

first

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the magazine for local government

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“Complaints are the **real stories of real people using real services**”

Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

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LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

12-13 March 2019, Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel

The Local Government Association Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is a key event in the conference calendar for senior fire officers and members of fire and rescue authorities.

The last year has seen widespread change in the sector. There is a new inspection regime in place, a new standards approach has been announced and there have been a number of changes in governance. There have been strides to improve the diversity of the service as well as issues around finance and funding. The sector's work on fire safety, inspection and enforcement as a result of the terrible fire at Grenfell is still evolving.

This event provides an opportunity to examine these changes, consider notable practice and examine how to develop this activity further.

To book your place visit www.local.gov.uk/events



LGA/ADPH Annual Public Health Conference and Exhibition

London, 21 March 2019

Our annual flagship conference on public health will explore and build on the challenging, innovative work being undertaken by local authorities, their partners and communities as they continue to make progress on improving the nation's health and wellbeing and tackling health inequalities.

Join us at our most popular health conference of the year to hear the very latest thinking on key policy and improvement agendas and put your questions and comments to those involved in shaping them at the highest level. There will be opportunities to network with your peers to discuss the issues that matter to you locally.

To book your place visit www.local.gov.uk/events



Social housing



Housing is one of the themes of this month's magazine, with a feature on the LGA's campaign aims following the publication, over the summer, of the Government's Green

Paper on Social Housing (p10-11, p24).

Many of you will have been to, or will be attending, your party's annual conference, and I hope you find time to attend the LGA's receptions and debates at these events. Ahead of the Labour and Conservative conferences, you can hear from Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary James Brokenshire MP (p13) and John Healey MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Housing (p12).

It's not too late to respond to the LGA's green paper on adult social care – the deadline is Wednesday 26 September (p15).

Elsewhere in the magazine, you can find out about the councillors who sit on the LGA's Executive. These are the people who represent you and set the LGA's strategic direction on your behalf (p16).

We also take a look at how Cardiff is working towards becoming a child-friendly city (p27), and we hear from inspection agency Ofsted on how new arrangements for inspecting councils' children's services are panning out (p23).

Lord Porter is Chairman of the LGA

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Carers 'putting their own health on the line'



Rising demand for care and the increasing costs of providing it is putting more pressure on families to look after loved ones, and taking its toll on their health and wellbeing, the LGA and Carers UK are warning.

Many of the 5.7 million unpaid carers in England are unable to take a break from their demanding role looking after people with complex needs.

This means they are at growing risk of needing care and support themselves, resulting in the loved ones they are caring for requiring more costly social care or being admitted to hospital, creating a surge in demand on the NHS.

Latest research shows that nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of carers in England have suffered mental ill health, such as stress and depression, while 61 per cent have experienced physical ill health because of caring. But, despite the demands of their role, a fifth (20 per cent) of carers in England have not received a carer's assessment in the past year, which would help identify their own support needs. The LGA estimates

it would cost £150 million to provide these assessments and is calling for the cost to be included in a long-term solution to paying for adult social care.

It is also calling for sufficient funding to ensure services, such as carers' breaks, are available to all carers who need them.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Unpaid carers are the backbone of the care system, many of whom are unable to take a break, putting their own health on the line.

"But this vital network of family carers is at an increasing risk of breaking down due to the nature of the job, rising costs and demands for care, and the crisis in adult social care funding."

Following the delay in the Government's Green Paper on Adult Social Care, the LGA has published its own green paper consultation to drive forward the public debate on what care and support is needed to improve people's lives and how these vital services are funded.

● See p15 and www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk

'No progress' on women elected to councils

Analysis by the Fawcett Society has found that, in the centenary year of some women being able to vote in parliamentary elections, 97 per cent of councils remain male-dominated.

The proportion of women elected to local government in England this year increased by less than 1 per cent, bringing the total population of female councillors to 34 per cent. There are only two more woman-led councils compared to 2016, with women making up 17.8 per cent of all council leaders.

Cllr Marianne Overton, Vice-Chair of the LGA, said: "The report rightly identifies that progress must be made at a faster pace to ensure a greater representation of women in our local authorities.

"It is vital that local government better reflects the communities we represent and is inclusive, in order to have the best skills and make the best possible decisions.

"The LGA is leading the 'Be a Councillor' campaign. This year, our main focus is to encourage women and under-represented groups to stand for election and help shape local councils to best support our communities. Councils also remain committed to ensuring that, once elected, women have an equal opportunity to become leaders."

She added: "Local government must be at the forefront of driving change, but it will be important to get the balance right between changing culture and imposing structures. Change will also require all political parties and Independents to fully engage and support a wide range of aspiring councillors."

The LGA is supporting the Women's Local Government Society's project, identifying 100 pioneers in women's suffrage, and women who used their elected positions and votes to bring benefits to their communities. It also plans to launch a self-assessment equalities toolkit, which will be available for councils this autumn.

● See www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/be-councillor



MPs: 'increase social care funding'

A new survey, carried out by ComRes on behalf of the LGA, has found that the overwhelming majority of MPs (84 per cent) and Peers (76 per cent) believe additional funding should go to councils' adult social care budgets to help tackle the funding crisis facing services.

Following the delay to the Government's adult social care green paper, the LGA has launched its own nationwide consultation to kick-start a desperately needed debate on how to pay for adult social care and rescue the services caring for older and disabled people from collapse.

The LGA estimates that adult social care services face a £3.5 billion funding gap by 2025, just to maintain existing standards, while latest figures show that councils in England receive 1.8 million new requests for adult social care a year – the equivalent of nearly 5,000 a day.

Increased spending on adult social care – which now accounts for nearly 40 per cent of total council budgets – is threatening the future of other vital council services, such as parks, leisure centres and libraries, which help

to keep people well and from needing care and support and hospital treatment.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Deputy Chairman of the LGA, said: "Councils, care workers, health professionals and now even MPs and Peers agree that social care funding to councils must be increased.

"Work to find a long-term funding solution for adult social care and support has been kicked into the long grass by successive governments for the past two decades and has brought these services to breaking point.

"The Government cannot duck this issue any longer. It must make genuinely new resources available urgently to plug the short-term funding gap of £3.5 billion, as well as set out its plans to secure the longer-term future.

"The LGA's green paper is the start of a nationwide public debate about the future of care for all adults, and how best to support their wellbeing, and we encourage as many people and organisations – including MPs and Peers – to have their say on how we pay for it and the responsibilities of citizens, families and communities."

● See p15.

news in brief

Hospital admissions

New analysis by Age UK has found that almost 1,000 elderly people a day are being admitted to hospital needlessly, amid a crisis in social care. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Over recent years, councils have protected adult social care relative to other services. But the scale of the overall funding picture for local government means adult social care services still face a £3.5 billion funding gap by 2025, just to maintain existing standards of care. The likely consequences of this are more and more people being unable to get quality and reliable care and support, which enables them to live more fulfilling lives."

Care needs rising

The number of older people needing round-the-clock care will double by 2035, according to the Lancet Public Health journal. Cllr Nick Forbes, LGA Senior Vice-Chair, said: "This report is a further warning of the crisis in adult social care and the urgent need to plug the immediate funding gap and find a long-term solution on how we pay for it and improve people's independence and wellbeing. Action is needed, which is why the LGA has published its own green paper consultation to drive forward the public debate (see www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk)."



The deadline for responses to the LGA's green paper is 26 September, see www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk

Adult services 'save NHS £60m'

Social care has saved the NHS almost £60 million in the past year by reducing the number of delayed transfers of care, according to new analysis by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services.

The NHS's excess bed days' calculations put the saving per day of having one extra bed available in hospital throughout 2016/17 at £313.

Over the last year, the number of delayed transfers of care days attributable to adult social care has fallen by 187,864, meaning that there has been a reduction of almost £60 million in NHS costs as a result of improved adult social care performance when compared with the previous 12 months.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Vice-Chairman, said: "Councils have reduced the average number of delayed transfers of care days attributed to social care since June 2017 by 40 per cent, despite significant budget reductions.

"To help councils build on this work and help reduce pressures on the NHS, adult social care needs to be put on an equal footing with the health service.

"Like the 70th birthday funding for the NHS, a similar urgent rescue package is needed for social care and prevention services to ensure taxpayers' money is spent most effectively to reduce the need for people to be admitted to hospital in the first place."

Washing and dressing

Older people should get free personal care, such as help with getting washed and dressed, says a new report from Independent Age. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "This report is a positive contribution to the debate on what sort of care and support people want and how we fund these vital services. People have a right to live the life they want to lead, and high quality adult social care and support plays an essential role in this. It is also vital to society. It strengthens communities, reduces pressures on the NHS, supports around 1.5 million jobs and contributes as much as £46 billion to the UK economy."

news in brief

Girls self-harming

Almost a quarter of 14-year-old girls self-harm according to 'The good childhood report 2018', from The Children's Society, which examines the state of children's wellbeing in the UK. One in six of all children surveyed hurt themselves deliberately, including one in 10 boys. Cllr Roy Perry, Vice-Chairman of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "These alarming figures reinforce the urgent need to tackle the crisis in children's mental health. This is why we are calling for councils and schools to be given the funding to offer independent mental health counselling so pupils have access to support as and when they need it." See www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures for more on the LGA's children's campaign. ● See p25

Homeless children

More than 123,000 children and their families spent the school summer holiday homeless, an increase of around 53,000 since 2011. The number of homeless children that councils are housing in temporary accommodation has increased by 76 per cent in the past seven years. The LGA is calling on the Government to adapt welfare reforms and allow councils to borrow to build new homes, with the right infrastructure, to tackle the housing shortage – the root cause of the homelessness crisis. Cllr Judith Blake, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "It's crucial that we take the serious measures that are needed to get towards our collective ambition to end homelessness outright."

Brushing teeth

Three in five parents in Britain say their children brush their teeth for 90 seconds or less, below the two minutes recommended by dentists, according to a YouGov survey commissioned by a toothbrush manufacturer. Cllr Nick Forbes, LGA Senior Vice-Chair, said: "Last year, the NHS had to perform more than 43,000 operations – 170 a day – to remove teeth in children and teenagers. There must be a reinvestment in innovative oral health education, so that parents and children understand the impact of sugar on teeth and the importance of good oral hygiene."

'Emergency' in secondary school places

Thousands of children face missing out on a secondary school place in the next five years, with more than half of all councils in England at risk of not being able to meet demand, according to new analysis by the LGA.

Unless new places are created, nearly 134,000 children will miss out on a secondary school place by 2023/24 as a result of the surge in primary school pupils.

The LGA says the country faces a secondary school places "emergency" unless government gives councils the powers to open schools or direct academies to expand.

Its analysis reveals that, unless more secondary school places are created, 13 councils will face a secondary school place shortfall in 2019/20; this will rise to 25 councils in 2020/21, 46 in 2021/22 and 54 in 2022/23.

By 2023/24, 71 councils (52 per cent) face not being able to meet demand for 133,926 places.

With two-thirds of secondary schools now academies, councils have a very limited ability to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide school places.

The LGA is calling on government to give councils the power to open new maintained schools, where that is the local preference,



and hand back the responsibility for making decisions about opening new schools.

It should also give councils the same powers to direct free schools and academies to expand that they currently hold for maintained schools.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "No family should face uncertainty over securing their child's secondary school. But the reality is, we face an emergency in secondary school places where the number of pupils is growing at a far faster rate than the number of places available.

"This is why councils need to be given the powers to help solve this crisis. It is only by working with councils, rather than shutting them out, that we can meet the challenges currently facing the education system."

SEND pupil funding concerns

A report by the National Association of Head Teachers has found that 94 per cent of schools are finding it harder to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) than they did two years ago.

Only 2 per cent of the 600-plus respondents to the online survey said the top-up funding they received was sufficient to meet individual education, health and care plans (EHCPs) or statements for pupils with SEND.

And 83 per cent reported not receiving any funding from health and social care budgets to support pupils with statements or EHCPs.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The findings of this report reinforce the desperate need for the Government to provide significant, ongoing and sustainable funding to help councils manage the rising demand in support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

"We have previously warned that, unless councils are given the funding to meet this need, they may not be able to meet their statutory duties, and children with high needs or disabilities could miss out on a mainstream education.

"As a starting point, we are calling for an urgent review of funding to meet the unprecedented rise in demand that councils are experiencing."



Children's services reaching 'tipping point'

Councils overspent on children's services by £816 million last year and are increasingly having to divert money from other services to meet an unprecedented surge in demand for care services, the LGA has warned.

Last year saw the biggest annual hike in children in care since 2010 and councils are now starting 500 child protection investigations every day. This rise in demand for child protection support means councils are often only able to provide urgent help for children and families already at crisis point, leaving very little to invest in early intervention and prevention.



Cllr Roy Perry, Vice-Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "These figures clearly show the huge and increasing financial pressures children's services are under, with many councils being pushed to the brink by unprecedented demand.

"It is not just increased pressure for care for the elderly causing the problem for local authority budgets.

"Councils have done what they can to protect spending on children's services, and have spent over £800 million more than they had budgeted on children's social care. Councils do not want to cut the very services that are designed to help children and families before problems begin or escalate to the point where a child might need to come into care.

"We are absolutely clear that, unless new funding is found, these vital services, which keep children safe from harm and the worst abuses of society, will reach a tipping point."

The LGA estimates that, overall, local government in England faces a funding gap of almost £8 billion by 2025, with a growing number of councils struggling to balance their books. It has warned that the next Spending Review will be "make or break for local services" and must recognise the urgent need to tackle the funding gap.

i The LGA's **Bright Futures campaign** (www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures) continues to promote the work of councils in ensuring our children and young people have the best start in life, as well as the prevention and early intervention work we can do if we are given the powers and funding we need.

Helping young people to trust

Even local authority areas have been awarded government funding to help them provide 'trusted' adults to support children at risk of sexual abuse or of being drawn into criminality.

A Home Office-commissioned review by the Early Intervention Foundation found that a trusted relationship with an adult is an important part of programmes to support vulnerable children, and that the lack of such relationships is consistently cited as a contributing factor in cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation (see www.eif.org.uk/building-trusted-relationships/).

The beneficiaries of the Government's £13 million Trusted Relationships Fund will use the cash to help foster relationships between frontline professionals, such as youth workers,

police and nurses, and vulnerable youngsters.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Early intervention work with children and their families helps to limit the need for children to enter the care system, improves performance at school and helps avoid mental health issues in later life.

"All councils take their child protection responsibilities seriously and have a strong record of working with local partners such as police, schools and health services, to protect vulnerable children. This fund will help to support this work. However, with children's services facing a £3 billion funding gap by 2025, it is getting increasingly difficult to fund long-term projects that help children and families when they need it most."

Capturing land value

Central and local government should be able to capture more of the increase in the value of land that occurs when planning permission is granted, to help pay for new local infrastructure and affordable housing.

So say MPs in 'Land value capture', a report from the Commons' Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

The report makes a number of recommendations that the LGA has called for, including:

- improvements to compulsory purchase powers so they are simplified, and made faster and less expensive for local authorities
- reforms to the Land Compensation Act 1961 so that councils have the power to compulsorily purchase land at a fairer price
- that government should work with the LGA to provide additional resources, training and advice to local planning authorities to ensure that they are able to negotiate robustly with developers.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "We have long called for reforms to land compensation and compulsory purchase laws and are pleased the committee has called for the Government to implement several of our recommendations.

"Rising land prices are one of the most influential contributors to our housing crisis – they mean fewer homes are built, they are less affordable, they are built more slowly, there can be compromises on quality, and there is not enough funding left over for vital local infrastructure and services that communities need to back development.

"There are therefore huge gains for communities, economies and public services in allowing councils to capture potentially billions of pounds of land value increases to invest in the very infrastructure and services that generate those increasing values.

"We are also pleased the committee recommends that government provides extra support to councils, through the LGA, to help give local authorities a strong hand in negotiations with developers.

"Government action on these recommendations would have a significant impact on building more homes with the right infrastructures and places that people want to live and work."

Contacting first

If you have contacted the LGA's first magazine using the email address first@local.gov.uk over the past few months, then we may have not received your email because of an IT issue that has only recently come to light. If this is the case, we are very sorry that we have been unable to reply to you. We are always delighted to receive your letters, news and ideas for stories, so please contact us using first2@local.gov.uk, or email first editor Karen Thornton direct at karen.thornton@local.gov.uk

Councillor survey

If you are an elected member in England, you should have received an email inviting you to take part in the 2018 Councillor Census. Thank you if you have already responded. If not, we would be really grateful if you could, as the findings inform the LGA's practical support to authorities and councillors. They are also of real use to central and local government and political parties in the development of strategies and policies. Past surveys have given the most comprehensive, timely overviews of local government representation and how that has changed over time. The deadline is Monday 1 October. For more information, or if you have any problems accessing the survey, please email stephen.richards@local.gov.uk



Avoiding roadworks

New digital services to help motorists plan their journeys better and avoid disruptive roadworks have been announced by the Government. Street Manager will generate real-time data, and will be free for technology companies and app developers to use. LGA Transport Spokesman Cllr Martin Tett said: "These initiatives will give road users more accurate information to plan their journeys and avoid delays where possible. The extension of lane-rental powers, long called for by councils, will give incentives to utilities to minimise disruption on the busiest roads throughout the country."



Warning on toxic cosmetics

Hundreds of thousands of pounds of counterfeit cosmetics, including make-up and perfume, have been discovered by trading standards officers from councils across the country.

The fake make-up had been sold by rogue traders, and included well-known brands such as MAC, Chanel and Benefit. The LGA has warned consumers and legitimate businesses that the products can result in health problems, including chemical burns and skin rashes.

Cosmetics seized by Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards included products that contained chemicals such as highly toxic mercury and illegal levels of a skin-whitening agent.

One skin-lightening product contained a chemical called hydroquinone at a level of 10.8 per cent, which can cause liver, kidney and brain damage.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said:

"Counterfeit cosmetics can be dangerous as they can contain toxic chemicals and dangerously high levels of lead, which can be detrimental to people's health.

"Fake designer products cost businesses and the taxpayer thousands of pounds each year. Councils have been targeting rogue retailers selling these fake products, and the fines they have received should deter others from selling these dangerous products.

"People should always do their research and take a pragmatic approach when they are buying make-up and cosmetics. Check the reviews of online sellers, and bear in mind that if something is really cheap, it's likely to be fake and could potentially be harmful.

"Anyone who has purchased make-up that they think is dangerous should stop using it immediately and report it to their local trading standards team.

"It is vital that people report any concerns, so that councils can take action to prevent anyone being harmed or scarred for life."

Sustainable travel hit by funding uncertainty

Lack of revenue funding and uncertainty over current levels of funding are the main barriers to councils investing in sustainable travel, an LGA survey has revealed.

A snapshot poll of councils in England with responsibilities for transport planning and passenger transport reveals the overwhelming majority have: introduced 20 mph zones; provided secure cycle parking and/or changing facilities; promoted cycling and/or walking through schools; and included sustainable travel within their local health and wellbeing strategy.

However, the survey reveals that the main obstacles to councils doing more to invest in sustainable travel are: lack of revenue funding (87 per cent for cycling/walking and 82 per cent for public transport); uncertainty over continued levels of funding (74 per cent for cycling/walking and 79 per cent for public transport); and a lack of capital funding (68 per cent for cycling/walking and for public transport).

By 2020, councils will have faced a reduction in core government funding of nearly £16 billion since 2010. The LGA estimates councils in England face a funding gap of almost £8 billion by 2025.

The LGA said long-term funding certainty for sustainable travel, such as cycling and walking initiatives, would help councils do more to promote exercise, which reduces obesity while also cutting car use, generating wider benefits around reducing congestion and emissions.

Cllr Judith Blake, LGA Transport Spokesperson, said: "Councils are working hard to reduce congestion on our roads and tackle air pollution in our communities. Good air quality is vital for our health and quality of life, as well as the environment.

"However, this survey makes clear that significant change is still needed. Uncertainty and a lack of revenue funding are highlighted as clear barriers to investment."

Rising demand for sexual health services

The LGA has warned that record demand for sexual health services in England is putting the system under huge pressure and leaving people facing longer waits for appointments.

It says the surge in demand is happening at the same time as cuts to funding for councils' vital public health services.

Latest figures show there were 3,323,275 attendances at sexual health clinics in England in 2017, up 13 per cent on the 2,940,779 attendances in 2013, which is the equivalent of an extra 210 a day or 1,471 a week.

The total number of sexual health screens (tests for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV) has risen 18 per cent during this time period, from 1,513,288 in 2013 to 1,778,306 in 2017.

The LGA says that government cuts to councils' public health budgets have left local authorities struggling to meet increased demand for sexual health services. Some people are having to be turned away from clinics because all appointments for that day are fully booked.

The LGA is urging government to reverse £600 million in public health cuts to help councils meet rising demand for sexual health services and prevent people from experiencing potentially longer waiting times and a reduced quality of service.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "While it's great to see a huge increase in people taking their sexual health seriously, this rising demand is pushing some councils' sexual



health services to peak capacity levels, which are not sustainable in the long term.

"Demand for sexual health services has risen successively for the past five years, and there is a real risk of waiting times increasing and patient experience deteriorating.

"Cuts to public health funding need to be reversed, as this could affect councils' ability to meet further increases in demand and respond to unforeseen outbreaks of sexually transmitted infections.

"While it's good news that diagnoses of sexually transmitted infections have fallen, it will be hard to maintain this progress, with some sexual health services at breaking point."

Child diabetes up 40%

The number of children and young people being treated for Type 2 diabetes – normally only seen in adults and often linked to obesity – has soared by around 40 per cent in just four years, to more than 700 cases, the LGA has warned.

With obesity being the single greatest risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, it says the figures underline the critical need to urgently tackle the childhood obesity crisis.

According to the latest figures for 2016/17 from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 715 children and young people under the age of 25 received care for Type 2 diabetes from paediatric diabetes units in England and Wales, of which 78.6 per cent were also obese. The data shows an increase of 41 per cent on the 507 cases from 2013/14.

Type 2 diabetes can lead to serious health problems such as blindness, heart disease, kidney failure and lower-limb amputation.

Unlike Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 is largely preventable and is closely linked to lifestyle, such as unhealthy eating or lack of exercise.

The LGA is urging government to reverse the £600 million cut to councils' public health funding, which is used to help fight obesity.

LGA Deputy Chairman Cllr Izzi Seccombe, said: "Councils, with their public health responsibilities, are on the frontline fighting obesity, but for this to work effectively they need to be properly resourced.

"Cutting their public health funding is short-sighted and undermines any attempt to help our children live healthy and fulfilling lives."

news in brief

HIV cases down

New HIV diagnoses in the UK have fallen for the second year and are at their lowest level since 2000, according to Public Health England. New diagnoses fell by 17 per cent in 2017, from 5,280 in 2016 to 4,363. Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing board, said: "The progress made in supporting people with HIV, enabling them to live independent, fulfilling lives – and the fact that it is no longer the death sentence it once was – is a major public health success story. Since public health moved to local government in 2013, councils have embraced their new responsibilities and worked with their health and community partners to deliver innovative programmes that support people with HIV."

E-cigs 'less harmful'

E-cigarettes are estimated as 95 per cent less harmful than conventional cigarettes and are too often being overlooked as a stop-smoking tool by the NHS, according to the Commons' Science and Technology Select Committee.

It says regulations relating to the licensing, prescribing and advertising of their health benefits should be relaxed.

An LGA spokesperson said: "Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, so any initiatives to help the one in five people who smoke should be encouraged. Since the advent of e-cigarettes, we have seen the number of users of smoking-cessation services fall, while the population of smokers left is now more challenging to get to quit."

Meanwhile, the number of people who stopped smoking after accessing NHS stop-smoking services in England up to March 2018 has fallen by 11 per cent on the previous year, according to a recent NHS report.

LGA Deputy Chairman Cllr Izzi Seccombe said: "Councils remain committed to helping smokers quit and spend almost £100 million each year on these services and wider tobacco control.

"However, this is increasingly challenging due to central government reductions to the public health budget, which is used to fund stop-smoking services, and which will only compound acute pressures for NHS services further down the line."

features

Local solutions to the housing crisis

Councils must be empowered to build homes and tackle homelessness



Councillor Martin Tett is Chairman of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board

As we approach the 2018 Autumn Budget and the 2019 Spending Review, the LGA is embarking on a campaign to build the case for long-term sustained investment in local government.

Housing will form a crucial part of this campaign, as every one of us needs a stable and secure home: it is fundamental to leading healthy, fulfilled and productive lives.

But for too many people, housing is unavailable, unaffordable, or inappropriate for their needs. Currently, councils are providing temporary accommodation for more than 200,000 homeless people, over half of whom are children.

The housing crisis permeates all areas of local and national policy-making. It damages our communities, holding back growth and the creation of jobs. It also has an enormous impact on the public purse – the effect of poor housing on health is similar to that of smoking or alcohol and costs the NHS £1.4 billion a year.

Councils need to be at the heart of the housing crisis solution. They must be freed and empowered to play their full role in ensuring the provision of housing that supports health, jobs, and community. They need powers to build homes, tackle

homelessness, and plan good places (see box, below, right, for our housing campaign aims).

In the LGA's view, increasing the supply of social housing is one of the most important steps the Government could take to solve the housing crisis. This would add new supply quickly, support home ownership, reduce homelessness, and generate huge public service savings.

Given the scale of these benefits, the ambition shown in the Government's recent Social Housing Green Paper, 'A new deal for social housing', is disappointing.

In terms of supply, it seeks views on how to encourage housing associations to build more, and confirms some welcome flexibilities for councils. For example, councils will no longer be forced to sell high-value council homes to fund discounts on homes sold under Right to Buy. What's more, councils will be able to choose whether to offer fixed-term tenancies.

We've been arguing for these changes for a long time, but they don't go far enough. We need a renaissance in council building, led by a removal of borrowing restrictions and the ability for councils to keep the money raised from selling their homes.

Elsewhere in the Green Paper, the Government confirmed that it will be

implementing the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building regulations and fire safety, which were geared towards improving safety following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The LGA is already working closely with government on this programme of work. We're also calling for a ban on the use of combustible materials on buildings, and for any new burdens on councils to be fully funded.

We also support potential plans to allow local MPs or councillors to consider a complaint about housing before it's escalated up to the Housing Ombudsman – local politicians are well-placed to support tenants through the complaints process.

But we're less supportive of a consultation on whether the social housing regulator should publish a league table for social landlords. New, national performance regimes introduce a risk of one-size-fits-all standards being set without an understanding of local tenants and their homes.

The current system, where council landlords are accountable to both the regulator and local politicians, strikes a good balance between national standards and local democracy.

Green Paper proposals to give tenants more choice over the management and



For more information on the LGA's work on housing, please visit www.local.gov.uk/housing. The LGA is holding a conference on 'The need for speed: increasing build out rates for new homes' in London on 11 October, see www.local.gov.uk/events



“A stable and secure home is fundamental to leading healthy, fulfilled and productive lives”

governance of their homes, and to help tackle stigma, are good ideas. The LGA is already looking at good practice in tenant involvement, and it's positive that there is an emphasis on tackling stigma.

Councils are proud of their housing stock, the tenure, and their tenants, and they have had to rebut negative stories about what it means to be involved in council housing for many years.

Overall, though, the Green Paper does not go nearly far enough. Ultimately, we need a huge expansion in the social housing stock for people from all walks of life, creating thriving mixed communities.

Government can help councils to lead the way by providing the freedoms and flexibilities that will allow them to invest in homes in the longer term. Unfortunately, the Green Paper falls short of doing this.

Our housing campaign aims

The LGA wants:

- A leading role for councils in shaping the investment that has become available through the Affordable Housing Programme, so that new housing and infrastructure meets the needs of their local communities.
- Access to borrowing, including the removal of the borrowing cap on housing revenue accounts, so that councils can borrow to build the homes their communities urgently need.
- Retention of all receipts from homes sold through Right to Buy, so that councils can fund replacement homes.
- Any unexpected costs for councils arising from urgent fire safety work, following the Grenfell tragedy, to be met centrally.
- Rules scrapped that allow offices to be converted to flats without planning permission.
- Local communities empowered to have a say over development in their areas.
- A system that stops land values spiralling out of control, so that councils can deliver the affordable housing and infrastructure that our communities desperately need.
- Help to attract the next generation of planners and place-makers.
- Welfare reforms adapted to reduce the risk of homelessness for key groups, including lifting the local housing allowance freeze, which is currently keeping renting out of reach for low-income families.
- Ministers to commit to covering any shortfalls in funding for councils' new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Rough sleeping strategy

The LGA was a member of an advisory panel involved in the development of the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, along with councils and homelessness service providers and partners.

The proposals in the strategy were fairly encouraging, and included some of the panel's recommendations. For example, as part of a renewed focus on local homelessness strategies, councils will need to update their strategies by winter 2019. They'll also need to publish annual action plans, and make sure that strategies meet certain expectations.

There was also £17 million for Somewhere Safe to Stay pilots, which will see the introduction of assessment hubs offering advice and support to rough sleepers in 15 areas with high levels of rough sleeping. There'll be better, earlier support given to people at risk of spending a night on the streets.

Further funding targeted at preventing rough sleeping – from across several government departments, including £30 million from the NHS – was also announced.

However, as with the Social Housing Green Paper (see left), the strategy is more interesting for what it excludes, rather than includes. The LGA would have liked to see truly substantive measures to make sure that fewer people reach the point of crisis – namely, a reversal of welfare reform measures and a step-change in the supply of social housing.

We're also disappointed by the strategy's heavily centralised approach – it introduces numerous, nationally-controlled, disparate pots of funding, undermining councils' strategic influence.

Councils need to be given the powers and funding to tackle all forms of homelessness in a way that's joined up and takes account of local needs. This means that local homelessness strategies need to be the vehicle through which all new funding flows.

The LGA is continuing to push for this, so that all government departments can contribute to local efforts to tackle homelessness – once and for all.

i The LGA, in partnership with the National Housing Federation, is hosting a series of autumn roundtables to explore how local authorities can work with housing associations to tackle rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness. For more details contact priya.thethi@local.gov.uk

Housing for the many



John Healey MP is Shadow Secretary of State for Housing

Labour would lift council house borrowing caps and put affordable homes at the heart of the planning system

After eight years, the Conservatives' record of failure on housing is clear: home ownership is down, homelessness is rising, and the number of new social rented homes being built is still at the lowest level since records began.

As councils across the country know, the housing market is broken and Conservative housing policy is failing to fix it.

Ministers talk big about house building targets, to be reached sometime in the dim distance of the next decade. Labour starts from the basic truth that what new homes we build, and who they're for, matter just as much as how many we build.

Councils will be at the heart of our plans. Our first immediate step must be to halt the huge loss of social rented homes under current Conservative policy – 150,000 in the last five years alone.

We'll stop the sell-off of social rented homes by suspending Right to Buy, ending all conversions to 'affordable rent' and ensuring a future government can never again force councils to sell the best of their homes.

This April, Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn MP and I launched Labour's green paper, 'Housing for the many', setting out Labour's commitment to build a million genuinely affordable homes over 10 years, by launching the biggest council house building programme for more than 30 years.

At the heart of our programme will be lifting council housing borrowing caps to their prudential limits. But this common-sense step will just be the start. We'll make funding available to councils who want to build, and back those councils who don't currently have any council housing because of stock transfer to start building again.

We will transform the planning system with the importance of affordable homes at its heart, end the 'viability' loophole that lets commercial developers dodge their obligation to deliver affordable homes, and



©CHRIS SHARP

“We'll keep making the case for radical change on housing”

give local areas access to cheaper land with a new English Sovereign Land Trust.

After the disaster of Grenfell Tower, when survivors told us that “tenants were victims before the fire”, it's clear radical reform is needed. We will make safe homes for all the very highest priority with funding for sprinklers in all council high-rise blocks, a ban on combustible cladding, and fire safety the first standard in a new Decent Homes 2 programme.

By contrast, the Tories' social housing plans released this summer offer no fresh thinking or fresh funding for new, genuinely affordable, homes. But the lack of Conservative confidence on

housing shows how Labour is winning the case for change.

The Housing and Planning Act, passed more than two years ago, was the most anti-council piece of housing legislation in decades. We opposed it in Parliament then and, although the Government won the votes, we won the arguments. Proposals for a forced sell-off of council homes have now been dropped, draconian 'pay to stay' plans scrapped and a nationwide Right to Buy for housing association tenants mothballed. Unaffordable 'starter homes' are still unbuilt.

So we'll keep making the case for radical change on housing but, with Labour in opposition at Westminster, the best hope for change for millions of people is Labour councillors and councils across England. This record demonstrates the difference Labour in power can make, and will be an important part of the platform on which Labour wins the next General Election.



The Labour Party conference takes place in Liverpool from 23 to 26 September, see www.labour.org.uk/conference

Local government for the 21st century



ANDREW BAKER/LGA

Councillors have bold choices to make that will be critical to meeting the aspirations of the people they serve

One of my favourite parts of this job is the chance to work with our great councillors across the country – people who strive to make the places they live better and improve people's lives.

It's an ambition I share. My passion for local government isn't just professional, it's deeply personal. My father built his career in local government – ultimately becoming a chief executive – and I grew up with local government.

The task facing us is wide ranging, but having met so many of you, I know that we share the ambition to make a real difference.

Working together, we have to tackle people's housing concerns in a meaningful way. We must build quality homes for young people, families and everyone else who needs a place to call their own.

In doing so, we must be mindful of protecting the green belt but also recognise that compromise will sometimes be needed.



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

No-one is better placed to do this than local councillors like you. After all, you know your communities better than anyone else.

Your achievements speak for themselves. Many of you have continued to deliver quality public services and have maintained public satisfaction levels in a tough financial environment.

I know this hasn't always been easy. I am committed to working with you as we put local government finance on a fair and sustainable footing to serve all parts of our country.

This includes important work on the latest phase of our business rates retention programme, which gives local

councils the incentives they need to grow their local economies.

And, as online shopping's impact is felt on our high streets, it's time for a diverse approach where new businesses and start-ups can flourish.

Investment in our high streets does not only mean thriving local economies, but also thriving communities – places where people from all backgrounds can come together in confident and well-integrated communities.

We must stand together at this critical moment, and seize this chance to consider what local government in the 21st century can do, and what it can be.

We have bold choices to make. Choices that, ultimately, will be critical to meeting the aspirations of the people we serve: to build more homes, deliver great public services and create vibrant communities that can prosper.

I am confident that, by working together, we can achieve this and more.



The Conservative Party conference

takes place in Birmingham from Sunday 30 September to Wednesday 3 October, see www.conservativepartyconference.com

Profit with a purpose



Councillor Joy Allen (Lab) is Portfolio Holder for Transformation at Durham County Council and a member of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Councils are becoming more commercial, but need to keep social value at the heart of their work

As funding shrinks, we have seen an increased focus on income generation and efficiency savings in local government. But as councils innovate in this area, it is critical that they position social value at the heart of their commercial strategies.

Recent changes to statutory investment guidance and minimum revenue provision guidance mean councils need to continue to be clear about the purpose behind their profit.

Manchester and Plymouth City Councils are among those leading the way when it comes to the social value in their commercial practice. Each council has its own specific challenges and, equally, its own unique assets and opportunities.

Manchester's commercial activities are having a successful impact on local jobs, housing, skills and growth. A key aspect of its success is its ability to identify opportunities early and react quickly to markets, using a robust, yet supportive, governance model.

Rather than view commercial projects in isolation, the council's ambition is to develop Manchester as a world-class city. One example is Manchester City Football Club's deal with Abu Dhabi United Group to invest in the regeneration of east Manchester. This resulted in the Manchester Institute of Health and Performance, which helped victims of the Manchester Arena terrorist attack to recover.

In addition, the city council's joint venture, Manchester Life, has enabled the building of 1,200 housing units and provided apprenticeships in leisure, construction, and health innovation for local people.

The Manchester Christmas markets bring in huge visitor numbers, increasing spend in the local area and driving economic growth. And the council's Town Hall project is safeguarding, repairing and partially restoring Manchester's Grade I listed town hall (pictured). It is working with contractors to maximise the local jobs, investment and apprenticeships created through the project.

Plymouth is a developing city. It is the third biggest port in the world and has the biggest naval base in western Europe. The



“Councils need to continue to be clear about the purpose behind their profit”

council has replaced 123 strategies with just one, which has a clear social value focus in that it will only invest in the local area.

The council's key driver is economic growth and to increase the numbers of businesses locally – but it must be inclusive growth, which benefits all residents.

The council's growth and municipal enterprise programme aims to achieve £1.8 million per year. Two examples of this are its cooperative trading company, CATERed, which is jointly owned with local schools, and Delt, a shared service with the local clinical commissioning group, realising savings through scale and resilience.

It is also able to step in where there is market failure, for example in direct developments where the council is prepared to take on greater risk than private

developers. Developments include a local business park, a Next fashion, home and garden store, and investment in an existing industrial estate. The council has released 33 council-owned sites, using its planning system to develop 5,000 homes between 2016 and 2021, with the possibility to increase this further.

The two city councils are sharing their experiences to support sector-led improvement. Manchester's Chief Executive Joanne Roney OBE and Plymouth's Chief Executive Tracey Lee addressed the LGA's annual conference in July, at a packed workshop on commercialisation that I chaired. The LGA has also been pulling together resources and guidance for councils and councillors, which you can access at www.local.gov.uk/commercialisation



If you would like to develop your commercial skills, find out about the LGA's free one-day Commercial skills for councillors' masterclass at www.local.gov.uk/commercialisation



The lives we want to lead

Hundreds of organisations and individuals have responded to the LGA's green paper on adult social care

With a rapidly growing ageing population, increases in costs, decreases in funding, care providers closing and contracts being handed back to councils, the adult social care system is now widely recognised as being at breaking point.

Since 2010 councils have had to bridge a £6 billion funding shortfall just to keep the system going. But demand for care is increasing. Councils in England receive 1.8 million new requests for adult social care a year – the equivalent of nearly 5,000 a day.

Adult social care services face a £3.5 billion funding gap by 2025, just to maintain existing standards of care.

The likely consequences of this are more and more people being unable to get the quality and reliable care and support that enables them to maintain their independence and wellbeing, as well as greater strain on unpaid carers, who are

the backbone of the care system. For at least two decades, successive governments have failed to find an answer to how we fund adult social care for the long term. 'Sticking plaster' solutions – such as one-off funding to councils and increases through a social care 'precept' to council tax – have failed to address all immediate pressures, let alone deal with the longer term.

These issues cannot be ignored any longer. This is why the LGA published its own green paper consultation in August (see **first** 627), with the support of its partners (see panel, right).

We've had a fantastic response so far, with thousands of people engaging online and more than 200 formal responses. We would like to say a big thank you for championing the green paper on social media, and ask that you keep up the great work as the closing date of the consultation approaches on 26 September.

What some of our partners have said

"It is vital that we keep the focus on the plight of social care, in spite of the succession of government postponements of their own green paper. The LGA is to be congratulated on keeping the debate going and we will respond to the issues it raises."
Niall Dickson, Chief Executive, NHS Confederation

"The LGA's 'green paper' represents an important contribution to the debate about what we want society to look like from one of the key contributors to delivering that future. ADASS will work with the LGA alongside all stakeholders in this critical debate, to ensure the voice of adult social care remains prominent throughout."
Glen Garrod, President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services

"By setting out its own green paper, the LGA is demonstrating the sort of cross-party dialogue and collaboration necessary to deliver the sustainable settlement we desperately need. We are running out of road for the Government to kick the can down."
Professor Paul Burstow FRSA, Chair, Social Care Institute for Excellence

"'The lives we want to lead' is a very welcome initiative. Where central government stalls, local government is helping to keep adult social care firmly on the agenda. We all need to engage with the questions in this report, raise the debate and fill the void left by central government's lack of policy progress."
Dr Rhidian Hughes, Chief Executive, Voluntary Organisations Disability Group and Chair, Care Provider Alliance



i For more information about the LGA's social care green paper, including resources, suggested tweets and images, please visit www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk. On Twitter, use the hashtag #FutureofASC and tag @LGAcomms

On the board

Meet the elected members who steer the work of your LGA

The LGA is a membership organisation that works on behalf of councils in England and Wales to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with central government.

We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

One of our strengths is that we are a politically led and cross-party organisation. This is reflected in our governance

structures, with leadership and direction given by a senior group of councillors from each of our four political groups (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, and Independent).

The LGA Executive plays a coordinating role, setting priorities and providing strategic direction to the association's work. It is advised by the LGA Leadership Board (the LGA's chair, vice-chairs and deputy chairs) and holds the LGA's programme boards to account.

The LGA Executive is made up of the

Leadership Board, plus the chairs of the boards, representatives of Wales and the English regions, balancing members and non-voting members – see below and right.

The Leadership Board directs the LGA's day-to-day activities and business, in accordance with the strategic priorities and direction set by the LGA Executive, and also reports and makes recommendations to the executive.

Each year, the LGA Executive is reconstituted to reflect the outcome of the English and Welsh local elections. The LGA's current political balance is: Conservative – 43.4 per cent; Labour – 38.8 per cent; Liberal Democrat – 9.7 per cent; and Independent – 8.1 per cent.

LGA leadership board



Lord Porter of Spalding CBE (Con, South Holland) has been Chairman of the LGA since 2015 and Leader of South Holland District Council since 2003. He is a former Chairman of the District Councils' Network and former Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group. gporter@sholland.gov.uk



Cllr Nick Forbes (Lab, Newcastle) is the LGA's Senior Vice-Chair and Leader of the LGA's Labour Group. He has been a Labour councillor since 2000 and was elected Leader of Newcastle City Council in 2011. nick.forbes@newcastle.gov.uk



Cllr James Jamieson (Con, Central Bedfordshire) is an LGA Vice-Chairman and was elected Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group earlier this year. He was first elected in 2009 and became Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council in 2011. james.jamieson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Cllr Howard Sykes MBE (Lib Dem, Oldham) is an LGA Vice-Chair and was elected Leader of the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group in 2017. He is a former Leader and Deputy Leader of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, and currently Leader of the Opposition. howard.sykes@oldham.gov.uk



Cllr Marianne Overton MBE (Ind, Lincolnshire) is an LGA Vice-Chair and has been Leader of the LGA's Independent Group since 2011. She is Leader of the Lincolnshire Independents and sits on Lincolnshire County Council and North Kesteven District Council. cllm.overton@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Cllr Robert Alden (Con, Birmingham) is an LGA Deputy Chairman. First elected in 2006, he is Leader of the Conservative Group on Birmingham City Council. robert.alden@birmingham.gov.uk



Cllr Paul Carter CBE (Con, Kent) is a Deputy Chairman of the LGA, Leader of Kent County Council, and Chairman of the County Councils Network. paul.carter-leader@kent.gov.uk



Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE (Con, Warwickshire) is an LGA Deputy Chairman. First elected in 2001, she became the first female Leader of Warwickshire County Council in 2013. cllrmsseccombe@warwickshire.gov.uk



Cllr David Simmonds CBE (Con, Hillingdon) is a Deputy Chairman of the LGA and has been Deputy Leader of Hillingdon Council since 2002. dsimmonds@hillingdon.gov.uk



Cllr Peter Box CBE (Lab, Wakefield) is an LGA Deputy Chair and has been Leader of Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council since 1998. pbox@wakefield.gov.uk



Cllr Michael Payne (Lab, Gedling) is an LGA Deputy Chair, Deputy Leader of Gedling Borough Council and a member of Nottinghamshire County Council. cllr.michael.payne@gedling.gov.uk



Cllr Lib Peck (Lab, Lambeth) is a Deputy Chair of the LGA. First elected in 2001, she has been the Leader of Lambeth Council since 2012. lpeck@lambeth.gov.uk



Cllr Anne Western CBE (Lab, Derbyshire) is an LGA Deputy Chair and former Leader of Derbyshire County Council. She was first elected in 1997. anne.western@derbyshire.gov.uk



Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE (Lib Dem, Sutton) is a Deputy Chair of the LGA. First elected in 2002, she has been the Leader of Sutton Council since 2012. ruth.dombey@sutton.gov.uk



Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Ind, Epsom and Ewell) is an LGA Deputy Chair and was Leader of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for five years. cwoodbridge@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

board chairs and other executive members



Cllr Peter Fleming OBE
(Con, Sevenoaks) is Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board and has been Leader of Sevenoaks District Council since 2005.
cflr.fleming@sevenoaks.gov.uk



Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE
(Con, Gloucestershire) is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, and a former Leader of Gloucester City Council.
mark.hawthorne@gloucestershire.gov.uk



Cllr Ian Hudspeth
(Con, Oxfordshire) is Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board and Leader of Oxfordshire County Council. He was first elected in 2005, becoming Leader in 2012.
ian.hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Cllr Martin Tett
(Con, Buckinghamshire) is Chairman of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board and has led Buckinghamshire County Council since 2011.
mtett@bucksc.gov.uk



Cllr Simon Blackburn
(Lab, Blackpool) is Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board and has been Leader of Blackpool Council since 2011.
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Cllr Anntoinette Bramble
(Lab, Hackney) is Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, and Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care at Hackney Council.
anntoinette.bramble@hackney.gov.uk



Cllr Sir Richard Leese CBE
(Lab, Manchester) is Chair of the LGA's City Regions Board, Leader of Manchester City Council, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Deputy Mayor for the Economy.
r.leese@manchester.gov.uk



Cllr Richard Watts
(Lab, Islington) is Chair of the LGA's Resources Board and has been the Leader of Islington Council since 2013. He joined the council in 2006.
richard.watts@islington.gov.uk



Cllr Rishi Shori
(Lab, Bury) is a Balancing Member on the LGA's Executive, a Deputy Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, and Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Transport at Bury Council.
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Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
(Lib Dem, Portsmouth) is Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, and Leader of Portsmouth City Council.
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Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (Lib Dem, Cambridge) is a Balancing Member on the LGA's Executive, and was elected to Cambridge City Council in 2016.
lucynethsingha@icloud.com



Cllr Robert Bucke
(Ind, Tendring) is a Balancing member on the LGA's Executive, and was elected to Tendring District Council in 2015.
cflr.rbucke@tendringdc.gov.uk

regional and Wales



Cllr David Finch
(Con, Essex) represents the East of England LGA. He is also a member of the LGA's Resources Board and has been Leader of Essex County Council since 2013.
cflr.david.finch@essex.gov.uk



Cllr John Hart
(Con, Devon) has been Leader of Devon County Council since 2009 and is Chairman of South West Councils.
john.hart@devon.gov.uk



Cllr Barry Lewis
(Con, Derbyshire) represents East Midlands Councils. He is Derbyshire County Council's Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture and Tourism.
barry.lewis@derbyshire.gov.uk



Cllr Stephen Parnaby OBE
(Con, East Riding) has been Leader of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council since its inception in 1996, and represents Yorkshire and Humber at the LGA.
councillor.parnaby@eastriding.gov.uk



Cllr Roy Perry
(Con, Hampshire) is Chairman of South East England Councils and has been Leader of Hampshire County Council since 2013. He was first elected in 2005.
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Cllr Michael Wilcox
(Con, Lichfield) represents the West Midlands on the LGA's Executive. He has been Leader of Lichfield District Council since 2010.
michael.wilcox@lichfielddc.gov.uk



Cllr Simon Henig CBE
(Lab, Durham) represents the North East on the LGA Executive. First elected in 1999, he has been Leader of Durham Council since 2008.
simon.henig@durham.gov.uk



Cllr Peter John OBE
(Lab, Southwark) is Chair of London Councils and Leader of Southwark Council. He is also a member of the LGA's City Regions Board.
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Cllr Terry O'Neill
(Lab, Warrington) represents the North West Regional Leaders Board. He was first elected in 1991 and has been Leader of Warrington Borough Council since 2011.
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Cllr Debbie Wilcox
(Lab, Newport) is the Leader of the Welsh LGA, Leader of Newport City Council, and also sits on the LGA's City Regions Board.
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non-voting members



Cllr Philip Atkins OBE
(Con, Staffordshire) represents the County Councils Network and is Leader of Staffordshire County Council.
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Cllr John Fuller
(Con, South Norfolk) is Chairman of the District Councils' Network and Leader of South Norfolk District Council.
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Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE
(Lab, Barnsley) is Leader of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Chair of the LGA's Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA).
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Alderman Sir David Wootton
(Ind, City of London) is Chairman of Local Partnerships and a member of the City of London Corporation.
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You can find out more about your LGA Executive colleagues and other councillors who sit on the LGA's boards by visiting www.local.gov.uk/about/our-meetings-and-leadership/lga-leadership

interview

Real people, real services

Complaints about councils can provide an early warning of where things are going wrong, says **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Michael King**



“I want a more sophisticated conversation with the sector – and, if possible, with the media – about what complaints mean”

Elected members should be at the heart of complaints about their councils, according to Michael King. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman sees his office as sharing a key role with councillors in providing local accountability for public services.

“There is a really strong relationship between the feedback and intelligence we get from complaints, and the role of members in trying to represent their locality but also to hold their own local authority to account,” Mr King says.

Members – either as part of the executive or as part of full council – are on the receiving end of his office’s work; they act as local representatives (originally, residents could only bring complaints to the ombudsman through their local councillor), and they can provide a link between scrutiny and complaints, he adds.

“Complaints provide an incredibly useful set of data and intelligence for members to use in scrutiny, because they are the real stories of real people using real services, and I think that’s why they are so valuable,” says Mr King.

“Councillors are the natural eyes in giving the public a voice when things go wrong, and in trying to promote service improvement, transparency and accountability at a local level. So I think there is a really strong relationship for us to have with elected members; it’s certainly not one they need to feel defensive of.”

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) investigates individual complaints about local public services and registered social care providers. In 2017/18, it logged 17,452 complaints. It carried out



4,020 detailed investigations, upholding 57 per cent of these complaints, and made 3,622 recommendations to put things right.

Each year, the LGO writes to every council about their complaints, and publishes thematic reports identifying trends and issues affecting the sector (these also include questions for councillors to ask in scrutiny). Recent high-profile reports have looked at homelessness and temporary accommodation, as well as education, health and care plans.

Mr King is the first to concede that the number of complaints received by an individual council will usually correlate to the size of its population and its responsibilities. A large, upper tier authority will get more complaints than a small district council.

A doubling of complaints in the latter could be the result of just one controversial planning development or a mobile phone mast going up – “it doesn’t tell you anything about the corporate health of the authority”, he says.

“I’m very keen to try to move the national conversation about complaints away from ‘have they gone up or have they gone down’ to what do they tell us about the corporate health of that body? What do they tell us about lessons we can learn to avoid the same things happening again, and how can we use them to drive service improvement?”

“I want a more sophisticated conversation with the sector – and, if possible, with the media – about what complaints mean.”

Allowing for that big picture, however, Mr King is adamant that complaints can help to identify trends within local government as a whole, and particular concerns within individual councils.

“It would be easy to think ‘complaints,

there are a small number of them, it’s a self-selecting group, how much does that tell you about the world?’

“Yet over and over again, what we find is that they are actually quite a significant and telling insight, and an early warning into things that are going wrong, either with individual authorities or in terms of trends.

“The strength of it is it’s the lived experience of local government reflected in people’s complaints. And often, they provide some really profound insights into what’s going on.”

So should councillors be worried if their local authority is getting a lot of complaints – or, conversely, if it is getting very few?

“Sometimes good authorities get lots of complaints because they are very open, mature – they’re listening, they’re learning. I would never condemn a local authority for having high numbers of complaints,” says Mr King.

“If you’re getting disproportionately fewer complaints than similar authorities, then that’s a cause for concern. If I was an elected member, I would be asking questions because that, potentially, is a sign you are not open to feedback – you’re not listening to the people who use your services, and maybe problems are being swept under the carpet.”

The three areas the LGO has reported on most in the last 12 months are adult social care, children’s services, and homelessness. The LGO has recorded year-on-year increases in complaint numbers for adult social care for the past eight years, with a disproportionate number (around two-thirds) of those complaints upheld.

Mr King is concerned about sometimes “arbitrary cuts” in the amount of care people

receive, and local authorities increasingly saying they can’t afford to do what guidance or legislation tells them to do – for example, around some areas of charging for care.

“There are some structural things we are seeing, where in some cases it’s not about individual mistakes, misunderstandings or errors, it’s about policy positions being adopted to try to balance the books, which are either not in accordance with principles of good public administration or have unforeseen consequences for people at the margins,” he says.

In children’s services, the LGO continues to monitor education, health and care plans (EHCPs), where the uphold rate on complaints remains at around 80 per cent – mostly to do with delays and failings in moving children from statements of special educational needs to EHCPs.

And, last year, the LGO’s report on homelessness identified continuing problems with homelessness and housing in London, but also that these problems were spreading beyond the capital – and affecting working families, rather than ‘stereotypical’ rough sleepers.

“People think of homelessness in terms of people sleeping rough on the streets, people who’ve got drink or drug problems or are going through some sort of life crisis,” says Mr King.

“That’s not the big picture of homelessness we are dealing with through our complaints. We’re seeing people – often who are in work – being priced out of private sector accommodation and being housed in unsuitable temporary accommodation. In some cases, ironically, it’s people who work for the council who are applying for help with homelessness.” >



“It would be wrong for us to arbitrarily disapply people’s rights because of local funding pressures”

> The LGA continues to campaign for improved funding for local government, particularly in adult care and children’s services. But while Mr King, as a former local government officer, is sympathetic to the sector’s financial situation, he is adamant that it must hold councils to account based on established law, rights, guidance and standards.

“We have to be very careful not to be political and draw political conclusions. It’s for others to draw conclusions about what might be going wrong. We can’t comment on whether things are properly funded or not, or whether the legislation is correct or not, that’s just not our remit. All we can do is highlight the experiences we are seeing through the lens of complaints,” he says.

“It would be wrong for us to arbitrarily

disapply people’s rights because of local funding pressures. That doesn’t mean I’m blind to the realities and difficulties that local authorities face. The LGO has been through the same process; we’ve implemented cuts of 43 per cent, so we’ve got the t-shirt.”

Looking ahead, the LGO is making changes to how it records and publishes data about how complaints are remedied, with the aim of moving away from a simplistic focus on complaint volumes to one that looks at the lessons that can be learned to improve services for the many, not just those who complain. These include plans for an interactive map showing how councils have responded to LGO recommendations.

Also in the pipeline is a report on

how councils are managing change and transformation, and how that is playing out in terms of complaints. Mr King is concerned about the introduction of blanket policies that have unforeseen consequences or, in some cases, are unlawful, and instances of “corporate memory loss” as services are outsourced or reconfigured in different ways.

His office has come across instances where local authorities have lost access to their own records, which shows “just how important it is to put proper governance around these arrangements”.

“The commercialisation and transformation agenda brings new challenges in terms of public accountability,” Mr King says.

“Significant externalisation of services shouldn’t mean that a golden thread of accountability between the public and the council is lost. People should be building into their outsourcing contracts provisions so they have proper oversight of what’s being delivered, but also so that there’s proper accountability for when people complain. We’re seeing that done very well, sometimes we’re seeing it absent altogether.

“On a similar note, there’s lots of new partnerships and structures emerging in local government – combined authorities, partnerships with the health service. Lots of those things are wholly good and are attempts to create more joined up public services.

“But again, in creating those new structures, you have to be very clear that public accountability needs to remain at the heart of it – the public voice has to be there.”

He adds: “We see some authorities that are very defensive and unhelpful when we try to investigate. We see others who are mature and open.

“It’s not about whether you make mistakes, because we all do – me included; it’s about how you react to them and how you learn from them.”



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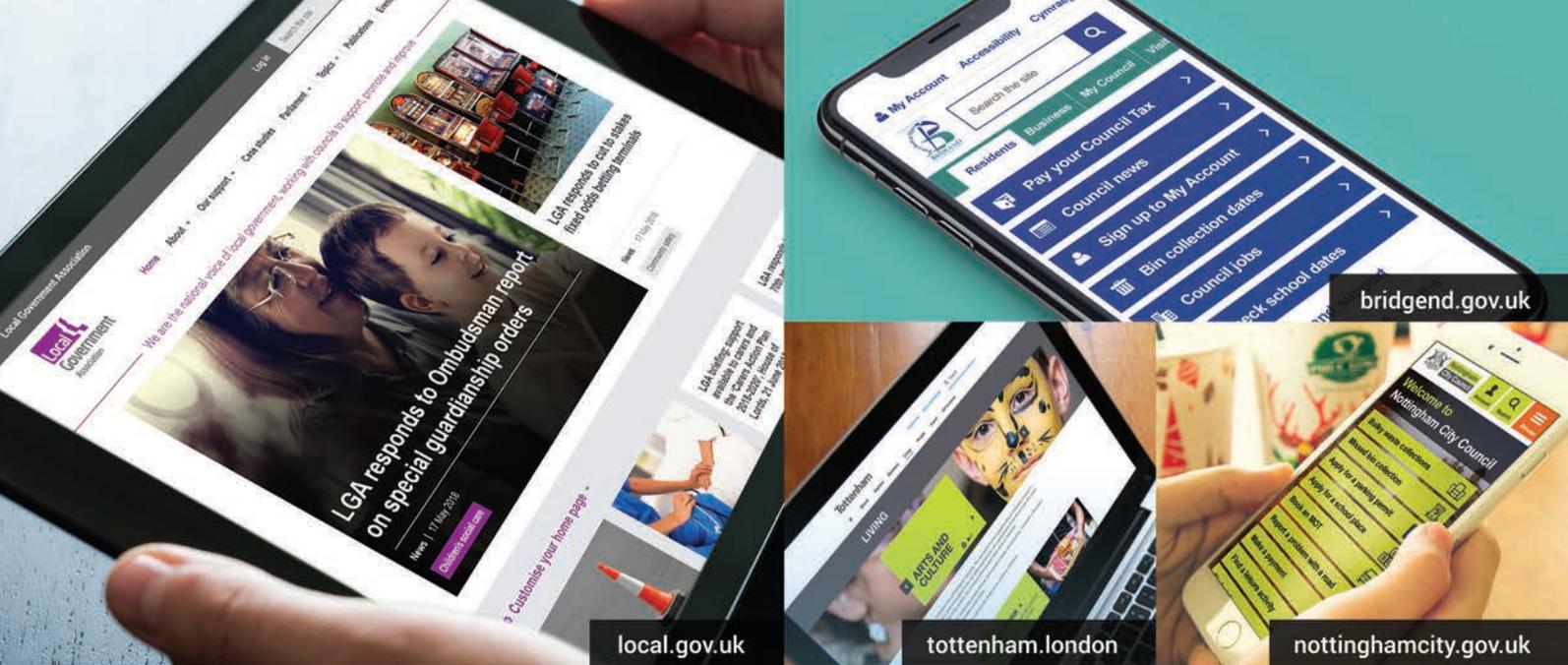
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comment

Inspecting children's services



Yvette Stanley is National Director for Social Care at the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

The new Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework launched in January. And, since joining Ofsted, it has been my job to make sure that the way it is being delivered on the ground reflects what the sector signed up to in principle. I'm pleased to say – so far, so good!

Children's experiences and progress are still at the heart of ILACS. The biggest change is the move from a four-week inspection every four years to much more regular contact and a

wider suite of inspection 'tools'. The inspections are risk-based, proportionate, and tailored to a local authority's specific circumstances.

ILACS involves an annual engagement meeting for all local authorities; shorter, one-week inspections for authorities previously judged good or outstanding; two-week standard inspections for those requiring improvement to be good; with focused visits in between and regular monitoring for inadequate authorities before we re-inspect.

Most crucially, it aims to support improvement and catch those who aren't improving before they fall.

So far, about 60 per cent of areas inspected under the new approach have improved their grading, and the proportion moving out of 'inadequate' at re-inspection is similar. This is not a lowered bar: we are using the same grade descriptors, and where local authorities

aren't performing well, we will be very clear about that. To date, sector colleagues tell me that ILACS is tough, but fair.

The good news is that we have seen many places using their previous inspection outcome and better self-evaluation to create an environment for good decision-making and good social care practice to thrive. Ultimately, this helps ensure children are better protected.

Where these building blocks aren't in place, our reports identify what needs to improve. For significant concerns, we will set out 'areas for priority action', which we expect the local authority to respond to swiftly with an action plan.

Of course, it is difficult to talk about performance without the spectre of finances surfacing. Indeed, one of the most common questions I get from chief executives is: "How do I know that my director of children's services is managing spend, as well as managing risk to children?"

Many local authorities are achieving this delicate balance, making effective decisions for children even in a tough financial climate.

The best places have the elements you would expect in common: a stable leadership team, well-implemented models of practice, and a direct line of sight to, and understanding of, the risks frontline staff are managing. Absolutely critical is manageable caseloads, which mean social workers can do effective direct work with families, and make good, timely decisions.

We are, of course, conscious of context when we inspect. But our role is to assess practice and its impact on children and families. We all know the cost of inadequacy, both reputational and financial.

I would argue that getting it right – right child, right support, right time – is the most efficient use of hard-pressed resources.

In inspections to date, I have seen a sector that, despite the massive challenge of increasing demand and tightening funding, is ever more resourceful, and eager to get the most impact for children within that context. That's good for local authorities and, most importantly, good for our most vulnerable children and families.



Yvette Stanley and Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman will be speaking at the National Children and Adult Services Conference 2018 in Manchester from 14-16 November. **For more information** and to book your place, please visit www.ncasc.info

Austerity is damaging services for children

“Councils are struggling to meet the increased demand that children’s social care now faces”



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

Children’s social care has seen a dramatic surge in demand over recent years and, as a result, it has moved up the agenda for local and national government.

The LGA revealed in January that a child is being referred to local authority children’s services every 49 seconds and that an average of 90 children entered care every day last year, which also saw the largest annual increase in care numbers since 2010.

Councils have warned the Government time and time again that ongoing funding cuts, including the £3 billion gap that councils’ children’s services are facing by 2025, have left them struggling to meet the increased demand that children’s social care now faces.

If local authorities aren’t given the injection of funding that is desperately needed, they will continue to struggle to give the support that vulnerable children need.

The combination of continued cuts from central government and the surge in demand for access to children’s social care means that, in the past year alone, there was an £816 million overspend in councils’ children’s social care budgets.

Councils have worked endlessly to protect funding for essential children’s services, but budget pressures from relentless Tory government cuts since 2010 have meant they often face the difficult choice of overspending to meet demand and making

cuts to other essential council services.

It is time that the Government woke up and realised the damage that its austerity agenda is doing to the most vulnerable in society, and that it simply cannot continue.

Simply put, councils have tried to protect children’s budgets, but – with the continued financial pressures – this cannot be done any longer. The funding gap must be addressed to ensure that children’s services are protected and continue to support the most vulnerable in society, now and in years to come.

● See Bright Futures, the LGA’s campaign for children’s services, at www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures

chairman’s comment

Social housing: a missed opportunity



Lord Porter
is Chairman of the LGA

Good housing is at the heart of everything else we, as councils, do. If your residents have poor housing, you – and they – have a problem. And not just a housing problem: you have an education problem, a health problem, an anti-social behaviour problem.

Many of the difficult things councils have to help people with stem from bad housing. So the best way to fix any of those problems is to make sure everybody has a safe, secure, decent home.

That’s why the LGA believes a significant expansion in social housing is the single most important step the Government could take to help solve the housing crisis. It would add new supply

quickly, support home ownership, reduce homelessness, and generate huge public service savings.

Unfortunately, the Government’s Social Housing Green Paper, published over the summer, showed a disappointing lack of ambition on this front.

There were some positive measures. We will be able to invest greater proportions of Right to Buy receipts into new homes, match receipts with the Affordable Housing Programme grant – and we won’t have to sell off our high-value council houses. Retaining local flexibilities on fixed-term tenancies is also welcome.

But, right now, councils are housing 77,000 families and 125,000 homeless children in temporary accommodation, with a further million on waiting lists, and many more families

struggling in expensive, less secure private rented housing.

The last time the country built enough homes, councils built 40 per cent of them. We need a renaissance in council building, led by a removal of borrowing restrictions, local retention of all Right to Buy sales receipts, and flexibility to set Right to Buy discounts.

The Social Housing Green Paper proposals are not sufficient on their own to bring about this renaissance, which will only be achieved by enabling councils to build the homes that their communities need. We will continue to press government to make the changes we want to see and hope that the Green Paper is a starting point for a more ambitious plan.

“The Green Paper proposals are not sufficient on their own to bring about a renaissance in council house building”

group leaders' comments



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

Funding messages for party conference

“Conservative councils consistently deliver excellent services in challenging financial circumstances”

Party conference marks the start of the new political year, and with the Conservative Party still firmly entrenched as the largest party in local government after the local elections, I look forward to our voice being heard loud and clear in Birmingham.

We all know that local government is the most efficient and trusted part of the public sector, and that Conservative councils consistently deliver excellent services in challenging financial circumstances.

Party conference provides us with a unique opportunity to lobby Cabinet members, MPs and key advisers with our messages around funding, and for us to be allowed more freedom so that we can continue to deliver for our residents.

The LGA will host two events: our conference debate, 'Investing in our future: why the spending review must provide for communities' (ICC, Hall 9, 3.45 pm to 5.00 pm on Monday 1 October); and our evening reception (ICC, Media Suite, 9.30 pm to 11.00 pm on Tuesday 2 October).

I am delighted that Communities Secretary James Brokenshire MP has indicated that he will be present at both.

In addition to these events, LGA Conservative Group colleagues will be speaking at a range of fringe meetings during the conference week. Further details on these will be provided in our monthly email bulletin at the end of September.

I look forward to meeting many of you in Birmingham.



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

Children self-harming figures are horrifying

“Many councils are being forced to cut early intervention work, which helps children avoid reaching crisis point”

Ministers, and all of us, need to address the crisis in children's mental health, after a recent Children's Society report revealed that around one in four 14-year-old girls self-harm – a figure I find horrifying, especially as a father of two girls.

'The good childhood report 2018', which examines the state of children's wellbeing in the UK, found that, out of the 11,000 children surveyed, one in six reported self-harming at 14.

One told the charity: "I felt like self-harming was what I wanted to do and had to do, as there was nothing else I could do. I think there is help for young people, but not the right kind of help.

"Feeling not pretty enough or good enough as other girls did contribute towards my self-harming; however, I don't feel just being a girl is the reason, as I think boys feel the same way too."

Councils work hard to ensure children and young people can access the support they need. However, with children's services facing a £3 billion funding gap by 2025, many of our councils are being forced to cut early intervention work – including youth services – which helps children avoid reaching crisis point.

Government should release the £1.7 billion promised for child and adolescent mental health services as a matter of urgency. It is scandal every day it does not!



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

Looking ahead to next May's elections

“We are listening to you, speaking for councils nationally, and getting more good people to stand”

After one of the hottest UK summers on record, the new political year is under way, along with a busy season of LGA Independent Group events, including regional activity and our annual conference on 23 November.

Our aim, as always, is to help members do a great job for your residents. We are listening to you and speaking for councils nationally, as well as getting more good people to stand for election.

The elections next May are very significant for us. It is important that each of our councillors has a supportive network in place. Some of your supporters may get engaged in local issues, or want to assist more directly by being a councillor in a neighbouring ward, adding strength to your work.

Through the LGA's Be a Councillor campaign, we are able to help our members reach prospective candidates, encouraging those already active in their communities to stand. Do get in touch with the office for more information.

So as we prepare for elections next May, we also focus on the key policies at hand and being a strong voice for local government in discussions on Brexit, adult social care, housing and the ongoing funding pressures facing us all.

The year ahead will, undoubtedly, be another challenging one for local government, but our voice on behalf of our authorities is loud and being heard.



For more information about the LGA's political groups, see www.local.gov.uk

Apprenticeships for all



Councillor Emma Crane (Con) is Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homes at Rugby Borough Council

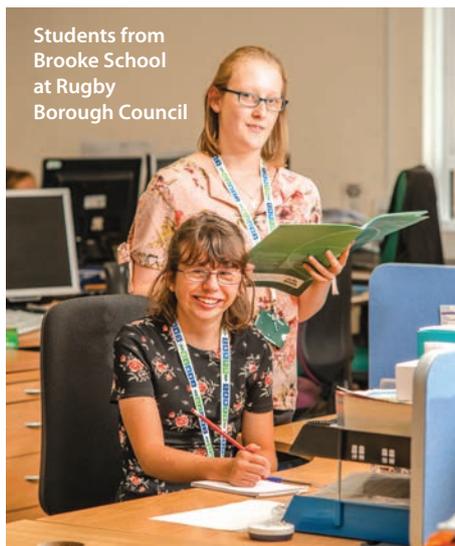
Faced with the prospect of a third of our staff being aged over 50 by 2020, Rugby Borough Council launched an apprenticeship programme to recruit and develop young people.

It's been a success, with half of the apprentices securing permanent or fixed-term contracts with the council, in roles ranging from trainee licensing officer to trainee horticultural mechanic.

But we wanted to take our apprenticeship programme a step further.

Three years ago, we forged a partnership with Rugby's Brooke School, which caters for young people with a variety of needs, including physical, sensory, emotional and communication disorders.

The council has placed equality and diversity at the heart of the organisation,



Students from Brooke School at Rugby Borough Council

RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

achieving 'excellent' status under the Equality Framework for Local Government for the first time in 2014 and again in 2017, when it was reassessed.

Working with Brooke School's Making My Own Way Project, we have provided internships to 10 students, offering opportunities that go

way beyond the traditional work experience placement.

It's a team effort, with teachers from the school offering support to the student in the workplace, while each intern also has a council mentor, who ensures the student develops the confidence and skills to make a real contribution.

And it's delivered results, with one of the interns successfully transferring to the council's apprenticeship programme and completing an information technology qualification.

The success of the Brooke School partnership led us to broaden the scope of our apprenticeship programme and we now offer apprenticeships to young people with physical or learning disabilities, and young people on the autism spectrum.

It requires a high level of commitment from both the apprentice and council staff, with a wide range of our teams offering placements during the apprenticeship to ensure they learn a variety of skills and develop confidence in the workplace.

But this commitment brings rewards, both in terms of the diversification of our workforce and the opportunities we can offer to young people in our borough.

Supporting adopted children with special needs

A quarter of the children that leave care go to 'permanent' new homes, with either adoptive parents or special guardians assuming parental responsibility.

But for two-thirds of those children, that is not the end of the story, so far as the local authority's responsibility goes, because that is the proportion who have additional or complex needs.

These children are likely to need extra help at some point in their childhood, if not on an ongoing basis. Each local authority is required to publish its plans for how it will support these children.

Regional adoption agencies (RAAs) offer the opportunity for a step change in the delivery of these support services, removing the postcode lottery that – sadly – means there is not consistently reliable delivery of this vital support for some of the most vulnerable children in our communities.

RAAs are a working example of the sector-led improvement that local government wants to promote. They are already providing



Andrew Christie is Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board

adoption services for a third of local authorities, and, in total, more than 90 per cent of councils have already set up their RAA or are progressing plans to do so.

Looking ahead, we can be confident there will be sufficient RAAs to ensure there are enough adopters. At present, we face a shortfall in recruitment. We run the risk that children will wait longer for matches to families or, even worse, be denied an adoptive family.

Children's Minister Nadhim Zahawi MP has asked all local authorities for their recruitment projections. All but 10 have provided this information. Now we must ensure we secure delivery.

The Adoption and Special Guardianship



Leadership Board will monitor performance across the country every quarter. I hope you will help ensure those children who need it are offered a good adoptive home, and are given support as and when they and their families need it.



For more information about the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, please visit www.cvaa.org.uk/asglb/



UNICEF/SUTTON-HIBBERT

Putting children's rights into practice

Since 2017, Cardiff – alongside four other cities and communities in the UK – has been working with UNICEF UK and our partners towards international recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City.

This means placing the rights and voices of children and young people at the heart of our policies, strategies and services; involving them in decision-making; and addressing the barriers that limit their life chances.

Cardiff's commitment to becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City must be shaped by children and young people. Since the very beginning of our journey, they have worked with us so that we can find out where they think our priorities should lie.

Based on what they've told us, we are prioritising education, family and belonging, and health.

On education, making sure Cardiff's schools embed child-rights practices – where the voices of young people are heard and acted upon – will be front and centre of our ambitions to become a Child Friendly City.

Developing skills for life is also at the heart of our approach. It has been estimated that nearly two in three children entering schools today will end up working in jobs that do not yet exist. In our Child Friendly City, children will leave school with the life skills they have told us they need to succeed, including the abilities to make well-balanced decisions, manage personal finances, develop



Councillor Sarah Merry (Lab) is Deputy Leader of Cardiff Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills

healthy lifestyles, and maintain good social relationships.

When it comes to families, our ambition is for Cardiff to be a place where all families are supported to be together and can enjoy activities around the city.

And on health, giving children the best start in life is a priority. Getting it right for families in the first 1,000 days – from conception to a child's second birthday – is critical to achieving this aim.

We are already seeing progress in all three of these areas. More than 30 of our schools have started their journey towards becoming UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools. In May this year, meanwhile, we held our biggest car-free event. Thousands of families were able to

cycle in the city centre and enjoy a range of free family-friendly activities.

A Street Play pilot programme has started, where residents can simply apply to close their roads on a monthly basis, to enable children to play safely in their streets.

And Cardiff has adopted a 'Think Family' approach, making sure that public services are joined up and that children and families are given the right support, in the right way, at the right time in the first 1,000 days of a child's life. Cardiff is also working towards UNICEF UK Baby Friendly accreditation in maternity and community health services.

We are at the beginning of our journey towards becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City, with much more to come. I, along with a third of my councillor colleagues, have received training in children's rights from UNICEF UK, with another round of training planned for the autumn.

Through this work we can ensure that the voices of our children and young people are heard. This means the priorities we set as a city are informed by a diverse mix of interests and opinions, and are relevant and beneficial to all.



UNICEF UK's Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme works in partnership with local councils across the UK to help make places where all children feel safe, heard, nurtured and able to flourish, using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as its guide. For more information, please visit: www.unicef.org.uk/child-friendly-cities

Community energy for all

Community energy initiatives are wide-ranging, from community-owned renewable energy schemes and street-wide insulation programmes, to bulk-buying schemes and green open-homes events.

They bring multiple benefits – reducing fuel bills and helping alleviate fuel poverty; creating jobs and strengthening the local supply chain; building community capacity and pride; and helping meet carbon-reduction targets and mitigate climate change.

But most community energy projects happen in more affluent areas, meaning these benefits aren't as widely shared as they might be. That's not to say there aren't initiatives in low-income neighbourhoods, but there could be far more.

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) spoke to community energy initiatives in low-income neighbourhoods, and found many ways in which councillors can help.

For example, they can press for the integration of community ownership and benefit in planning proposals for renewable



Harriet Sansom is a Communities Project Manager at the Centre for Sustainable Energy

energy schemes, and encourage high building-fabric standards in new builds.

Where neighbourhood plans are being written, urge residents to think about sustainable energy from the beginning of their plan development – and support those who are already doing it.

You can highlight the untapped community energy opportunities that exist with the council's buildings and land, and engage with the council regarding its investment activities. Are there opportunities for building local renewable energy and

demand-reduction schemes? This could be insulation and solar panel schemes targeted at low-income and council-owned households, running loan schemes to enable householders to buy energy-efficient appliances, or providing financial backing to large-scale community-owned energy schemes.

Arrange for local stakeholders from local government, the private sector, community development organisations, health bodies and energy agencies to come together and brainstorm what could be done locally on sustainable energy.

While it's a time of restricted capacity and funds in local government, community energy initiatives can build the long-term economic resilience of a community – and there are many great examples already demonstrating this. Councillors and councils play a critical leadership role in supporting and driving forward these initiatives.



For more information about the work of the Centre for Sustainable Energy, or to read 'Bringing local energy benefits to deprived communities', please visit www.cse.org.uk.

Giving young people a voice



Councillor Alex Michaels (Lib Dem) is Chairman of Three Rivers District Council's Youth Council

I've chaired Three Rivers District Council's Youth Council for just over a year, and it's amazing how much you can achieve working with young people in such a short amount of time.

Since having our first meeting in October 2017 (see **first** 620), the 15 schools we have worked with have impressed us with the progress they have made in the community projects we discussed less than three terms ago.

We have gone from having two representatives from each school council to hosting all 200 members, with them barely fitting into our theatre alongside parents,

governors, teachers and my colleagues from all parties.

Projects included a magnificent video by four schools in Chorleywood, which featured the students talking about a controversial project to build a playground on the common – the first time children had a voice in this long-running saga.

They also included litter picking, visiting and working with elderly people, and lots of debates and discussion in the form of videos, slideshows and presentations.

Our aim was to do as little talking as possible, and let the students and their projects talk for themselves. It became clear that even the youngest students, aged six and seven, can find their voice and play an active and important role in society.

We all know young people are the future, but only when we gave them a platform did we realise how undervalued their role is in society. Every session needed to be cut short as the questions were endless, and the students'

“Even the youngest students can play an active and important role in society”

excitement provided inspiration for us all.

At the end, when councillors from all parties came on stage to take questions, I was acutely aware that – while we represent the local authority to them (and often our parties to each other) – they represent the future to us. We must involve them more and empower them to lead us. After all, they inherit the world from us, and we must give them a voice now.



For more information, please follow Cllr Alex Michaels on Twitter @MrAlexMichaels

parliament

Protecting the most vulnerable

With normal service resumed in Parliament following the summer recess, a number of important bills are being discussed in both the House of Commons and House of Lords.

One such is the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill, which is currently in Committee in the Lords, and which the LGA has provided briefings for.

The Bill seeks to reform the current deprivation of liberty safeguards (DoLS) system, which would enable councils to work with their partners locally to ensure people who lack mental capacity are placed at the centre of decisions made about their care. The LGA has long called for these changes and welcomed the introduction of the Bill.

Councils have been working hard to protect the rights of the most vulnerable

people since the well-documented increase in responsibilities following a 2014 Supreme Court judgment. Despite this, local government has continued to prioritise those most in need. Even with an 11 per cent increase in applications from 2015/16 to 2016/17, the number of DoLS applications completed in 2016/17 increased by 45 per cent.

We look forward to working with government on the development and implementation of a reformed, fully funded

“It is vital there is a consistent approach across social care”

scheme that ensures there is adequate protection for human rights, including any guidance to support the Act.

While the LGA is supportive of the Bill, we will want to see a number of changes to ensure that councils are not unduly burdened by the new provisions.

We support an amendment tabled by Baroness Thornton relating to provisions to extend the safeguards to 16 and 17-year-olds. It is vital there is a consistent approach across social care that supports vulnerable people of all ages. This Bill is an opportunity to introduce this recommendation, and would align with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Councils are currently experiencing significant pressures across adult social care budgets, and the system is widely perceived as being in a state of crisis. Since 2010, councils have had to deal with a £6 billion funding gap in adult social care services, and we estimate the service faces a funding gap of £3.56 billion by 2025.

Therefore, it is important that sustainable funding for adult social care for transition to, and implementation of, the Bill is provided to councils. Failure to do so could have a damaging impact on the crucial services on which people rely.

We support an amendment which requires the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to report on the impact of the Act on those it applies to, including individuals, local authorities and care home providers.

The amendment commits the Government to laying a report in Parliament on the operation of deprivation of liberty safeguards no later than two years after the Bill receives Royal Assent, and is important as it will help with consideration of the impact of cost pressures on council budgets.

We will be working with government and Parliament on the Bill to influence its final shape, and to help create a simpler and less bureaucratic deprivation of liberty safeguards system.



For more information about the LGA's work in Parliament, please visit www.local.gov.uk/parliament

councillor

A year in the life of...



Councillor Neil Prior (Ind) is Cabinet Member for Transformation and IT at Pembrokeshire County Council

I've been in my post a little over a year at Pembrokeshire County Council, and it has been the busiest year of my life. So I thought I'd share my thoughts – and my top tips for surviving and thriving in elected life.

Immerse yourself. Local government is complex but when you add in 'code of conduct' and 'constitution' training, and have worked out which scrutiny committee does what, you'll realise how enormous it really is.

So throw yourself into it, but realise that there will come a point when you'll know where you can best spend your time.

'The bloody council'. There will be a honeymoon period where council critics will hold high hopes for the future and you can do no wrong, but sooner or later you will be labelled a self-serving, in-it-for-yourself crook and liar.

While I'm a fan of social media, there will probably be an online group who have a strong opinion on your actions, and will happily share their thoughts on the internet.

Build relationships. You are a potential threat to an established way of working, and other members will want to know if you will support them. On the flip side, there are officers and councillors who want to see change and it's important to work with them. To get things done, you'll need to build your credibility.



"To get things done, you'll need to build your credibility"

Leadership. You are a leader of both your community and council. This is more explicit in my case as I am a cabinet member. Finding your feet is not easy but, by being clear in my objectives, building my credibility and by being authentic, I think I'm getting there. I've also had to remind myself that leading change is difficult.

Pace and process. Local government can be painfully slow. As someone who's worked in the technology sector, it's been a challenge to increase the speed of our transformation programme but I've been fortunate enough to have some brilliant senior staff to work with.

Balance. Depending on your availability and other commitments, you will need to find the balance of your work in the council, on the council, and in your community. You also still have a life and will need to take some downtime.

Expect the unexpected. You're on call

24/7 and you'll have to deal with wide-ranging issues where people genuinely need your help. That's a big responsibility but incredibly fulfilling, and it's what people elected you for. They don't really care about the brilliant contribution you made in scrutiny, they care about the grass being cut and the bins being collected.

Council is theatre. I watch and listen to the more experienced in the chamber for the way they construct their arguments and their timing. And while it's daunting, it's important to get on your feet and be part of it.

Fulfilment and purpose. People have put their faith in you to serve them, and this is your priority. It's critical to remember that you work for them.

Enjoy it. It's a privilege to serve and I'm going to make sure I enjoy it, bring my personality to it, make the most of the experience and do my best.

No two councillors' experiences will be the same, but I hope that my thoughts above will help anyone brave enough to enter the democratic arena fashion a way through the first year of elected life.



This is an edited version of a blog published previously by Cllr Prior on his LinkedIn page, see www.linkedin.com/pulse/year-county-councillor-surviving-thriving-elected-life-neil-prior/

elections

Electoral volatility

The party conference season offers an opportunity for all the political parties to assess their current standing among the electorate.

The opinion polls continue to suggest there is little to choose between Labour and the Conservatives, as has broadly been the case ever since last year's General Election. Everybody else is far behind, though the Liberal Democrats do occasionally manage to nudge into double figures.

A closer reading of the polls, though, would seem to indicate that support for one and all is fragile. That picture is amply confirmed in the pattern of local by-elections.

It is not that there has been an unusual number of gains and losses (21 seats have changed hands in the 71 contests since May



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



Neath Port Talbot's Gwynfi ward, it suffered a calamity – slumping from 56 per cent of the vote to just 13 per cent to be swept aside by an Independent candidate. The Conservatives attracted just four votes in the same ward.

On the other hand, Labour nearly doubled its vote share and ran the Conservatives close in the Newton Regis and Warton ward of North Warwickshire – a constituency where the Conservatives posted one of their best results in the country at last year's General Election.

As the governing party, the Conservatives themselves would expect reverses. They have lost a net five seats since May, but often still manage to sweep up the last vestiges of UKIP support in wards previously contested in 2015. Their victory in Thanet in July, for example, saw their vote share more than double.

With both major parties riven by internal disputes, and with the UK set to leave the EU on whatever terms scarcely a month before next May's local elections, it is likely that electoral volatility will continue to be commonplace, and that unforeseen issues or events have the potential to impact rapidly on voters' opinions and behaviour. It is no time to try to be a soothsayer.

“There have been some tidal shifts in the votes attracted by each party”

2018), rather there have been some tidal shifts in the votes attracted by each party.

In the last few weeks alone, the Liberal Democrat vote share was down by 30 percentage points in Newquay, Cornwall, but the party gained the Watton-at-Stone ward in East Hertfordshire polling fully two-thirds of the vote from a standing start.

In Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, the party polled 400 more votes than in 2017 on a much lower turnout, to easily depose the Conservatives.

Labour, too, has had its ups and downs. In

i For all the latest by-election results in full, including a spreadsheet of voting statistics, please visit www.local.gov.uk/first

local by-elections

Bury, East

LAB HELD

37.8% over Con

Turnout 26%

Carlisle, Denton Holme

LAB HELD

37.9% over Con

Turnout 22.1%

Cornwall, Bude

LIB DEM HELD

28.2% over Ind

Turnout 29.9%

Cumbria, Denton Holme

LAB HELD

31.5% over Con

Turnout 22.1%

East Hertfordshire, Watton-at-Stone

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

37% over Con

Turnout 39.3%

Knowsley, Halewood South

LAB HELD

11.9% over Ind

Turnout 24.2%

Neath Port Talbot, Gwynfi

IND GAIN FROM LAB

42% over Plaid Cymru

Turnout 51%

North Warwickshire, Newton Regis and Warton

CON HELD

4.4% over Lab

Turnout 32%

North Yorkshire, Knaresborough

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

19.8% over Con

Turnout 30.3%

Rushcliffe, Gotham

CON HELD

9.1% over Lab

Turnout 44.3%

Sevenoaks, Farningham, Horton Kirby and South Darent

CON HELD

29% over Lib Dem

Turnout 25.6%

Tameside, Ashton Waterloo

LAB HELD

26% over Green

Turnout 19.5%

Wirral, Bromborough

LAB HELD

18.9% over Con

Turnout 23%

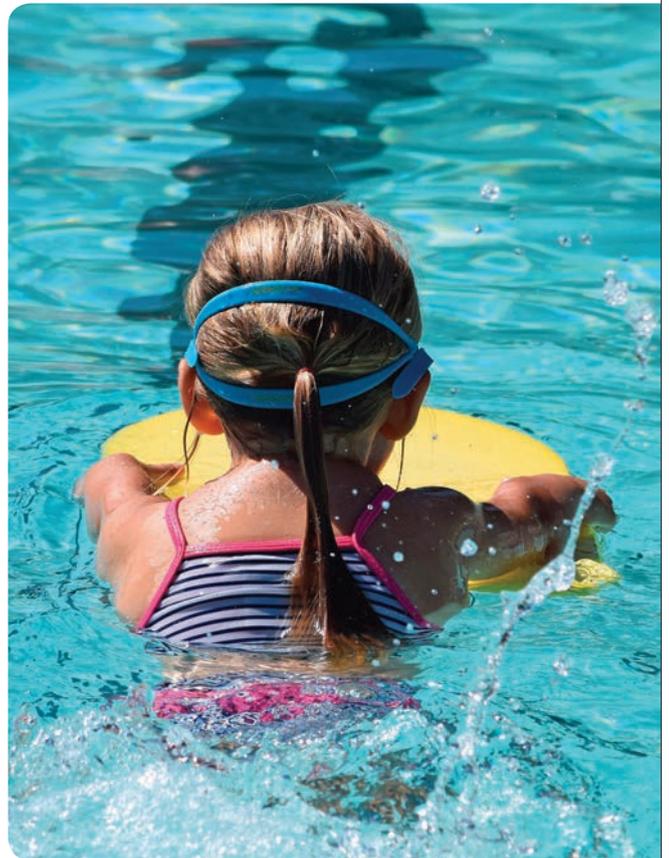
Sport and Physical Activity Conference 2018

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



LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition

2-4 July 2019

Bournemouth International Centre

Sponsorship opportunities available please contact: amanda.spicer@local.gov.uk

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To book your place visit www.local.gov.uk/conference

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