

# first

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the magazine for local government

**Interview:**

“Local areas should have the chance to improve **before we come and give them the judgement**”

Eleanor Schooling,  
National Director for  
Social Care, Ofsted

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on new housing

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**NATIONAL  
CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES  
CONFERENCE 2017**  
BOURNEMOUTH 11–13 OCTOBER

## Youth and experience



Children and young people are one of the themes of this month's **first**. We take a look at the funding issues facing the local services that are vital to protecting them from serious risk of harm and supporting families in crisis (p10). We also have an interview with Eleanor Schooling, Ofsted's National Director for Social Care, in which she discusses the new inspection framework for children's services (p18).

Our party conference coverage continues with articles ahead of the Conservative and Labour conferences from Communities Secretary Sajid Javid MP and his Shadow, Andrew Gwynne MP (p12-13).

Elsewhere in the magazine, you can read about our behavioural insights programme, which can help with funding for projects using research based on 'nudge' theory to manage demand for services. And you can find out more about our councillors, who sit alongside me on the LGA's Executive, setting the organisation's strategic direction (p16).

Our lead comment is from Cllr John Fuller, Chairman of the District Councils' Network, who highlights how district councils are punching above their weight when it comes to building new homes – but could do much more with the right powers and fiscal freedoms (p23).

**Lord Porter** is Chairman of the LGA

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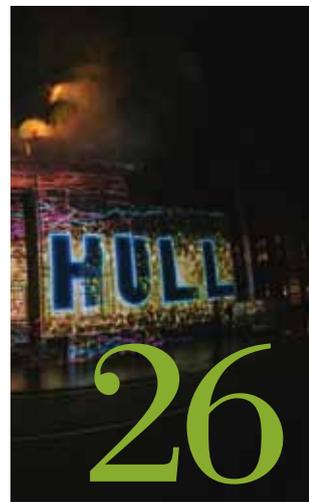
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## Devolution deadlock 'threatens local growth'

**Opportunities for billions of pounds worth of economic growth and hundreds of thousands of new jobs and homes risk being lost as a result of 'devolution deadlock' across the country, the LGA has warned.**

It is two years since the Government deadline for local areas to submit devolution proposals. Around 34 ambitious proposals – from cities, towns and counties across England – were submitted.

But no new deals have been announced for 18 months, despite many areas being keen to press forward with negotiations.

Councils want to see their communities access the full opportunities currently available to areas where devolution has taken place and ensure all parts of the country reap the benefits of having greater powers and funding to improve services such as skills, housing, transport and health and social care.

While the election of six combined authority mayors in May marked a significant milestone for devolution in England, it is not the only model of devolution possible. The LGA wants to explore further options for the widespread transfer of powers and responsibilities to the whole of England, in order to boost the economy and improve people's lives.

This has become even more important if

the Government is to ensure the whole nation benefits from Brexit, according to the LGA.

Council leaders insist Brexit should not simply mean a transfer of powers from Brussels to Westminster, Holyrood, Stormont and Cardiff Bay but must lead to new legislative freedoms and flexibilities for councils so that residents and businesses benefit (see p30).

The LGA also wants the Government to publish its annual devolution report, setting out progress on negotiating deals. It successfully lobbied for the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 to include reports, but this year's has yet to be published.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "There are concerns that devolution discussions have stalled and opportunities are being missed. To reignite the devolution process, the Government needs to engage in a debate about appropriate governance arrangements with local areas.

"This is fundamental to ensure that the momentum around devolving powers to local areas is not lost, and the billions of pounds worth of economic growth, hundreds of thousands of jobs and homes on offer through non-metropolitan devolution deals is not lost with it."

## news in brief

### Budget submission

As **first** was going to press, the LGA was making its submission on behalf of councils to the Government's first Autumn Budget, due on 22 November. The submission sets out how – with the right funding and powers – councils can continue to lead their local areas while the Government gets on with negotiating Brexit. It details the cost pressures and why, with many local services facing significant funding gaps, it is vital that the Budget recognises that councils cannot continue providing services without sufficient and sustainable funding. For more details, see next month's **first** or visit our website ([www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)). ● See p24.

### Women councillors

Only 33 per cent of councillors are women, dropping to 17 per cent among council leaders, according to a new report from the think tank IPPR. 'Power to the people? Tackling the gender imbalance in combined authorities and local government' identifies barriers to women entering local government and progressing into leadership roles, and calls on the sector and political parties to make gender equality a priority. Cllr Marianne Overton, LGA Vice-Chair, said: "The report rightly highlights that progress in achieving gender balance should be at a faster pace. However, change will only come through a mix of support programmes and direct action from political parties to encourage and sustain aspiring female councillors."

### Delayed transfers

The latest NHS England figures on delays in transferring patients out of hospital show a total of 181,700 delayed days in July 2017 – a decrease on July 2016, when there were 184,600. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Nearly six out of ten people (55.9 per cent) delayed in hospital are unable to leave because they require further NHS services, with just over a third (37.4 per cent) awaiting support from council social care. Councils are doing all they can to get people out of hospital and back into the community quickly and safely." But she warned that "sudden and last minute" reductions in council targets for reducing delays were "unrealistic" and "unachievable".

# Secondary places crisis

Almost half of councils across the country are at risk of being unable to meet rising demand for secondary school places within the next five years, the LGA has found.

New analysis of Department for Education figures and local pupil forecasts shows that more than 125,000 children face missing out on a secondary school place by 2022/23.

The LGA is calling on government to urgently give councils the powers to force academies and free schools to expand if additional places are needed in a local area and voluntary agreement cannot be reached.

With nearly two-thirds of secondary schools now academies, this is the only way to make sure councils can fulfil their statutory duty to ensure every child has a school place.



Councils also need to be given back powers to build new schools in areas where they are needed, if it is logistically impossible for local academies or free schools to provide the places needed. Currently, although councils have a duty to make sure there are enough places, all final decisions about new schools have to be made in Whitehall.

The LGA's analysis reveals that unless more secondary school places are created, 12 local authorities will face a shortfall in 2018/19, rising to 23 in 2019/20, 41 in 2020/21, 57 in 2021/22 and 66 in 2022/23.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils have worked hard to help create almost 600,000 additional primary places since 2010. This is no small feat. However, as those children move on to secondary schools, the majority of which are now academies, securing new secondary places in the areas where they are needed is becoming increasingly difficult."

He added: "Councils are working with one hand behind their backs to help as many pupils as possible receive a place at their first choice school. If we are to avoid this looming crisis, councils need to be able to force existing academy schools to expand if voluntary agreement is impossible and must be given back powers to open new maintained schools themselves."

# National funding formula for schools

Councils will continue to be involved in setting local school budgets, following the Government's announcement on its national funding formula for schools. They will also remain able to make additional funding available for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

But the LGA has raised concerns about schools being asked to make up the shortfall in central funding for SEND, saying this is "not sustainable" given the other pressures on schools' budgets.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "The LGA has long called for fairer funding for all schools and for councils to be able to work with schools to set budgets that reflect local need."

"We are therefore pleased that the Government has recognised the important role councils can play in the introduction of the national funding formula by giving councils and schools the flexibility to set budgets locally. This will help schools and local areas adapt to the new formula in the long term."



"Councils have been concerned for some time about the growing funding pressures facing support for children with SEND. It is therefore right that the Government has allowed councils to retain the ability to make additional funding available – with the agreement of schools – to meet the rising demand and pressures for SEND support."

"However, asking schools to meet the shortfall in central government funding for this vulnerable group is not sustainable in the long term, particularly given the huge pressures facing schools' core budgets. Councils are calling on government to launch a review of high-needs funding to ensure we meet the needs of our most vulnerable children."

## 'No academy role for councils'

Councils should not be given a stronger role in failing academy schools, according to a senior Ofsted figure.

In an interview for this edition of *first*, Eleanor Schooling, Ofsted's National Director for Social Care, says that improving poor academy schools is now the role of the regional schools commissioners.

The LGA has been lobbying for a greater role for councils in school improvement, particularly in respect of failing academies given that its research shows that 91 per cent of council-maintained schools are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "Councils' track record of helping to improve schools with their local knowledge, expertise and democratic oversight cannot be ignored."

"With the majority of secondary schools now academies, Ofsted also found that more work needs to be done to improve these

schools, especially in the North and the Midlands.

"Councils are key to unlocking that improvement. Allowing them to intervene early and use their vast experience would help these schools to deliver the high quality education that all of our children deserve."

In her interview, Ms Schooling says she doesn't believe councils should be given a stronger role in failing academies.

"There are other mechanisms now for making sure that academies that are not doing so well do well and that's really now the regional schools commissioners' role."

But she adds: "In reality, every local authority should be thinking about the schools that are in their local area because they are still their children and elected members are still accountable for what happens to those children."

● See p18

## Assessing new homes need

The Government is consulting on a new way of assessing housing need, with the aim of increasing the supply of new homes.

But the LGA has warned that while there might be benefits to having a standard approach to calculating local authorities' housing need, councils are best placed to know local needs and lead new development in their area.

It reiterated its call for new powers and fiscal freedoms to help councils build more homes.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "A formula drawn up in Whitehall can never fully understand the complexity and unique needs of local housing markets, which vary significantly from place to place.

"It is crucial that councils and communities can lead new development in their areas. Councils know that the only way to tackle our housing crisis is to build more homes, and the right types of homes needed for our communities. Councils already approve nine in 10 planning permissions, but are often frustrated when approved homes aren't built quickly enough.

"Our residents are clear – new homes in their communities have to be affordable, high-quality, and supported by adequate infrastructure and sustainable local services. The only way to do this is to make sure that councils – who are closest to the communities they serve – have the powers and funding they need to deliver homes that are right for their local area.

"This means powers to make sure developers build out approved homes in a timely fashion, adequately funding planning departments, so that they can cover the cost of processing applications, and freeing councils to borrow to build quality new homes communities want and need.

"Ultimately, we need a renaissance in council house building if we're to deliver the affordable homes this country needs. National ambitions will not be realised without new freedoms and powers for councils."



# Taxpayers footing £1 bn planning subsidy bill

**Local taxpayers will be forced to spend £1 billion covering the cost of planning applications by 2022, according to new LGA analysis.**

Planning fees are set nationally, which means councils are prevented from recovering the full cost of processing the 486,500 planning applications they receive on average each year.

Since 2012 – the last time the national fees were increased – communities have footed the bill for as much as a third of all planning applications. This represents desperately needed resources being diverted away from other vital local services.

The bill for local taxpayers to cover the cost of planning applications is growing at a rate of around £200 million a year and will reach £1 billion by 2022.

This is the equivalent of repairing 4.35 million potholes, providing grant funding to help councils and housing associations build 8,507 new affordable homes, and creating more than 828 miles of public pavements.

As first was going to press, the Government announced a new consultation on planning (see left), which includes a

commitment to increase planning fees for those councils delivering additional homes. The LGA cautioned that this increase needs to apply to all councils as soon as possible, and with no strings attached. It also wants government to commit to testing a fair and transparent scheme of local fee setting, to allow councils to recover actual costs.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Housing Spokesman, said: "Councils are working flat-out to approve almost nine in 10 planning applications, with the majority processed quickly.

"But the shortfall in the amount of fees councils can charge and the cost of processing applications is heaping further pressure on the stretched planning departments that are so crucial to building the homes and roads that local communities need.

"Councils need to be able to recover the actual cost of applications and end such a needless waste of taxpayers' money.

"Locally set fees would also allow councils to prevent increased costs being passed on to residents, while developers could contribute more to maintain high-quality planning decisions, and improve the ability of councils to speed up the planning process."

## Call to review taxi licensing laws

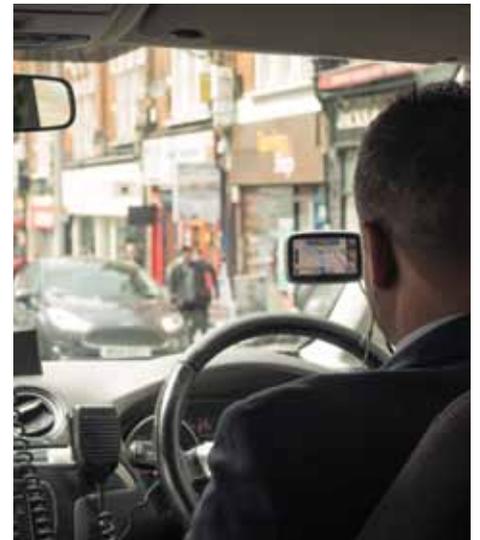
The LGA is calling for taxi laws to be updated urgently to reflect new technology, help reduce the risk of child sexual exploitation and create a level playing field for drivers.

Taxi and private hire legislation – some of which dates back to 1847 – needs strengthening to improve passenger safety in light of the proliferation of app-based taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) companies and increased cross-border hiring.

Councils cannot take enforcement action against the rising numbers of taxi drivers licensed by other authorities operating in their area. This is causing huge frustration to councils and local drivers who – depending on what the local rules are – may have had to comply with more rigorous licensing standards.

The Government has set up a working group to look at the issue over the autumn. The LGA wants the group to look at national minimum licensing standards for drivers of taxis and PHVs, a national database of all licensed taxi and PHV drivers, and cross-border hiring. It is urging government to support new legislation on taxi and private hire vehicles, to modernise the licensing system.

The LGA has recently commissioned the development of a national register of taxi and PHV licences that have been refused or



revoked so councils can check new applicants against the database.

Cllr Clive Woodbridge, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "The need for reform is now urgent. Councils are doing what they can to strengthen licensing processes, but we have always said that the best way to strengthen safeguarding is to update legislation, which only government can do."

# More homes needed for older people

The number of specialist homes for older people will need to increase by 400,000 in less than 20 years as a result of our ageing population, LGA analysis has revealed.

The LGA is calling for a 'residential revolution' to provide more homes for older people, by giving councils the tools to deliver more housing that supports positive and healthy ageing.

One in five people in England will be over 65 in a decade. However, only 0.6 per cent of over-65s currently live in specialised accommodation, with a form of care support such as 24/7, on-site staff – 10 times less than in more developed retirement housing markets such as the USA or Australia.

Worryingly, the number of these types of homes will need to increase by 75 per cent by 2035 to ensure our ageing population is fully housed.

The LGA's report, 'Housing our ageing population', says it is crucial that councils have sufficient funding to adapt existing housing, as at least 80 per cent of the homes we will inhabit in 2050 have already been built. These adaptations are a vital component in supporting older people's independence, health and wellbeing and should be at the

heart of integrated health and care strategies.

Essex County Council's Independent Living Programme, Newcastle City Council's Older People's Housing Delivery Plan and the work of Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust in delivering dormer bungalows and a retirement village are all examples of innovation in providing this specialist housing.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Housing Spokesman, said: "Our ageing population means that older people are an increasingly crucial part of our housing market. They now live in a third of all homes, and this is set to increase. Delivering quality housing that meets the needs of these older people is essential.

"Councils across the country are innovating when it comes to delivering housing for older people – from building new homes that are attractive to older people wanting to 'right-size', to ensuring housing is at the heart of integrated care.

"However, councils cannot tackle this issue alone. Support from government, which incentivises house building and provides councils with the funding and resources they need, is crucial to our efforts to support positive ageing."

## Utilities to be charged for roadworks

Utility companies are to be charged by the hour to carry out roadworks, the Government has announced – something the LGA has long called for.

'Lane rental' ensures that utility companies and others carrying out excavations and similar work on the road can be charged by the hour to ensure roadworks are carried out as efficiently as possible. It follows successful lane rental trials in London and Kent.

The Government estimates that the 2.5 million roadworks currently carried out each year cost the economy £4 billion because people are unable to get to work on time or deliveries are delayed, resulting in higher costs for business.

Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Transport Spokesman, appeared on the BBC News Channel, BBC Radio 4's PM and ITV's national news to respond to the announcement.

He said: "The LGA has been calling for lane rental powers for councils for a number of years. We are delighted that the Government has accepted our calls and acknowledged the success of pilot schemes.

"Councils are on the side of frustrated motorists who find themselves spending wasted hours held up in tailbacks. We're confident these new measures will help minimise delays from roadworks, and keep traffic moving on our local roads.

"It is crucial that councils are given these powers without lengthy national approval mechanisms, so they can ensure critical roadworks are carried out as quickly as possible. The sooner councils are allowed to get on top of this problem the better.

"We look forward to working with government to make sure that any new system allows vital work to be completed as soon as it possibly can be."

**i** 'Housing our ageing population' is available free at [www.local.gov.uk/housing-our-ageing-population](http://www.local.gov.uk/housing-our-ageing-population)

## 'Use Brexit to make food hygiene scores mandatory'

All food premises in England should be forced to display 'Scores on the Doors' ratings when EU laws governing food safety are converted into UK law after Brexit, to improve hygiene standards and protect people from harm, the LGA has urged.

Council environmental health teams score food outlets from zero to five based on factors such as kitchen cleanliness, cooking methods and food management.

Businesses in Wales and Northern Ireland are legally required to display their rating, but not those in England

The LGA wants the Government to see Brexit as an opportunity to strengthen food

safety laws when converting EU law into UK law, and empower councils by legally extending the mandatory display of 'Scores on the Doors' to England.

This would not only improve consumer confidence and raise standards, but also reduce the need for – and therefore cost of – enforcement action by councils.

The LGA says that businesses – including restaurants, pubs, cafes, takeaways, sandwich shops, supermarkets and delicatessens – that fail to comply should be fined or prosecuted.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "With mandatory hygiene rating display

already in force in Wales and Northern Ireland, the UK leaving the EU provides a crucial opportunity to toughen up food safety laws by extending the legislation to England as well.

"Food hygiene standards and compliance levels have risen since the scheme was introduced in Wales.

"Making the display of hygiene ratings compulsory in England is good for business. Not only would it incentivise food outlets to improve or maintain high hygiene standards – which would reduce the risk of illness for customers – it would also improve consumer confidence and save taxpayers' money."



# NATIONAL CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES CONFERENCE 2017

BOURNEMOUTH 11-13 OCTOBER

Share good practice, network with colleagues and progress issues of national policy for children and adult services at this year's NCAS Conference.

With a mix of ministerial addresses, plenaries, sub-plenaries and workshops, this conference is vital to elected members, directors of children's and adult services, directors of public health, senior managers, policy makers as well as organisations with responsibilities for children and adults in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Alongside the conference will be an exhibition of suppliers and providers of relevant services as well as a lively Speakers' Corner.

#### Speakers include:

**Terrie Alafat CBE**, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Housing

**Emma Bennett**, Director of Children's Services, City of Wolverhampton Council

**Paul Burstow**, Chair, SCIE

**Niall Dickson**, Chief Executive, NHS Confederation

**Jackie Doyle-Price MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Department of Health

**Robert Goodwill MP**, Minister of State for Children and Families, Department for Education

**Sir Malcolm Grant**, Chair, NHS England

**Heléna Herklots**, Chief Executive, Carers UK

**Jeremy Hughes CBE**, Chief Executive, Alzheimer's Society

**Kevin Hyland**, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

**Clive Jones**, Director of Children's and Adult Services, Telford & Wrekin Council

**Barbara Keeley MP**, Shadow Minister for Mental Health and Social Care

**Dame Christine Lenehan**, Director, Council for Disabled Children

**Alison Michalska**, President, Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)

**John O'Brien**, Secretary to the Inquiry, IICSA

**Lisa Pascoe**, Deputy Director, Social Care, Ofsted

**Dr Chai Patel**, Chairman, HC-One Limited

**Lord Porter of Spalding CBE**, Chairman, Local Government Association

**Lyn Romeo**, Chief Social Worker, Department of Health

**Duncan Selbie**, Chief Executive, Public Health England

**Andrea Sutcliffe**, Chief Inspector, Adult Social Care, Care Quality Commission

**Margaret Willcox**, President, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)

Book your place at  
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# Letters

## Challenging FGM

It should be a concern to all councils that nearly 12,700 new cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) have been identified in England over the past two years, highlighting the size of the challenge facing all agencies.

In a truly fair society, no woman or girl would be at risk of FGM. It is gender-based violence – it is unacceptable and it needs to stop.

The National FGM Centre is a partnership between Barnardo's and the LGA, to achieve a systems change in the provision of services for girls and women affected by FGM. In areas where the centre is working, social work provision to affected girls and families has been quickly and significantly improved through the intervention of its social workers, who are embedded in council safeguarding teams.

Hundreds of referrals have been received in areas that previously only recorded a handful of cases each year.

However, not enough GP practices and NHS trusts are submitting FGM attendance records. It is crucial that they continue to do this to help build reliable and accurate figures reflecting the prevalence of FGM across the country. I encourage all members of health scrutiny boards to ensure this issue is on your agenda and that performance is suitably scrutinised in your area.

**Cllr Anita Lower (Lib Dem)**, Leader of the Opposition, Newcastle City Council, and Chair of the National FGM Centre

## Public health

The One You shop in Ashford town centre was launched in February to provide residents across the borough with support and advice on how to lead a healthier lifestyle.

One You is Public Health England's national campaign encouraging adults to take control of their health by making small lifestyle changes which have health benefits now and in later life.

Before the end of June, 941 people had visited the shop, with 574 receiving health interventions, 116 of which were people wishing to stop smoking. Nearly 70 health MOTs have been undertaken. These involve a blood pressure check, BMI assessment, a lifestyle discussion and then advice and guidance on healthy lifestyles.

Additionally, more than 50 health checks, which include a cholesterol check, and 70 blood pressure checks, have also been carried out, and the shop now boasts a room for breastfeeding mums.

The impact of the One You shop has been terrific, and reflects the council's innovative approach. As the lead authority in the borough, we have a duty to be concerned about our residents' wellbeing and work closely with our colleagues in health organisations.

One You promises to be the future of healthcare provision. When it was set up, the eyes of the NHS were firmly focused on the shop. They are pleased, as are we, that it is having such a positive effect.

**Cllr Brad Bradford (Con)**, Portfolio Holder for Health, Parking and Community Safety, Ashford Borough Council

## sound bites

**Cllr Dan Cohen (Con, Leeds)**  
"Sitting on the #Leeds Environment, Housing & Communities #Scrutiny Board, looking into updating CCTV provision, community hubs & migration."  
[www.twitter.com/cllr\\_dan\\_cohen](http://www.twitter.com/cllr_dan_cohen)

**Cllr Warren Whyte (Con, Buckinghamshire)**  
"After a 13-hour council day, managed to get my dinner from @waitrose with 2 minutes to spare."  
[www.twitter.com/CllrWarrenWhyte](http://www.twitter.com/CllrWarrenWhyte)

**Cllr Charles Wright (Lab, Haringey)**  
"Dodging the rain on housing inspections in #Woodside today. Issues including rubbish collection, security, cleaning being taken up #cllr."  
[www.twitter.com/CharlesWright57](http://www.twitter.com/CharlesWright57)

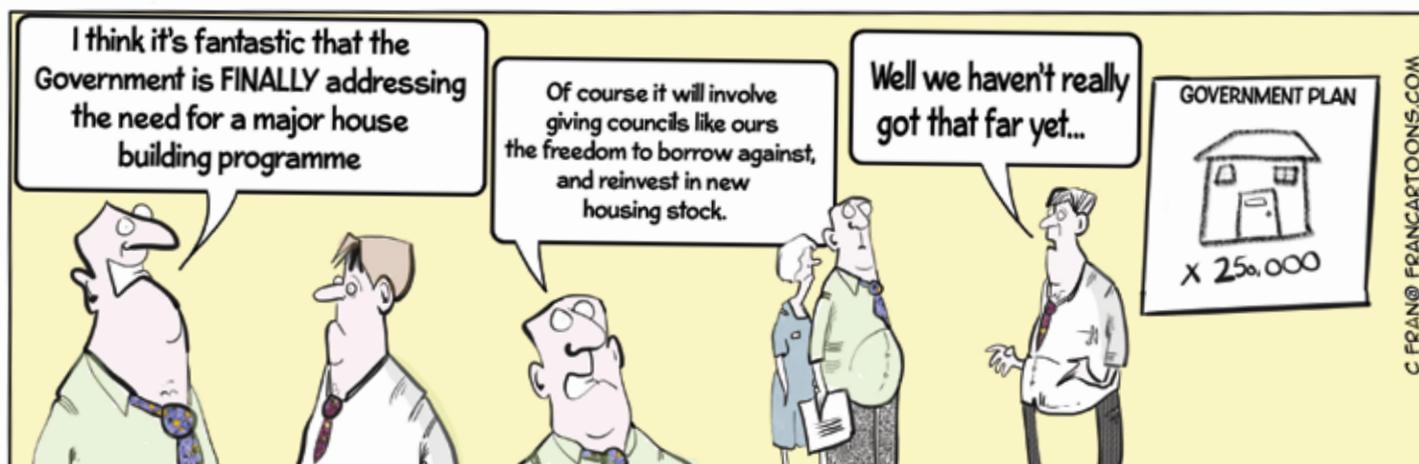
**Cllr Peter Marland (Lab, Milton Keynes)**  
"Lovely to visit @Growing\_People Urb Farm this morning in Wolverton. Doing great work for the community and young people."  
[www.twitter.com/Pete\\_Marland](http://www.twitter.com/Pete_Marland)

**Cllr Alan Connett (Lib Dem, Devon)**  
"On way home from great @LGANews cllr conference in Manchester. Ran 'conflict resolution' session with Helen Holland & Ami Beeton #localgov."  
[www.twitter.com/AlanConnett](http://www.twitter.com/AlanConnett)

**Cllr Karen Walker (Ind, Bath and North East Somerset)**  
"Thanks to @bathnes staff for doing the litter-pick around the Odd Down park n ride that I asked for #ThankYou."  
[www.twitter.com/Karenwalker3434](http://www.twitter.com/Karenwalker3434)

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Let us know. Email [first@local.gov.uk](mailto:first@local.gov.uk)



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# features

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## Happy and healthy

The LGA will be launching a campaign this autumn for proper funding of the services that change children's and young people's lives



Cllr Richard Watts is Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board

All children deserve the best start in life, to be happy and healthy, given the support they need to work through challenges, and helped to develop the resilience, knowledge and skills to thrive.

Helping children and young people to fulfil their potential is a key ambition of all councils. Our children's social care system works not only to protect children at serious risk of harm, but to support families to stay together when they're having difficulties. It also offers care for children with disabilities, steps in to help when families experience a crisis – such as the hospitalisation of a parent – and works with young people to help them overcome hurdles.

By 2020, local government in England will have lost 75 pence out of every £1 of core central government funding that it had to spend in 2015. At the same time, demand for these services has increased significantly. More than 170,000 children were subject to child protection enquiries in 2015/16, compared with 71,800 in 2005/06 – a 140 per cent increase in just 10 years. The number of children on child protection plans increased by almost 24,000 over the same period.

Although councils are finding innovative solutions, there are very few savings left to find that won't have a real and lasting impact on the crucial services that many children and families rely on. While councils have worked hard to protect

budgets for essential child protection services, funding pressures have led to difficult decisions elsewhere.

Councils are facing a £2 billion funding gap for children's services by 2020, while government funding for the Early Intervention Grant has also been significantly cut, by almost £500 million since 2013. It is projected to drop by a further £300 million by 2020.

We must also remember that prevention is always better than cure. The more money spent as problems arise in childhood and adolescence, the less cash is needed to tackle more acute issues as children reach adult life. However, as budgets shrink, councils and their partners have found it increasingly difficult to invest in the early help services that can most effectively meet children's needs.

Take mental health problems facing children and young people. We know that about one in 10 children and young people are affected by mental health problems, which can have a damaging impact on future life chances if not tackled quickly and effectively. Current trends show that substantial numbers of young people are increasingly struggling with problems such as anxiety, depression and self-harm, with nearly 19,000 young people having

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*“The way money is currently spent leaves little to invest in early intervention or to improve access for all”*



*“We urgently need more investment to ensure children are able to access the right support, at the right time”*

been admitted to hospital after harming themselves in 2015 – a 14 per cent rise over three years.

Demand for treatment has surged, with the average waiting time for children and young people to access mental health services ranging from 14 to 200 days. Once through the referral process and finally able to get specialist support, even young people with life-threatening conditions can wait more than 100 days before receiving any form of treatment. There just isn't enough capacity in the system to meet the level of need.

Councils cannot fix this alone. Additional government funding for child and adolescent mental health services is currently channelled through clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), which are under no obligation to involve councils or health and wellbeing boards in the decisions they make. Facing a long list of urgent priorities, after years of underinvestment, money is often spent on more critical care.

Understanding that good emotional health and wellbeing is not just about treating diagnosable mental health



*“Good emotional health and wellbeing is about designing services and systems that offer support early on – such as school-based counselling”*

conditions, but also designing services and systems that provide support early on – such as school-based counselling – will go some way to relieve the pressure on more acute services. However, the way money is currently spent leaves little to invest in early intervention or to improve access for all.

Leaving children and young people unable to access support until they reach crisis point puts increasing pressure on already overstretched children’s social care services and – more importantly – fails the children and young people who rely on us for help. It is far from the only example. We

urgently need more investment to ensure children are able to access the right support, at the right time.

If problems arise, we need to know that our children can get effective help quickly. But, if we want this to happen, councils must be at the heart of creating properly funded local systems that work.

This autumn we are launching a new campaign, calling on the Government to fund properly the services that change children’s lives. With the right help, our children and young people don’t need just to get by – they can thrive.



**To find out more about the campaign**, join us at the National Children and Adult Services Conference 2017 in Bournemouth from 11-13 October. To book a place, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events) or follow the conference on Twitter at [#ncasc17](https://twitter.com/ncasc17)

## Amanda’s story

I first realised I was getting ill at 14, although I wasn’t finally admitted as an inpatient until 16. When things started getting out of control, I turned to my local GP. We had no school nurse or wellbeing practitioner to help.

For a long time, I accessed a number of different support services as I wasn’t judged to be ill enough to go into hospital. It felt like I was on a seesaw, waiting and waiting to see different therapists and counsellors – like I was just keeping my head above water, with no-one getting to the root cause of my anorexia and depression.

School was the only stable thing in my life. By the time I became an inpatient it was great, supporting me as I completed my GCSEs. If I had been supported earlier it would have made a huge difference to my care and recovery from mental illness.

I was given a social worker, who oversaw my treatment. Having someone to chase referrals between services was so helpful. If you’re really ill, you haven’t got the capacity to be in control of your own care. You need someone to help you.

It’s the little things that matter. Appointments made after school, having someone I can go for a walk with, grab a coffee. Someone to fight my corner.

My social worker was the link between services, chasing referrals, helping me feel like a human. But even with this help, I felt as though no-one really knew me, like I was just a number, a target. I was told ‘you’re not ill enough’, ‘you’re not special’. I felt as though I had to prove that I was ill enough to get the help I needed.

I finally got the right support at university when I was put in touch with a counsellor who understood me. I now work to help improve the way mental health services are provided to young people. I am passionate about mental health and I really think I can change my negative experiences of using services into a positive, to help others that are experiencing the same as I was.



**Amanda is a Young Adviser for the Great Involvement, Future Thinking (GIFT) Partnership,**

which runs My Access to Psychological Therapies (MyAPT), a service transformation project for child and adolescent mental health services. See [www.myapt.org.uk](http://www.myapt.org.uk) for more information.

# A fairer Britain



Andrew Gwynne MP is Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

## Labour in local government will continue to help shield communities from austerity and promote innovation

Local government has long been recognised as one of the most efficient parts of the public sector, leading the way on innovation, transformation and public services, and doing an incredible job in often difficult circumstances.

Despite seven years of Tory cuts, Labour in power has helped shield our communities from the worst of the Government's austerity agenda, while continuing to innovate and make a real difference to people's lives.

In Bristol, Labour has highlighted the social care crisis that is facing local government and our communities – leading the call for city leaders to come together to lobby central government over cuts. South Tyneside Council has developed an innovative, purpose-built facility to support integrated health and social care services, designed to support an ageing population.

In London, our Labour Mayor, Sadiq Khan, has stopped Boris's vanity projects and prioritised the development of new affordable housing – putting people before politics.

Our metro mayors in Greater Manchester and Merseyside, Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham, understand that 'a Northern Powerhouse' is one built by local people and by investing in our communities – not through slogans.

After one of our darkest nights, as Manchester woke to find children, young people and their families had lost their lives, Andy offered the confident, empathetic and unifying leadership that was needed in our city region.

Labour in local government will continue to innovate to make a real difference to people's lives. But seven years of brutal cuts have created a crisis that is being ignored by central government.

The Labour Party, local government leaders and the LGA have been warning of this for years. Back in 2012, the then LGA Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell warned that by the end of the decade, councils could be forced to wind down services unless we saw urgent action on the adult social care funding crisis.



ANDREW BAKER/LGA

*“Seven years of brutal cuts have created a crisis that is being ignored by central government”*

Five years later, the crisis is even worse – the overall funding gap facing local government is now £5.8 billion – and yet the Government is still attempting to claim that 'Whitehall is listening'. Even if councils stopped filling potholes, maintaining parks and open spaces, closed all children's centres, libraries, museums and leisure centres, turned off every street light and shut all discretionary bus routes, they still would not have saved enough money to plug this gap.

Councillors have been forced to make very difficult decisions as this Tory government has sneakily devolved cuts and attempts to pass the blame away from ministers and onto local councillors in town halls. But we will not be fooled.

We know these cuts have the same root cause – a Tory dogmatic vision of a smaller state. We know the cuts forced onto our communities have hit the poorest and most vulnerable the hardest. But these seven years of cuts, privatisation and falling wages have created a desire for change. Austerity is a political choice, and it is the wrong one.

Ensuring that our local government has adequate funding to provide core services is not something that should be up for debate. The country needs fresh ideas and new leadership, yet is being held back by a party that is more interested in finding £1 billion for self-preservation than funding for our public services.

During the General Election, we laid out an alternative vision for Britain, and millions of people, for the first time in years, felt hope. This is the message we will continue to take to the country throughout conference season.

A vote for Labour – in local elections next May, and in the next General Election whenever it comes – will always be a vote for that fairer Britain we all want to see.

# Making policy a reality



ANDREW BAKER/LGA

## Housing, finance and business rates, devolution, Brexit and community integration are among the ministerial priorities for local government

Less than a week after June's General Election, the country was rocked by the awful events at Grenfell Tower. As anyone would hope and expect, my department has spent a lot of time and effort since that dreadful day working to help and support those affected, and to assess the safety of other buildings.

We're committed to getting residents into new permanent accommodation as soon as they feel ready to take that step, and we've recently announced the terms of reference of Dame Judith Hackitt's review into building regulations and fire safety.

My department has been in touch with councils about what action needs to be taken to ensure our social housing is safe, addressing issues including cladding. There is more to do, such as identifying the private buildings that may also be affected, and I'm grateful for all the cooperation we are receiving with this ongoing work.

While the victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy will continue to be our number one priority, there is no shortage of other topics on which I need to make progress.



Sajid Javid MP is Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Over the last year I have been taking action to fix our broken housing market. For generations, we have simply not built enough homes. But behind this truism lie many other issues, all of which we must confront if we are to deliver fairness for working people.

That is why I recently published our new method of assessing housing need, so that we can plan properly, to get the right homes built in the right places. I also announced increases in planning fees to help ensure planning authorities are properly resourced. Our White Paper outlined our plans to speed up build out rates, and diversify the housing market.

These changes will make a significant and lasting difference to our housing market,

but many ordinary working people need help right now. I will soon publish a draft bill setting out our proposals for banning letting fees paid by tenants, and intend to say more about our plans to crack down on leasehold abuses in the coming months.

In the absence of legislation on local government finance, we need to work with the sector to determine the best way forward on business rates retention and on our business rates review. We also need to make progress on the Fair Funding Review.

The wider sustainability of local government remains a key concern. I was pleased to have significant new funding for adult social care in the Spring Budget, but we need long-term funding solutions, so I will work with others across government to assess the various options.

On devolution, our priority has been to conclude the original deals. Now we need to ensure others know the rules of the game. I want to provide a clear framework, agreed with all relevant cabinet ministers, so local areas know where they stand.

The DCLG is working with local authorities and others to understand place-based impacts and the opportunities of our EU exit. I welcome the contribution the LGA has made so far and hope you will continue to work with us to ensure we make this a success.

I am particularly excited by the opportunity of a new UK Shared Prosperity Fund – a vital tool to help us generate local growth, drive up productivity and invest to reduce inequalities as we leave the EU.

Finally, the recent terror attacks bring into sharp focus the necessity of the work we're doing in light of last year's Casey Review. Our Integration Strategy is a work in progress, but I am confident it will help deliver a step-change in terms of tackling segregation.

This represents an ambitious agenda for me, my ministers and my department over the coming months. I am grateful for the hard work of the LGA, councils and councillors up and down the country who offer advice, constructive criticism, and who, ultimately, make our policy ideas a reality.

# Prospect at Party Conferences 2017

Prospect will once again be putting on a series of discussions and debates at the party conferences to give delegates and parliamentarians the opportunity to debate some of the key issues affecting the UK.

If you would like to register your interest to attend our events or to find out more about our thought leadership programmes, please call Saskia Abdoh on 0203 372 2914, or email [saskia.abdoh@prospect-magazine.co.uk](mailto:saskia.abdoh@prospect-magazine.co.uk)

## Labour

### Tom Clark in conversation with Andy Burnham

Date: Sunday 24th September, 19.30

Venue: Hilton Brighton Metropole, Hall 7

### How can investment in national infrastructure help to re-balance the UK economy?

Date: Monday 25th September, 08.00

Venue: Hilton Brighton Metropole, Lancaster

Chair: Duncan Weldon, Associate Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Andrew Adonis, Chairman, National Infrastructure Commission; Bill Esterson MP, Shadow Minister for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; Stephen Kinnock MP; John Holland-Kaye, Chief Executive Officer, Heathrow Airport

### Business Reception

Date: Monday 25th September 2017, 20.00

Venue: The Grand Brighton Hotel, Pavilion

Chair: Tom Clark, Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Hilary Benn MP, Chair, Committee on Exiting the European Union; Catherine McGuinness, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, City of London Corporation

### Digital Safety—helping your constituents get fraud smart

Date: Tuesday 26th September 2017, 12.45

Venue: Hilton Brighton Metropole, The Ambassador Room

Speakers: Andy Booth, Managing Director, Current Accounts and FX, Barclays; Bill Esterson MP, Shadow Minister for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

### The Financial Inclusion Reception

Date: Tuesday 26th September 2017, 18.00

Venue: The Grand Brighton Hotel, Victoria Terrace

Chair: Steve Bloomfield, Deputy Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Sherard Cowper-Coles, Chair, Financial Inclusion Commission; Yvonne Fovargue MP, Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government; Peter Dowd MP, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury

## Conservatives

### 10 years after the crash

Date: Monday 2nd October, 12.45

Venue: Manchester Central, Exchange 11

Speakers: Ed Smythe, Chief Economist, Positive Money; George Freeman MP, Chair of the Prime Minister's Policy Board (invited)

### Smart cities, smart politics? What are the UK's infrastructure priorities?

Date: Monday 2nd October, 17.45

Venue: Manchester Central, Central 6

Chair: Duncan Weldon, Associate Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Stephen Hammond MP; Paul Plummer, CEO, Rail Delivery Group; Sadie Morgan, Commissioner, National Infrastructure Commission and Design Panel Chair, HS2

Prospect's 2017 Party Conference partners include:



### Mind the gap: how can we ensure that our pensions system does not leave behind the self-employed?

Date: Monday 2nd October, 17.45

Venue: Manchester Central, Exchange 1

Chair: Andy Davis, Associate Finance Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Richard Graham MP; Guy Opperman MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions and Financial Inclusion; Steven Levin, CEO—UK Platform, Old Mutual Wealth



### The Financial Inclusion Reception

Date: Monday 2nd October, 19.30

Venue: The Midland Hotel, The Petersfield Suite

Chair: Tom Clark, Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Guy Opperman MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions and Financial Inclusion; Sherard Cowper-Coles, Chair, Financial Inclusion Commission

### How can we avoid turning biomass into the Cinderella of the energy industry?

Date: Tuesday 3rd October, 08.00

Venue: Manchester Central, Central 6

Chair: Jon Bernstein, Associate Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Richard Harrington MP, Minister for Energy and Industry; Ray Tucker, CEO, Real Ventures



### Helping your constituents keep their finances safe online

Date: Tuesday 3rd October, 12.45

Venue: Manchester Central, Central 6

Speakers: Ben Wallace MP, Minister of State for Security; Andy Booth, Managing Director, Current Accounts and FX, Barclays



### How can investment in national infrastructure help to re-balance the UK economy?

Date: Tuesday 3rd October, 12.45

Venue: Manchester Central, Exchange 1

Chair: Tom Clark, Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Andrew Adonis, Chairman, National Infrastructure Commission; Nigel Milton, Director of Communications, Heathrow; Adam Marshall, Director-General, British Chambers of Commerce



### What are the myths and realities of self-employment?

Date: Tuesday 3rd October, 17.45

Venue: Manchester Central, Exchange 1

Chair: Tom Clark, Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Mel Stride MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General; Simon McVicker, Director of Policy and External Affairs, IPSE; Anna Soubry MP (invited)



### How can trade rebalance the economy in a post-Brexit Britain?

Date: Tuesday 3rd October, 17.45

Venue: Manchester Central, Central 6

Chair: Duncan Weldon, Associate Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: James Cooper, CEO, Associated British Ports; Lesley Batchelor, Director General, The Institute of Export; John Howell MP, Trade Envoy for Nigeria



### The Devolution Reception

Date: Tuesday 3rd October, 18.00

Venue: The Town Hall Manchester, The Banqueting Hall

Chair: Duncan Weldon, Associate Editor, *Prospect*

Speakers: Jesse Norman MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Roads, Local Transport and Devolution; Jason Pavey, Market Director Local Transport, Atkins



# Changing behaviours

Councils are increasingly using behavioural insight techniques to manage demand for local public services

**T**he LGA wants to encourage innovation in local public services and does this by giving support and funding to councils. Our behavioural insights

programme has funded council projects aimed at reducing the financial risks they face and encouraging innovation.

So what are behavioural insights?

The approach is based on the idea that interventions aimed at encouraging people to make better choices for themselves and society will be more successful if they are based on insights from behavioural science – commonly known as ‘nudge’ theory.

For example, putting fruit at eye level on shop shelves is a ‘nudge’ towards healthier eating, but banning junk food is not. However, well-researched and relatively cheap changes like this can encourage people to alter their behaviour and, by doing so, help manage and reduce demand for public services.

The world’s first government institution dedicated to the application of behavioural insights to policy issues was the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), which started life in 2010 inside 10 Downing Street. BIT has since conducted more than 400 randomised, controlled trials, including many in the area of government revenue, and has a specific team focused on local government.

The LGA worked with BIT to trial behavioural insights theory in three challenging service areas for local government – skills and employment, adult social care, and public health (see right). We are currently supporting trials on cutting sugar consumption in secondary schools, reducing incidents and the impact of domestic abuse, curbing demand for housing services, and increasing the uptake of online testing for sexually transmitted infections.



## Public health – Liverpool City Council

This project focused on reducing sugar consumption by local residents to improve health outcomes. It tested whether displaying the sugar content of different fizzy drinks at the point of sale has an impact on the number of drinks sold.

On alternate weeks, simple, red ‘stop’ signs were placed on refrigerator shelves containing high-sugar chilled drinks at three sites in two hospitals in Liverpool.

The signs led to a 7.3 per cent reduction in high-sugar drinks sales. If this were rolled out across the two hospitals, we estimate it could lead to around 930 fewer such drinks sold each year.

Encouragingly for retailers, we found no evidence that total chilled drink sales declined when the signs were in place, suggesting that people changed to low-sugar alternatives.

## Skills and employment – Lincolnshire County Council

The two trials in this project were aimed at improving the effectiveness of communications sent to employers encouraging them to consider investing in training and development for their staff, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized companies. By improving the skills of local people, you increase their ability to gain and keep higher wage employment, thereby improving local health outcomes and reducing demands on services.

## Adult social care – Leeds City Council

Focusing on improving efficiency and outcomes during initial contact with adult social care services, this project had two core aims. The first was to reduce the 22 per cent of referrals for assessment that do not lead to an uptake of social care support, by improving information and decision-making at this stage of the process; the second was to help establish approaches to social care by using people’s strengths and assets. The project involved trialling a new process for contact centre operators to use when taking a call relating to adult social care.

**i** You can find out more about our behavioural insights programme and apply for the latest round of funding via our new web page – see [www.local.gov.uk/behavioural-insights](http://www.local.gov.uk/behavioural-insights). The deadline for funding applications is Friday 10 November. We are also holding an event on ‘Using behavioural insights in local government’ in London on 15 March 2018. To find out more, visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

# Steering the LGA

## Meet the elected members who provide direction and oversee the work of the LGA

**T**he LGA is a membership organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national 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 politically led and cross party – and this is embedded in our governance structures, with

leadership and direction provided by a senior group of elected members from each of our four political groups.

The Leadership Board directs the LGA's activities and business in accordance with strategic priorities and direction set by the LGA Executive, and reports and makes recommendations to the executive on the LGA's activities. It is made up of the LGA's office holders (chairman, vice-chairs and deputy chairs).

The LGA Executive plays a coordinating role, providing strategic direction through the business planning process. It is advised by the Leadership Board and holds nine policy boards and the Fire Services Management Committee to account. It is made up of the Leadership Board, plus the board chairs, representatives of Wales and the English regions and balancing members. Three special interest groups – DCN, CCN and SIGOMA – have non-voting members (see below).

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 – 43.88 per cent; Labour – 38.07 per cent; Liberal Democrat – 9.4 per cent; and Independent – 8.65 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 David Simmonds CBE** (Con, Hillingdon) is an LGA Vice-Chairman and was elected Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group this year. He was the youngest councillor in London when elected at age 22 and has been Deputy Leader of Hillingdon Council since 2002.  
dsimmonds@hillingdon.gov.uk



**Cllr Howard Sykes MBE** (Lib Dem, Oldham) is an LGA Vice-Chairman and was elected Leader of the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group this year. First elected in 1987, he is a former Leader and Deputy Leader of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, where he is currently Leader of the Opposition.  
howard.sykes@oldham.gov.uk



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



**Cllr Sean Anstee** (Con, Trafford) is an LGA Deputy Chairman, Deputy Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group, and Leader of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council. He was first elected in 2008.  
sean.anstee@trafford.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 Peter Fleming OBE** (Con, Sevenoaks) is an LGA Deputy Chairman and has been Leader of Sevenoaks District Council for the last 10 years.  
cllr.fleming@sevenoaks.gov.uk



**Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE** (Con, Warwickshire) is an LGA Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board. She became the first female Leader of Warwickshire County Council in 2013.  
cllrmsseccombe@warwickshire.gov.uk



**Cllr Sue Murphy CBE** (Lab, Manchester) is a Deputy Chair of the LGA and Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council.  
cllr.s.murphy@manchester.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 Lib Peck** (Lab, Lambeth) is a Deputy Chair of the LGA and has been the Leader of Lambeth Council since 2012.  
lpeck@lambeth.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 Ruth Dombey OBE** (Lib Dem, Sutton) is a Deputy Chair of the LGA, Deputy Leader of the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group, and has been the Leader of Sutton Council since 2012.  
ruth.dombey@sutton.gov.uk



**Cllr Peter Reeve** (UKIP, Huntingdonshire) is an LGA Deputy Chair, Deputy Leader of the LGA's Independent Group, and Leader of UKIP on Huntingdonshire District Council.  
reeve@ukip.org

## board chairs and other executive members



**Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE**  
(Con, Gloucestershire) is Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board. He has been Leader of Gloucestershire County Council since 2010 and is a former Leader of Gloucester City Council.  
[mark.hawthorne@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:mark.hawthorne@gloucestershire.gov.uk)



**Cllr Martin Tett**  
(Con, Buckinghamshire) is Chairman of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board and has been the Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council since 2011.  
[mtett@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:mtett@buckscc.gov.uk)



**Cllr Paul Bettison OBE**  
(Con, Bracknell Forest) is Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board and Chairman of the IDeA Company Board.  
[paul.bettison@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:paul.bettison@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)



**Cllr Donna Jones JP**  
(Con, Portsmouth) is a Balancing Member on the LGA's Executive and Leader of Portsmouth City Council.  
[Cllr.Donna.Jones@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.Donna.Jones@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



**Cllr Claire Kober OBE**  
(Lab, Haringey) is Chair of the LGA's Resources Board and also represents London Councils on the LGA. She has been Leader of Haringey Council since 2008.  
[claire.kober@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:claire.kober@haringey.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 Business and Economy.  
[r.leese@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:r.leese@manchester.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.  
[cllr.simon.blackburn@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.simon.blackburn@blackpool.gov.uk)



**Cllr Richard Watts**  
(Lab, Islington) is Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board and has been the Leader of Islington Council since 2013. He joined the council in 2006.  
[richard.watts@islington.gov.uk](mailto:richard.watts@islington.gov.uk)



**Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE**  
(Lib Dem, Portsmouth) is Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, and a former Leader of the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group and of Portsmouth City Council.  
[geraldvj@gmail.com](mailto:geraldvj@gmail.com)



**Cllr Lisa Duffy**  
(UKIP, Huntingdonshire) is a Balancing Member on the LGA's Executive and Treasurer of the LGA's Independent Group.  
[lisa.duffy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.duffy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

## non-voting members



**Cllr Philip Atkins OBE**  
(Con, Staffordshire) represents the County Councils Network and is Leader of Staffordshire County Council.  
[philip.atkins@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:philip.atkins@staffordshire.gov.uk)



**Cllr John Fuller**  
(Con, South Norfolk) is Chairman of the District Councils' Network and Leader of South Norfolk District Council.  
[jfuller@s-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:jfuller@s-norfolk.gov.uk)



**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).  
[cllrstephenhoughton@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:cllrstephenhoughton@barnsley.gov.uk)



**Alderman Sir David Wootton**  
(Ind, City of London) is Chairman of Local Partnerships and a member of the City of London Corporation.  
[david.wootton@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:david.wootton@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## regional and Wales



**Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick**  
(Con, North Norfolk) is Chairman of the East of England LGA. He is the Leader of North Norfolk District Council and a member of Norfolk County Council.  
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**Cllr John Hart**  
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You can find out more about your LGA Executive colleagues and representatives for 2017/18 on these pages, and by visiting [www.local.gov.uk/about/our-meetings-and-leadership/lga-leadership](http://www.local.gov.uk/about/our-meetings-and-leadership/lga-leadership)

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# interview

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## Improving children's services

The new inspection framework should give councils a chance to improve before Ofsted comes along and makes a judgement, says **Eleanor Schooling**, its **National Director for Social Care**



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**A**mong the people asking Eleanor Schooling questions about her key responsibilities is someone very close to home.

"My granddaughter wants to come to work with me and see what it is that I do because she can't quite work it out," she laughs.

But the more pressing answers being sought from Ofsted's National Director for Social Care come from local government and are focused on one of her biggest tasks – changes to the inspection regime relating to children's services.

Ms Schooling is overseeing the new Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), which will replace the current Single Inspection Framework (SIF) from January 2018.

She is keen to stress the positives of the scheme for councils.

Rather than each local authority receiving a single inspection and subsequent judgement, ILACS includes an annual self-evaluation – or "conversation" as Ms Schooling describes it – related strictly to social work, and a focused visit before the all-important inspection every three years.

Ms Schooling says this "catch people before they fall" approach will mean Ofsted knows "much more about what's happening in local authorities long before people get into difficulties", and will enable it to have more impact on improvement. The annual conversation will enable councils to discuss their strengths and put right any areas of concern before they have an inspection, she says.

"Local areas will find that they have more contact with us but it will be for less long and it won't all result in a judgement inspection... If we get this right, more people should have the chance to improve before we come and give them the judgement."

Standard inspections will last two weeks and short inspections just one week, compared with the current four weeks under SIF; reports will reduce from 40 to 10 pages, and the content may vary according to different areas' priorities.

The new inspections will also evaluate the impact of leaders and managers on social work and how they are creating the right conditions for it to thrive. They will consider factors such as caseloads, user-friendly and efficient IT systems, supervision, workflow and knowledge of pressure points.

"What we're going to ask people for is much less but what we will want to do and to keep [doing] is looking at children's files, talking to social workers about what they know about the families and really getting a picture of what the experience of a child is

in their family... and how things are getting better for them," says Ms Schooling.

She adds: "Some places have had five years between inspections under the SIF programme and that really is too long. I don't want people to be sitting and waiting for an inspection. The things we're asking people to do are things that you'd want people to do anyway.

"People need to know what kind of social work is going on – what are we doing with children, is it working well, what are the things that we need to do differently, do we need to commission different services because we're not able to support certain types of family?"

"That's normally bread and butter work for people and that's what we want people to prepare for us. We don't want lots of strategies and lots of other paperwork because we won't have time to read it."

Ms Schooling has a long history in the public sector. Although she has never been a social worker, she has worked with young people and children in London for more than 35 years as a senior officer in several councils and as a headteacher in a number of primary schools.

In 2015, she left the London Borough of Islington – where she was Corporate Director of Children's Services for six years – for her current role, and is well aware of frontline social work challenges, not least caseloads.

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*"More people should have the chance to improve before we come and give them the judgement."*



*“People need to know what kind of social work is going on – what are we doing with children, is it working well, what are the things that we need to do differently?”*



> “We’ve found local authorities where there have been caseloads of 35 or 38. Social work is about working with families, so if you’ve got caseloads of 38 and you’re writing court reports and all those other things it’s really difficult to do any work at all with a family other than go for just a quick visit and maybe talk to the child.”

Other challenges listed by Ms Schooling include help and protection services, having enough children’s homes with the right specialism for the right children, having enough foster carers trained to look after older children, and the problem of adults who draw children into child sexual exploitation and gang-related crime.

LGA research shows that in 2015/16, councils overspent on their children’s social care budgets by £605 million, with child protection enquiries soaring by 140 per cent over the 10 years prior to this. The number of children on child protection plans rose by almost 24,000 over the same period.

However, Ms Schooling remains firmly of the view that funding is not essential to improvement.

“There is a huge rise in demand for services and a rise in expectations about just how much everyone can do to help families that have got really significant challenges,” she notes, but adds: “There is not a link between spending more and doing well.”

“Some places spend a lot of money and actually they don’t provide very good services for children. However, it is important for people to try to think about how they can prevent some of their spend.

“If it costs more than £500,000 to have a child in care in a specialist children’s home for a year, then just stopping one or two of those kinds of placement through different kinds of working with families, is immediately going to save some money.”

She adds: “There’s a point at which you can’t do the work if you haven’t got enough social workers, but some places are spending a lot of money on social workers because social workers are leaving.

“Social workers usually leave places where they’re not valued, where their caseloads are too high, where they don’t get adequate supervision and support, and where they don’t get learning and development.

“Where you’ve had some regions that have agreed together to really value and treat social workers well, they’ve brought their costs down because they’re not employing agency staff, they’re employing people who want to stay and want to work there.

“So there are a lot of things that a lot of people have done already, but more people could do, to control the costs and make it

a more rewarding job for social workers at the same time.”

LGA research shows that 91 per cent of council-maintained schools are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, but Ms Schooling doesn't believe councils should be given a stronger role in failing academies.

She says: “I think that will be going back to something we can no longer go back to. There are other mechanisms now for making sure that academies that are not doing so well do well and that's really now the regional schools commissioners' role.

“But, in reality, every local authority should be thinking about the schools that are in their local area because they are still their children and elected members are still accountable for what happens to those

children, so they must take an interest.”

Asked if Ofsted is able to challenge government effectively in cases where inspection suggests that national policy decisions are having an impact on the quality of services delivered to children and young people, Ms Schooling says: “One of the things our report on domestic abuse will say – to all of government – is that all of government working together can do differently and better around domestic abuse than at the moment.

“As a nation, we work hard at protecting families and children from domestic abuse when it becomes an emergency – we rush along with the blue light. We are much less good at the repair part and we're much less good at the prevention part.”

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**Eleanor Schooling will be speaking about the new inspection arrangements for children's services at the National Children and Adult Services Conference and Exhibition in Bournemouth from 11-13 October.** For more information and to book your place, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

*“Some places spend a lot of money and don't provide very good services for children”*



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## WE ARE NEWTON

We work with public organisations to crack some of the sector's biggest challenges. Not with reports or copy & paste thinking. But with unrelenting precision in uncovering and implementing the changes that will make the biggest difference.

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# comment

## Freeing districts to build more homes



Cllr John Fuller (Con)  
is Chairman of the District  
Councils' Network



**We've known for some time that district councils have been punching well above their weight when it comes to delivering the homes our country desperately needs, and now the Government's own statistics prove it.**

According to figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government, districts are at the forefront of housing delivery, accounting for nearly 50 per cent of the total number of housing completions in England last year.

In August, Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma praised South Norfolk, South Derbyshire and all districts in Gloucestershire for making some of the greatest contributions to new housing starts, which soared to the highest level for 10 years.

It's no surprise really, given that district councils, as the housing and planning authorities, are at the heart of local growth, often have substantial land holdings in their own right, and are well-placed to enable the delivery of good quality, well-designed housing that is affordable and meets housing needs.

But, with the right powers and fiscal freedoms, we could be doing even more to boost the number of homes built locally, especially the genuinely affordable homes that our residents are looking for.

Districts need more fiscal freedoms to truly unlock their potential and deliver more housing. We've been calling on government to increase the time available to spend Right to Buy receipts, to allow us to retain 100 per cent of them to build new homes, and to lift the borrowing cap for the housing revenue account. What we are also looking for is future certainty over rent-setting policy and the sale of high value assets, if we're to contribute fully to meeting the country's housing need.

Equally, the local plan development process urgently needs to be streamlined to support the delivery of quicker and cheaper local plans so that districts can deliver to their full potential. We were pleased that the Government recognised the importance of the plan-led approach to development in the Housing White Paper, released early this year,

and acknowledged the central role it plays in ensuring delivery of new homes.

However, the current process means the development of local plans is expensive, time-consuming and complicated. The 'gaming' of the five-year supply and 'planning by appeal' that often occurs in the current system tends to focus on unallocated sites, while allocated sites in adopted local plans, which have the greatest potential to solve our housing shortfall, are then delayed as a result. Speculative applications drain scarce resources from district council planning departments and reduce the credibility of the planning system in the eyes of local communities.

District councils operate at a level that allows them to understand their communities' housing needs. They need the powers and flexibility to be able to deliver the right number and range of tenures of housing that creates a balanced community and meets with local employers' needs.

Given the Government's ambition to build one million new homes by the end of 2020, and a further 500,000 by the end of 2022, it is key that district councils are given the freedoms to drive growth further so that they can continue their proud record of delivering quality homes to their communities.



**The District Councils' Network** will be holding its second national conference on 8-9 February in Kenilworth. Built around the theme of 'Better lives, bigger economies', you can find out more about the conference at [www.districtcouncils.info](http://www.districtcouncils.info)

### The authentic voice of Labour in power

*“Labour councils have been seriously disadvantaged by a Tory Government that has abandoned any pretence of fairness”*

Labour in local government is a true demonstration of what Labour can achieve in power.

For the seventh consecutive year, amid tragedy and continued government-imposed austerity, Labour councillors have stepped in and spoken up for our communities.

We have delivered services and innovations while being on the frontline of austerity, standing up for our communities being damaged by the compound effects of public sector cuts and welfare reform.

Labour councils have been seriously disadvantaged by a Tory Government that has abandoned any pretence of fairness in the way it distributes revenue support grant. Much of

the Government's policy agenda – the Housing and Planning Bill, localisation of business rates, enforced academisation of schools – seems designed to punish areas where Labour is strongest.

Despite this, Labour in local government has succeeded in making our voices heard to our communities. More than 31.4 million people in England and Wales now live in areas run by Labour councils or directly elected Labour mayors and are benefiting from Labour values being put into practice. We continue to be hungry for devolution so that Labour in power can get on with the job of delivering for our communities.

As we head into Labour's annual



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

conference, we'll be thinking about the challenges councils face in the year ahead. Brexit will be at the forefront and Labour in local government will work hard to ensure that any powers won back from Brussels are not simply transferred to Whitehall but are given to local decision-makers.

Again, we will call for adult social care to be properly funded, so that the most vulnerable in our communities get the resource and care they so need.

Within the Labour Party, we will work to ensure that local government voices and dedicated leaders get the recognition they deserve. After all, we are the authentic voice of Labour in power.

### chairman's comment

### Budgets and business rates



Lord Porter  
is Chairman of the LGA

One of the casualties of this year's surprise General Election was the Local Government Finance Bill, which would have paved the way for further retention of business rates locally by 2020.

While Brexit is set to dominate the legislative agenda, our analysis shows that the Government can deliver its manifesto commitment to give local government greater control over the money it raises – by devolving all of the £26 billion of business rates income to local areas – through existing legislation.

This will allow councils to continue to support economic growth and offer high quality public services. If this money is not forthcoming, ministers will have to come up with

more grant funding to plug the widening gaps in councils' budgets.

We've been in touch with many of you to get your thoughts on our submission to the Government's first Autumn Budget. We'll be making the point that English local authorities will have managed £16 billion of reductions to core central government funding this decade.

Wherever possible, these savings have been achieved through efficiencies and finding new ways of generating resources.

In 2019/20, more than half of all English councils, including three-quarters of district councils, will no longer receive revenue support grant – and will have to pay government a contribution from other income.

Councils cannot continue providing services without sufficient and sustainable

funding in the face of rising costs, including from increasing demand for children's services, adult social care and homelessness. There are also unfunded burdens such as the National Living Wage.

The LGA estimates local government faces a £5.8 billion funding gap by 2020 and needs an immediate injection of £1.3 billion to stabilise the adult social care market. We want the central share of business rates – an estimated £13 billion by 2019/20 – to be retained by the sector and used to plug these (and other) gaps.

We remain committed to working with the Government, to ensure that our vital local public services are put on a sound financial footing and councils can be fiscally independent.

*“English local authorities will have managed £16 billion of reductions to core central government funding this decade”*



Cllr David Simmonds CBE  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Conservative Group

## Devolve EU powers to local level

*“Powers repatriated from the European Union should be devolved to the most local level possible”*

Conservative councillors will arrive in Manchester for our annual party conference in October in good spirits, having consolidated our position as the largest party in local government, and also the largest group here at the LGA, following the excellent local elections results we achieved in May.

As ever, conference will give the ideal opportunity to review the past political year and look forward to the new one.

It has certainly been an eventful 12 months, with a snap General Election, the ongoing Brexit debate after the triggering of Article 50, and further important milestones in relation to devolution having been achieved following the election of six new combined authority mayors in May.

The momentum that has been achieved to date in relation to devolution, and the establishment of these newly elected mayors, offers a timely reminder in the context of the Brexit debate that those powers repatriated from the European Union after our departure should be devolved to the most local level possible rather than by default to Whitehall.

I look forward to discussing the LGA's lobbying work in relation to this and, indeed, a range of other key issues with Conservative councillor colleagues at various fringe meetings and social events during – what I am sure will be – another lively, informative and enjoyable party conference.



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

## Stop dithering on devolution

*“Local government has the right to be concerned that devolution discussions have stalled and opportunities are being missed”*

It's now two years since 34 ambitious devolution proposals from local government up and down the country landed on the minister's desk, and here we are still waiting with no new deals announced 18 months on.

All I can say to the Government – and especially the Chancellor with the Budget round the corner – is 'pull your finger out and get a move on'.

Indecision is a virus that can run through a government and destroy its will to achieve anything, let alone survive, so be warned. The Government differing about a range of subjects doesn't bode well as we can see from the daily newspaper headlines about the Brexit negotiations.

Local government and communities across the country have the right to be concerned that devolution discussions have stalled and opportunities are being missed. To reignite the devolution process, the Government needs to engage in a debate about appropriate governance arrangements with local areas.

This is fundamental to ensure that the momentum around devolving powers to local areas is not lost, and that the billions of pounds worth of economic growth, hundreds of thousands of jobs and homes on offer through devolution deals for our towns, cities, counties and communities, are not lost with it.

We expect Brexit to deliver new legislative freedoms and flexibilities for councils so that residents and businesses benefit.



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

## Helping councillors with the challenges they face

*“Independent Group members demonstrate what can be done when the public are at the forefront of decision-making”*

In recent years, the challenges facing councillors have continued to increase with no sign of them abating as we approach this year's Autumn Budget – balancing our budgets with no guarantee of fairer funding, ensuring good quality children's services despite cuts, and delivering adult care to an increasing population, to name just a few. It can feel like a never-ending battle.

Independent Group members lead 17 councils across England and Wales, demonstrating what can be done when the public are at the forefront of decision-making. In other councils they form the main opposition or may be a lone member, championing residents over party politics.

Whether our members are in the administration or not, peer support has never been more important; in September more than 100 member peers came together to ensure they are fully equipped for the year ahead.

Our peers can offer support to group members on a range of areas including leadership, alternative budgets, audit, planning, preparing for Ofsted, commercialisation and being an effective councillor.

You can access this support through the Independent Group Office, talking through issues on the phone individually or face to face as a group, so please consider what might be useful to you, your group or your council.

There is a great deal our peer members can do to help, but we need you to request it. Please email [independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk](mailto:independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk)



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

# Rogue B&B landlords



Cllr Gillian Campbell (Lab)  
is Deputy Leader of  
Blackpool Council

**I found it very interesting to read Shadow Housing Secretary John Healey's interview on the UK's broken housing market last month (first 615). He is right when he says too many people have to put up with living in sub-standard housing run by repair-shy landlords.**

For many seaside resorts, the problem of rogue landlords converting old B&Bs into poor quality housing is nothing new. That is the case for us here in Blackpool.

While many of our hotels continue to thrive, we still have a failing housing market where too many residents are forced to live in filthy, shoebox-sized rooms with poor levels of management and safety.

In a first world country in 2017, that is wholly unacceptable.

For rogue landlords, providing poor quality



housing is easy money. Convert a property into as many small rooms as possible, spend little or no money on them and take the housing benefit payments as a simple profit.

Drastic action is needed, and in Blackpool we are taking a stand and forcing landlords to up their game. Our new private sector landlord, funded through a successful £26 million bid to the Government's Growth Deal, is taking the fight right to their doorsteps.

Now, when a failed B&B comes up for sale, we are competing in the market to buy the property, renovate it into suitable and safe family homes and rent them out to compete directly with the other landlords. Given the choice between a safe, modern, cheap-to-run home, and a shoebox-sized room for exactly the same price, I know which one I'd prefer to live in.

As the previously unscrupulous landlords are forced to up their game to compete with our new, socially responsible landlord, our residents are the ones who reap the rewards, with better homes, safer communities and improved health outcomes.

It is a bold strategy, but in Blackpool we have never shirked a challenge.

*“For rogue landlords, providing poor quality housing is easy money”*

# Cultural regeneration



Cllr Stephen Brady (Lab)  
is Leader of Hull City Council

**In 2013, we launched the City Plan for Hull – a 10-year regeneration strategy with great ambitions for transforming the city physically, culturally and reputationally.**

This plan was cemented when Hull was successful in its bid to be the UK City of Culture 2017. Being the City of Culture has been a game-changer and, so far this year, has gone above and beyond expectations.

Research from the University of Hull's Culture, Place and Policy Institute (CPPI) shows nine out of 10 people living in Hull took part in cultural activity in the first three

months of 2017. The first season – Made in Hull, which ran from January to March – attracted more than 1.4 million visits.

Being UK City of Culture is bringing a feel-good factor and increased confidence to Hull.

The council accelerated a planned £25 million overhaul of the city's public realm infrastructure to get ready for our year in the spotlight, as well as refurbishing the city's art gallery, theatre and historic sites. Equally important has been the support we've given to businesses to bring investment here, and subsequently jobs.

Since the launch of the City Plan and City of Culture announcement, Hull has seen investment of more than £3 billion from the public and private sectors; the evening economy has seen an 83 per cent upturn; more than 40 new businesses have opened; and employment is the highest on record.

There is a real buzz in Hull and it is a place



that is brimming with culture, enterprise and opportunity.

We know the key to Hull's success has undoubtedly been its proven track record of partnership-working – central to the implementation of the City Plan – which has meant unprecedented levels of investment.

Now, it is vital that we work hard with our partners to ensure that the cultural regeneration we've experienced continues long beyond 2017, and events are already being lined up for 2018.

As Yorkshire's port city, we also have long-term plans to build a cruise terminal. It really is Hull's time.

*“Being UK City of Culture is bringing a feel-good factor and increased confidence to Hull”*



# Growing the knowledge-led economy



**Councillor Paul Watson (Lab)**  
is Leader of Sunderland  
City Council

**Sunderland is carving out a reputation as an emerging digital hub, reinventing its economy thanks to a technology renaissance, with the city council leading the charge.**

The city has witnessed the second fastest rate of digital turnover growth outside London and the highest digital tech birth rate in the UK – impressive statistics that really illustrate how far we have come.

What has allowed this city of heavy industry to move towards a weightless world that is leading Sunderland's economic transformation?

None of this is accidental; the growth of the knowledge-led economy in Sunderland has been, in no small part, supported by our work in creating the right conditions for the software sector to flourish.

More than 10 years ago, we opened the Evolve Business Centre, as one of the first major infrastructure investment projects designed to support the sector, offering incubator spaces for small firms, as well as large bases for established multi-nationals.

The latest building is Sunderland Software Centre, which is creating a new, innovative community of tech talent.

As well as being a place where software businesses want to locate, the centre has proved to be a magnet for regional events and initiatives. It is now home to Digital Catapult North East and Tees Valley – a partnership it leads on behalf of both the North East and Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnerships. It is also home to Sunderland Software City – an organisation that we founded in partnership with the University of Sunderland, Sunderland College and the North East Business and Innovation Centre, in order to spur on the development of the sector in the city and region.

One key ingredient in the future sustainability of this sector is the work going on to support the next generation of young talent. Working in partnership, the council is ensuring that Sunderland's schools, college and university are all adopting digital, to further the city's skills base.

Increasing the talent pool and encouraging our young people to explore a wide range of potential jobs and careers is a key priority for us. There is very close collaboration in Sunderland, which has enabled Sunderland College's NextGen programme and Sunderland Software City's Go Reboot to partner with the 'Girls who Code' programme in Washington DC. 'Girls Who Code' seeks to help female students

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*“The growth of the knowledge-led economy in Sunderland has been supported by our work in creating the right conditions for the software sector to flourish”*

develop a career in technology, and uses video conferences to share and develop new digital skills, work and experiences in the field of games development, animation and visual effects.

The partnership came about as part of Sunderland's Friendship Agreement with Washington DC – something that we are extremely proud of, and that has helped inspire some amazing projects over the years.

This project (pictured) is a great example of how our partnerships are creating opportunities to benefit young people in both our cities, and supports us in our goal of creating a thriving software and technology cluster. It's one of a great many things we are doing to ensure software is a staple part of our economy for generations to come.

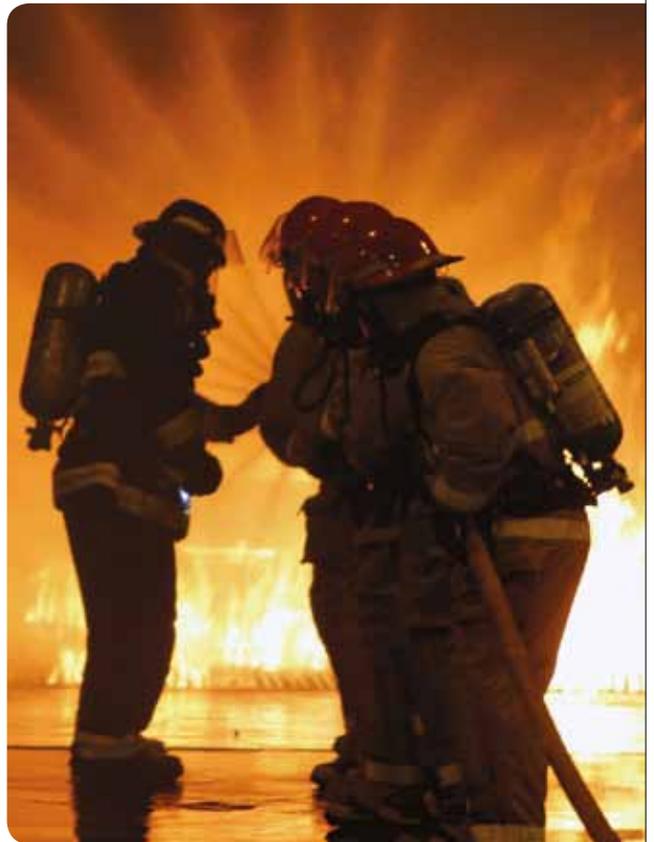
# LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

13-14 March 2018, Hilton Hotel  
Newcastle Gateshead

The LGA's Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is a key event for senior fire officers and members of fire and rescue authorities. The terrible fire at Grenfell Tower has raised new questions about fire safety and the inspection and enforcement role of fire services. This is against a backdrop of continuing fire reform with implications for collaboration, recruitment, procurement, culture and standards, and the appointment of a new inspectorate.

Join us to discuss these changes, look at good practice and examine how we can develop this further.

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



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Epilepsy and you is an exciting new programme that has been co-produced by Epilepsy Action, healthcare professionals and people with epilepsy. It helps people develop their confidence, knowledge and skills to live better with epilepsy.

*“Participants moved, on average, from a Patient Activation Measure (PAM) of level 2 – lacking skills and knowledge for self managing to PAM level 3 – beginning to take action to self manage their epilepsy.” (Coventry University, 2017)*

**epilepsy and  
you**  
online course

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# councillor

## Helping to scrutinise



Michael King is the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

**Councillors know the ombudsman holds local authorities to account when mistakes happen, but they may not know how we can help them scrutinise local services and drive improvement.**

Councils should be accountable to the people who use their services, and councillors have the democratic mandate to scrutinise the way councils carry out their functions. We can support that process with a number of tools councillors can add to their armoury.

We recently published our annual complaint statistics for all English councils. This includes all the complaints and enquiries we received, and the decisions we made. They are published on our website, so comparing authorities is simple.

We promote this data to encourage transparency, and I've seen some active councillors reacting to the key points for their authorities in the local press this year. I would encourage scrutiny of these figures in all authorities. By better understanding how your authority responds to – and learns from – complaints, you can start to build a picture of possible areas to question.

The best councils take an open and mature attitude to complaints, and rightfully see them as 'free feedback' and an opportunity to improve services for all residents. How a council responds to complaints says a lot about its culture. When scrutinising performance, it is important not to focus on the number of complaints and enquiries received. A high number of complaints to us may indicate the council having an accessible complaints process, just as much as a systemic issue.

More important is to concentrate on the number of complaints we uphold. In these cases, we found the council did something wrong, and was unable to resolve the matter with the person before we got involved. It is concerning that nationally our uphold rate for investigations increased from 51 per cent to 54 per cent this year.

Our data can also give reassurance to councils in those investigations where we decided they did something wrong, but made a satisfactory attempt to resolve the matter before the person came to us.

Another way we can help is through our focus reports. These look at the systemic issues we see from our casework – key problems that cause suffering for people nationwide. By highlighting what good practice should be, we aim to help councils

take preventative action to avoid similar problems happening in their areas.

Recent reports have focused on:

- bin collections
- misunderstandings of the law around a person's mental capacity
- changes to school transport policies.

In the coming weeks we will be reporting about the systemic delays we are seeing in councils completing education, health and care plans for children with special educational needs.

Scrutiny committees looking for topics could use our programme of focus reports to investigate the issues locally and ensure their council isn't repeating the mistakes of others. We also publish all of our investigations, which can be searched by council and subject matter.



*“The best councils rightfully see complaints as ‘free feedback’ and an opportunity to improve services for all residents”*



You can find the Local Government Ombudsman's complaints data, scrutiny questions, and other resources to help councillors at [www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/](http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/). The LGA's revised councillor workbook on handling complaints is at [www.local.gov.uk/councillor-workbook-handling-complaints-service-improvement](http://www.local.gov.uk/councillor-workbook-handling-complaints-service-improvement)

# parliament

## Paving the way for Brexit

**MPs have started debating key legislation designed to facilitate the UK's exit from the EU – and the LGA has been lobbying for councils to have a say on changes that impact local services and residents.**

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will convert the entire body of EU law into UK law, with the intention of giving businesses and individuals confidence that the rules have not changed on the day the UK leaves the EU.

In our briefing for MPs ahead of the Bill's Second Reading, we have called for this legal certainty to be given to councils too.

EU laws impact many of the council services that affect people's day-to-day lives, from protecting people from unsafe food when they eat out to regulating how councils buy goods and services. The conversion of EU law will have an impact on our most important public services.

The Government has presented the transfer of EU into UK law as a matter of process, not policy. However, we are concerned by the potential policy implications arising from the creation of new UK central agencies, especially those in many areas where regulation might be better achieved by local government itself.

Local government has a formal advisory role in the EU law and policy-making process through its membership of the EU Committee of the Regions. Formally involving local government in law-making has ensured that EU laws are influenced by those at the frontline of delivery.

The Prime Minister has made a commitment that the same rules will apply on the day after exit as on the day before. Therefore, the Bill needs to include a proposal to replace or replicate this formal advisory role for local government to help continue our role in good law-making in the UK once we leave



the EU: there should be no deficiency in local government powers.

Principles supporting devolution to, and consultation of, local government are included in EU treaties. There must be no loss of such powers for councils on Brexit day. Just as the roles and powers of the devolved administrations are set out in the Bill, so too must the position of councils be formally enshrined in law.

Former EU powers will start to be reviewed after the Bill is passed. The LGA believes Brexit should not simply mean

a transfer of powers from Brussels to Westminster, Holyrood, Stormont and Cardiff Bay. It must lead to new legislative freedoms and flexibilities for councils so that residents and businesses benefit. Taking decisions over how to run local services closer to where people live is key to improving them and saving money. For example, council leaders want to work with the Government to create a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (see **first** 615) as a like-for-like replacement of the current EU regeneration funding programme – worth £8.4 billion to 2020.

The Bill is likely to enter committee stage in October when MPs will put forward changes. We will work with parliamentarians to raise local government interests as the Bill moves through the Commons and then the Lords.



For more information on legislation affecting local government and the LGA's work in Parliament, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament) For debates on the EU (Withdrawal Bill), see <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/europeanunionwithdrawal.html>

# elections

## Volatile voters



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



**Electors remain volatile and will punish parties for the smallest transgressions it seems, given that eight of 18 recent by-election vacancies produced seat changes.**

Council by-elections may not always see high turnout but those who do vote are well informed. Such conditions present opportunities for challengers; candidates who establish a local presence, campaign hard and stick at it may be rewarded.

Undoubtedly, the Conservatives are having a tough time, losing six seats, with only a gain from the Liberal Democrats as consolation. Labour and the Greens each captured two former Conservative seats.

Labour's overall tally was boosted by Denise Hunt, who took Weston-super-Mare North Worle following the death of the incumbent Independent. She had fought a by-election in 2013 and the 2015 election, and victory rewards her perseverance.

Labour won Babergh's Sudbury South by a single vote. The three-cornered contest focused voters' minds, with the defending Conservatives selecting the aptly named Simon Sudbury. The winner – Labour's Luke Cresswell – attracted national scrutiny following his selection as candidate because of Twitter remarks made about Israel.

A slightly bigger majority of 58 votes separated Labour from Conservative in the Hednesford Green South ward of Cannock

Chase District Council. This was one of three by-elections in the area.

In neighbouring Hednesford South, the Conservative seat fell instead to the Greens, whose victor, Stuart Crabtree, is Secretary of the Cannock Chase branch. His party won the ward first in 2016 and victory here was assisted by a squeeze on Labour's vote.

A third defeat for the Conservatives, in the Staffordshire County Council division of Hednesford and Rawnsley, was only averted by 30 votes. There was certainly no evidence of a progressive alliance here, with the Greens featuring in a strong third place.

This was a division the Conservatives only gained from Labour last May. The loser then, George Adamson, current leader of Cannock Chase District Council, was denied again.

The second victory for the Greens took place in Lewes District Council's Ouse Valley and Ringmer ward, while elsewhere, there were seats exchanged between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.

Yet another defeat for the Conservatives came in East Cambridgeshire's Ely South ward, where the ballot comprised an all-women candidate list. Both Labour and Liberal Democrat hopefuls fought the county council vacancy last May but it was the latter's Christine Whelan who capitalised on her party's former strength in what had been a marginal seat until quite recently.

### local by-elections

#### Babergh, Sudbury South

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
0.1% over Con      Turnout 22.7%

#### Cannock Chase, Hednesford Green Heath

LAB GAIN FROM CON  
7.1% over Con      Turnout 19.6%

#### Cannock Chase, Hednesford South

GREEN GAIN FROM CON  
19% over Con      Turnout 26.1%

#### Colchester, Shrub End

CON GAIN FROM LIB DEM  
6.2% over Lab      Turnout 21.7%

#### East Cambridgeshire, Ely South

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON  
8.8% over Con      Turnout 40.2%

#### Herefordshire, Golden Valley South

IND GAIN FROM CON  
19.2% over Con      Turnout 40.5%

#### Lewes, Ouse Valley & Ringmer

GREEN GAIN FROM CON  
11.2% over Con      Turnout 42%

#### North Somerset, Weston-Super-Mare North Worle

LAB GAIN FROM IND  
9.5% over Con      Turnout 25.6%

#### Staffordshire, Hednesford & Rawnsley

CON HELD  
0.7% over Lab      Turnout 20%

The solitary Conservative gain was in Shrub End, Colchester. The ward has previously divided its party loyalty and defeat for the Lib Dems was always possible. Labour's vote recovered largely, although not exclusively, at the incumbent party's expense.

The delightfully named Golden Valley South ward in Herefordshire completes a tale of Conservative woe. Although the party won the seat comfortably in 2015, there is also a tradition of non-party candidates in this rural area. The successful Independent, Peter Jinman, is Chairman of one of the ward's parish councils.

**i** Professors Rallings and Thrasher can be emailed at [contact@electionscentre.co.uk](mailto:contact@electionscentre.co.uk).

Only by-elections for seats that changed hands or are mentioned above have been listed here (see right). For more information on these and other recent by-elections, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

# CREATING A POSITIVE PARKING EXPERIENCE

Elected council members can attend FREE of charge and officers can attend from as little as £99. See website for details.

Register now

## BPA Annual Conference

Thursday 5 October 2017 at Central Hall in Westminster

**If parking matters to you and your residents this is an event not to be missed.**

At this year's British Parking Association Annual Conference:

- We will be laying the foundations for the launch of the Positive Parking Agenda (PPA) which has the potential to radically change perceptions of parking.
- We will be scrutinising the way things are currently done and embracing new approaches and opportunities.
- We will be sharing operational models which have proven the benefits of consistency – a key element in changing perceptions of parking.
- We will examine how new technology can be used to deliver a positive parking experience.
- We are collectively making positive changes and committing to deliver the best possible all-round parking experience to residents across the UK.

Local authorities will be crucial players in making the Positive Parking Agenda a reality and support at every level is needed to make it work. Come along to join the conversation and find out how the parking sector is changing things for the better.

Delegate rates, full programme details and timings available at [www.britishparking.co.uk/BPA-Annual-Conference](http://www.britishparking.co.uk/BPA-Annual-Conference)



BRITISH PARKING ASSOCIATION

To discuss how BPA membership could benefit your organisation please contact [membership@britishparking.co.uk](mailto:membership@britishparking.co.uk)