable financial footing. The committee also backed our call for a long-term solution to the adult social care funding crisis.

The report warns that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is "overly reliant" on the next spending review to address the financial challenges facing councils, and that the lack of a long-term funding plan for local authorities is a risk to value for taxpayers' money.

The LGA has backed the committee's

findings on the importance of putting local government on a long-term sustainable financial footing and this will form the basis of our campaigning on behalf of councils ahead of next year's spending review.

This work will be combined with new analysis by the LGA that shows that the funding gap facing council services will reach £7.8 billion by 2025.

As well as the PAC report, it has been an extremely busy period for health and social care in Parliament as we celebrated the 70th birthday of the NHS. Four debates on health and social care were held in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, with the briefing work of the LGA playing a significant role in the discussions.

In the Health and Social Care and Housing,

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*"MPs backed our call for a long-term solution to the adult social care funding crisis"*

Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Estimates Day debate on funding for adult social care, Clive Betts MP, LGA Vice-President and Chair of the HCLG Select Committee, quoted our briefing that calls for a solution to funding social care that people and councils can rely on.

Later the same week, Norman Lamb MP, the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Health, led a backbench debate on the progress of the Transforming Care programme. Mr Lamb highlighted concerns about the progress of the programme and stated that there had been a failure to invest properly in community provision.

There were two debates in the House of Lords, focusing on funding for adult social care and the 70th anniversary of the NHS and the case for integration – both of which we produced briefings for.

And, in oral questions in the Lords, LGA Vice-President and former Chairman Baroness Eaton highlighted the LGA's survey of council leaders, which found that 96 per cent believe there is a major national funding problem in social care (see p5). She also urged ministers to work with the LGA as it consults on its own social care proposals, following further delays to the Government's Green Paper.

"I think we all agree that we urgently need a long-term funding solution for social care," she added.

Looking ahead, we will be promoting the LGA's 'Moving the conversation on' campaign to get better funding for local government in next year's spending review, working on the Social Care Green Paper, and continuing our work on Brexit and its implications for the sector.



**i** For more information about the LGA's work in Parliament, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament). You can follow the LGA's 'Moving the conversation on' campaign at [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on)

# councillor

## Five questions on funding



Graham Atkins is a Researcher at the Institute for Government

Congratulations to the 4,400 councillors newly elected or re-elected in May. Your time in office follows seven years of fiscal consolidation, with no signs of larger budgets or fewer demands to come. Ahead of next year's council budget and the 2019 Spending Review, here are the top five questions you need to be asking your officials.

### 1 What's been squeezed to protect social care?

Over the past five years, local authorities have cut spending on all local services apart from children's social care. Adult social care has also been relatively protected; spending was cut less deeply than other council services between 2010/11 and 2014/15, and has increased since then.

Local authorities have prioritised spending on the statutory services they are obliged to provide and on the services that voters notice most, such as A-road maintenance. But this has been done at the expense of other important, but easier to squeeze services such as Sure Start Centres, planning, and youth justice.

### 2 Has the council made efficiencies or cut services?

Cutting spending does not have to mean cutting services. Councils may have



maintained the scope and quality of services, if they were able to find efficiencies and do more with less.

There is some evidence of this. Resident satisfaction with waste collection, libraries, and road maintenance has held up despite spending reductions.

However, there are now signs that spending cuts in some areas may have resulted in service cuts. For example, waste collections have become less frequent and have not been fully replaced by recycling collections, which remained flat over the past three years.

Central government departments lack data on service performance, but richer, more informative, data may be held locally. Councillors need to use this data to judge what the implications of further spending cuts in different areas would be.

### 3 Are our reserves going up or down?

Changes in the level of local government reserves are often the canary in the coalmine.

If councils are raiding reserves to support day-to-day spending, they will soon find themselves in financial trouble.

Overall, reserves increased between 2010/11 and 2014/15. Since then, reserves have been declining among councils with social care responsibilities. In total, these councils have spent £2.5 billion from their reserves over the past two years.

### 4 What are our population pressures?

Demographic changes – primarily from an ageing population – are adding to financial pressure on local authorities.

Social care now makes up 54 per cent of spending on services. Two-thirds of adult social care provision is for the population aged 65 and over, which increased by 17.7 per cent between 2009 and 2016, and is forecast to increase by 60 per cent between 2014 and 2039. The other main recipients of adult social care – working-age adults with long-term care needs – also increased by 10 per cent between 2010/11 and 2016/17.

Increased demand is adding to pressures in other politically charged areas, such as children's services and housing.

### 5 What are our neighbours doing?

No council is an island. Specific challenges vary but all councils face a common challenge – delivering vital services with smaller budgets.

Failing to look at what belt-tightening or transformation projects have been tried before, or elsewhere, is costly, time intensive, and risks duplicating reforms undertaken in other parts of the country.

Previous Institute for Government research has shown that local authorities benefit most from sector and peer-led learning. Councillors should encourage their officials to learn from others – and make sure they themselves talk to their political counterparts in other boroughs.

Innovation is already happening locally; local authorities can show Whitehall how it's done.



This article was originally published at [www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/five-questions-new-councillors-must-ask](http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/five-questions-new-councillors-must-ask), copyright Institute for Government. The Institute for Government is a think tank working to make government more effective. For information about the LGA's support for member councils, including peer challenges, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/our-support](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support)

# elections

## Dividing the spoils

**Two-thirds of recent by-elections were in Conservative seats, with the party losing five but making a rare gain of its own.**

The Liberal Democrats continue to make headlines, winning three seats from a standing start and denied a fourth victory only by bad luck.

West Somerset's Alcombe ward provided further evidence of UKIP's demise but that should not diminish the Liberal Democrat performance here. In 2015, the spoils were divided between Conservative and UKIP. The Liberal Democrats neither stood then nor in 2011 and their campaigning effort this time was amply rewarded.

Another Liberal Democrat gain occurred in Whittlewood, South Northamptonshire, which had not held a district council election since 2007. The campaigning opportunity spurred local parties into action, prompting a healthy turnout, but the victory margin for Abigail Medina was comfortable.

UKIP's second defeat was inflicted by Basildon's Pitsea Labour party although the contest was close. UKIP's decline has been spectacular, with councillors losing seats or resigning the national party. It was unusual, therefore, that a by-election candidate could be found. But the real battle lay between Labour and the Conservatives, with only eight votes separating victor from vanquished.

The vacancy in North Kesteven's Skellingthorpe ward followed Shirley Pannell's resignation, having represented the area for almost two decades. With her personal vote now available, the contest



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entered unknown territory with the three main parties challenging alongside Richard Johnston for Lincolnshire Independents. Johnston won with almost half the votes.

July began with the Conservatives losing a further two seats, one each to Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The vacancy in Lichfield's Curborough ward was caused by the death of long-standing councillor Jeanette Allsopp, first elected in 1987. In 2015, UKIP received one in four votes and much of this migrated towards Labour in the by-election.

Less surprising for the Conservatives than that defeat was the loss of Kingsmead ward in Bath and North East Somerset. Prior to 2015, the ward was solidly Liberal Democrat so this Conservative defeat may be viewed as the ward reverting to type.

Small ward electorates sometimes lead to tied votes. Rutland's Oakham South West division finished with Independent Richard Alderman and the unlucky Liberal Democrat Joanna Burrows only separated after lots were drawn.

Waveney's Southwold and Reydon ward brought yet another shock victory for the Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives won easily in 2015 against a clutch of other candidates but, interestingly, no Liberal Democrat. This time, the party's David Beavan received more than 1,000 votes, 71 per cent of the overall share, while finishing 700 votes ahead of his Conservative rival.

Meanwhile, Waveney's Pakefield ward provided a rare Conservative gain from Labour. Although the defending party won all three seats in 2015, more recently, at the 2017 county elections, Pakefield's

### local by-elections

#### Basildon, Pitsea South East

LAB GAIN FROM UKIP  
0.5% over Con Turnout 17%

#### Bath & North East Somerset, Kingsmead

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
16.5% over Lab Turnout 35.4%

#### Lichfield, Curborough

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
27.3% over Con Turnout 15.6%

#### North Kesteven, Skellingthorpe

LINCS IND GAIN FROM IND  
19.3% over Con Turnout 26.9%

#### Rutland, Oakham South West

IND GAIN FROM CON  
0.2% over Lib Dem Turnout 33.6%

#### South Northamptonshire, Whittlewood

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
20.1% over Con Turnout 37.1%

#### Waveney, Pakefield

CON GAIN FROM LAB  
2.9% over Lab Turnout 27.2%

#### Waveney, Southwold and Reydon

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
49.6% over Con Turnout 49.2%

#### West Somerset, Alcombe

LIB DEM GAIN FROM UKIP  
12.1% over Con Turnout 29.9%



**Only wards that changed hands are shown right.** For all the latest by-election results in full, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

division returned two Conservatives. One of these county councillors, Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro, successfully applied that campaigning experience to the district council seat, providing her party with some much-needed good news.

# MAKING PARKING A POSITIVE FOR YOUR COUNCIL

**39** million daily journeys end at a parking space



TOP TWO FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING A SPACE:

1. LOCATION
2. SAFETY

CONGESTION IN THE UK'S LARGEST CITIES IS 14% WORSE THAN FIVE YEARS AGO

AT ANY ONE TIME 30% OF CITY CENTRE DRIVERS ARE LOOKING FOR A PARKING SERVICES



## SIGN UP TO THE POSITIVE PARKING AGENDA

The Positive Parking Agenda is a local authority led initiative, supported and assisted by the British Parking Association. We believe there is a need for consistency in how parking management is delivered and promoted by local and national government.

- The PPA will support local and national government to improve everyone's understanding of why and how parking is managed.
- The PPA will encourage local authorities to work together to bring about a better level of national consistency, raise standards, improve communications and be more innovative in the delivery of parking management.

Sign up to show your support for the Positive Parking Agenda. By signing up you will be pledging that you and your council support the key priorities of the PPA and will aim to align your parking policies and practices with them.

FOR DETAILS ABOUT THE PPA'S KEY PRIORITIES & TO SIGN UP, VISIT [WWW.POSITIVEPARKINGAGENDA.CO.UK](http://WWW.POSITIVEPARKINGAGENDA.CO.UK) OR E-MAIL [ALISON.T@BRITISHPARKING.CO.UK](mailto:ALISON.T@BRITISHPARKING.CO.UK)

72% of UK zones will miss air quality targets in 2020

27% OF MOTORISTS SAY CONGESTION AND JOURNEY TIMES ARE AMONG THEIR TOP FOUR MOTORING CONCERNS

TRAFFIC JAMS ON THE UK'S MAJOR ROADS COST THE ECONOMY £9BN A YEAR

14% OF MOTORISTS SAY THAT THE AVAILABILITY OF PARKING IS ONE OF THEIR FOUR BIGGEST CONCERNS

AN **ELECTRIC CAR** was registered every 3 minutes in the **FIRST 3 MONTHS OF 2017**

BY 2040 TRAFFIC IS PREDICTED TO RISE BY 43%

AROUND 82,000 PEOPLE ARE EMPLOYED IN THE PARKING SECTOR

IDLING ACCOUNTS FOR 40% OF JOURNEY TIMES

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