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## Omicron outbreak

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# Calling all councillors – we need you!

**Take part in the National Census of Councillors 2022 for a chance to win £250 for a local charity of your choice.**

The pandemic has had a lasting impact on local communities and the way we all live. Councils have had to adapt the way they deliver services, whilst councillors have changed their approach in order to meet their communities' needs.

At the LGA, we understand that this means the support you need may have changed dramatically.

To ensure we fully understand those needs and can provide the correct support, we are asking all councillors in England to take part in the National Census of Councillors 2022.

Completed surveys will be entered into a prize draw for a £250 donation to a local charity of your choice, with a guaranteed winner from each of the LGA's four political groups (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent).

**Look out for your personal link to the survey, which will be emailed to your official email address in January.** All responses to the census will be treated in the strictest confidence.

To find out more email:  
**[stephen.richards\\_cllcensus@local.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.richards_cllcensus@local.gov.uk)**





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## Another year ahead

**W**elcome to 2022, and I hope you managed to find some time to rest and recuperate over the festive period.

I know you will have been working hard to keep our communities safe in this latest Omicron phase of the pandemic, and to support vaccine and booster take-up locally.

We have updates on p5 and p10, but for the latest news please follow us on social media @LGAcouncils and @LGAnews or visit our coronavirus hub, [www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus)

The provisional local government finance settlement was released before Christmas, confirming a potential 6.9 per cent cash terms increase in councils' core spending power in 2022/23 (p11).

The long-promised white paper on adult social care was also published, offering a positive, 10-year vision, but no immediate funding for frontline services (p12).

Elsewhere in this month's first, we hear how people with learning disabilities are helping inform and improve local services in North Yorkshire (p16), and highlight a new LGA leadership course for lead members on building safety (p15).

Our lead comment (p23) is from Cllr Andrew Morgan, Leader of the Welsh LGA, who discusses the opportunities for improving councillor diversity provided by this year's local elections in Wales.

**Cllr James Jamieson OBE**  
is LGA Chairman



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Association

## New vision for adult social care

**The Government has set out a 10-year vision for adult social care in England, in a long-awaited white paper.**

'People at the heart of care' aims to ensure that everyone has choice, control and support to live independently, that adult social care provides quality and tailored care and support, and that it is fair and accessible.

The LGA said the white paper sets out a positive vision for social care, but needs to balance its aspirations and expectations with the wider reality of insufficient funding to meet current and rising demand.

It has called for adult social care to get a bigger share of the new Health and Social Care Levy (see p12).

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "This much-anticipated white paper sets out a positive vision for the future of adult social care and it is right that it has been co-produced with and alongside people who draw on care and support.

"While councils share the Government's ambition and want nothing more than to deliver it, they will need a substantially bigger share of the new Health and Social Care Levy for that to happen. Addressing unmet and under-met need, tackling rising pressures, retaining hard-working care staff, and investing more in prevention are all areas that need investment now if we are to significantly bolster core services. Unless these can be urgently addressed as an

immediate priority, any long-term proposals for social care – including those in the white paper – will be set up to fail because core services themselves will not be available or sustainable.

"Questions also remain about whether the funding allocated for the various major charging reforms, including for the introduction and running of the care cost cap and councils paying providers a 'fair rate of care', will be enough.

"Funding shortfalls impact directly on those who draw on care and support now, as well as those who will do so in future. The Government has been ambitious with its vision and now needs to match this ambition with the necessary funding to turn it into reality."



## Honours for LGA leaders

The LGA's chairman and chief executive are among the local government recipients of New Year Honours.

Cllr James Jamieson has been made an OBE for services to local government, and Mark Lloyd a CBE for services to local government and charity.

Cllr Jamieson, a former Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council, was elected Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group in 2018 and became the LGA's

cross-party chairman in July 2019. Cllr Jamieson OBE said: "Working in local government is a huge honour. I continue to be amazed and impressed by the dedication of all those involved, most notably during the current pandemic.

"I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard and delivered for their residents, and, in particular, the contribution of all my colleagues at the LGA who

have gone above and beyond." LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd began his local government career in 2000, joining Durham County Council and becoming its chief executive in 2005, before moving to Cambridgeshire County Council in 2008 and the LGA in 2015.

Mr Lloyd CBE said: "I am really pleased and extremely humbled to receive this award.

"I work with amazing people at the LGA and across

the whole of local government. I am inspired every day by the tireless work of councillors and council staff to do the best for their communities up and down the country."

Other awards included MBEs for Cllr John Clarke, Leader of Gedling Borough Council, and Robert Polhill, former Halton Borough Council Leader.

● For the full list, see [www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-new-year-honours-2022](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-new-year-honours-2022).





## Funding to tackle low vaccine take-up

**Councils are to get £22.5 million from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to encourage people to come forward and get vaccinated.**

The funding will focus on areas with low vaccine uptake and encourage hard-to-reach groups to come forward for a jab.

The Community Vaccines Champion scheme will also support 60 councils with the lowest vaccine uptake.

The scheme will tap into local networks to provide advice about COVID-19 and the vaccines, while champions will work with councils to identify barriers to accessing accurate information and provide tailored support.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Councils continue to do all they can to keep their communities safe, while encouraging everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated, and

this extra funding will be helpful in persuading more people to come forward.

"Rising Omicron cases mean that COVID-19 remains a serious public health threat and it is vital we all continue to do everything possible to protect ourselves and each other.

"Councils know their communities best and play an essential role in working to reach people and groups who might be hesitant or least likely to come forward for a vaccine.

"Getting our booster jabs will help minimise the spread and prevent the NHS from coming under unsustainable pressure.

"Directors of public health, working in councils, also need the necessary support, long-term resources and proper joint planning and agreement in advance of what is needed, to respond effectively to local outbreaks, ramp up local contact-tracing efforts and increase vaccination uptake."

## £1 billion support for businesses

The Chancellor has announced £1 billion in additional support for businesses most impacted by the Omicron variant.

Hospitality and leisure sector businesses in England will be eligible for one-off grants of up to £6,000 per premises.

Around 200,000 businesses are eligible for the grants, which are administered by councils.

More than £100 million in discretionary funding has also been made available for councils to support other businesses as part of the Additional Restrictions Grant.

In addition, the Government has said it will cover the cost of statutory sick pay

for covid-related absences for small and medium-sized employers.

A further £30 million will be made available through the Culture Recovery Fund, to allow more cultural organisations in England, such as theatres, orchestras and museums, to apply for support over the winter until March 2022.

Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "Councils continue to lead local efforts to support communities and businesses through the pandemic. This includes already distributing billions in emergency grant payments to businesses.

"We know these grants have been a vital lifeline to businesses, and councils will work hard to get this new government funding out to businesses.

"We are pleased that a further £102 million has been announced for the Additional Restrictions Grant. Councils will look forward to accessing this as soon as possible to ensure as many businesses in their area can benefit as possible."

## In brief

### Vulnerable teenagers

The children's social care system in England is unfit for purpose and often puts vulnerable teenagers in greater danger, according to a report from the Commission on Young Lives, run by former children's commissioner Anne Longfield. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "This report is right to highlight the challenges in finding appropriate homes for young people where they cannot live with their parents. The Competition and Markets Authority recently confirmed councils' concerns that the 'market' for children's placements is failing, and we are working closely with it and the Independent Review of Children's Social Care as they develop recommendations for improvement. We urgently need the Government to work with us on recruiting the foster carers and children's homes workforce that we need to support our children in care."

### Waste collection

Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2020/21 show a reduction in waste sent to landfill and an increase in food waste collection. Cllr Darren Rodwell, LGA Environment Spokesperson, said: "These figures are testament to the hard work of councils in maintaining levels of recycling and diverting millions of tonnes of waste going to landfill, especially during the pressures of lockdown restrictions, and demonstrate that the current waste collection system is working well. In particular, it is great to see the work councils are doing with residents to increase correct food waste disposal, with food waste collections up by 11 per cent."

### Staff shortages

Bin collections have been cancelled across the country amid staff shortages, as the Government asks key sectors to prepare for up to a quarter of public sector workers to be absent because of COVID-19. As **first** was going to press, the Government announced 100,000 critical workers in England will receive free lateral flow tests to help keep essential services running. The LGA is calling for council employees to be prioritised for testing.

## In brief

### Children's mental health

Children's mental health services risk slipping backwards due to extra demand created by the pandemic and the scale of prior unmet need, MPs have warned. The Health and Social Care Committee said it was unacceptable that more than half of young people with a diagnosable condition pre-pandemic do not receive mental health support. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, LGA Children and Young People Board Chair, said making early support hubs available across the country to access mental health services would help reduce delays, and that sufficient funding for councils is needed to meet current, unmet and new demand for children's mental health support.

## Rental sector standards

Private sector renters are facing a "postcode lottery" over the standard of their homes, a report from the National Audit Office claims. The report says that regulation in England is failing to ensure that housing is safe and secure, with privately rented properties less likely to comply with safety requirements than other types of housing. Cllr David Renard, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "With more powers such as the freedom to establish landlord licensing schemes, councils would be better placed to support a good quality local private rented offer in their communities."

## Foster care crisis

Foster care faces a staffing crisis to meet the needs of children in care, a leading charity says. The Fostering Network's 'State of the nation's foster care 2021' report said retention and recruitment of high-quality foster carers is the biggest challenge facing the sector, meaning that children are missing out on vital support. Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said councils recognise the vital work of foster carers and that children's social care must be adequately funded to enable them to provide the best possible support, highlighting a £600 million annual shortfall as demand increases.

# Funding to get rough sleepers vaccinated

**The Government has announced a 'Protect and vaccinate' scheme to help increase vaccine uptake among people who are homeless and sleeping rough.**

Funding of £28 million is being allocated to councils to help rough sleepers get their COVID-19 vaccines and move into safe accommodation during the winter.

This will see mobile vaccinations delivered where people are sleeping rough and support for outreach work in shelters to educate people about the dangers of the virus.

Cllr David Renard, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "People living on the streets are among the most vulnerable in society, with reduced ability to self-isolate safely and are less likely to access healthcare services, with many also having underlying health conditions.

"This funding will help councils build on existing local efforts to reach out to rough sleepers, and those who are at risk of homelessness, to ensure they can safely and easily receive a vaccination."

Meanwhile the Government has set out details of its Homelessness Prevention Grant to support homeless people and those at risk of losing their home.

Councils will be given £316 million to help people find a new home, support people facing eviction or move households into temporary accommodation.



This also includes £5.8 million to support people forced into homelessness due to domestic abuse.

Cllr James Jamieson OBE, LGA Chairman, said: "It is really important that we focus on avoiding the tragedy of people becoming homeless in the first place.

"This vital funding will help councils support households to remain in their homes for as long as possible, and find alternative safe, secure housing for those that need it.

"We are also pleased government is providing additional funding so councils can further support those made homeless as a result of suffering domestic abuse."

## Private rented housing 'converted to Airbnbs'

Councils are warning of a growing crisis in the private rented housing sector, with a sharp rise in landlords selling up or converting their properties into Airbnbs.

The District Councils Networks (DCN) found that 76 per cent of councils surveyed said that this had caused a rise in housing waiting lists, while 48 per cent of councils said they were now experiencing a significant pressure on housing services.

The pandemic has resulted in landlords leaving the market due to tenants unable to afford their rents, and a rise in 'staycations', leading to a boom in the short-term holiday let market.

DCN is calling on the Government to increase investment in council housing and give councils the tools they need to create

their own permanent housing for people in their communities.

Cllr David Renard, LGA Housing Spokesperson, said: "The findings are concerning and highlight the need to tackle our severe housing shortage by building more social housing, homes that are much more affordable than in the private rented sector.

"We have set out the case for building 100,000 social homes for rent each year, which would go a long way towards reducing council housing waiting lists.

"We also need to see a cross-departmental government plan to tackle homelessness with long-term investment in prevention and services to support economically vulnerable people and households, to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place."

## Cash for councils up 6.9%

Council core spending power could increase by 6.9 per cent in cash terms in 2022/23, according to the provisional local government finance settlement.

Published before Christmas, the settlement for England also includes an extra £1.4 billion over three years to help with additional cost burdens related to social care.

The LGA said the announcement provides certainty on the allocation of most of the £1.6 billion of funding announced in October's Spending Review (see **first** 665) for councils in the next financial year.

However, it called for clarity on which local government funding reforms will happen, and when the Fair Funding Review will proceed and with what scope.

While welcoming the additional funding for adult and children's social care, it warned this will not go far enough in addressing the real and current pressures facing these vital services (see **p12**).

Cllr James Jamieson OBE, LGA Chairman,

said: "The increase in grant, together with council tax raising powers, will support councils to meet extra cost and demand-led pressures in 2022/23 to keep providing services at pre-pandemic levels. However, for that to happen, every council will have to raise council tax by the maximum in the next financial year.

"This leaves them facing the tough choice about whether to increase council tax bills to bring in desperately needed funding at a time when they are acutely aware of the significant burden that could place on some households."

He added: "We look forward to resuming our work with the Government on the Fair Funding Review to ensure overall local government funding is sufficient when any funding distribution changes are introduced, and that no council sees its funding reduce as a result."

● Consultations on the provisional local government finance settlement close on 13 January, see [www.gov.uk/government/consultations](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations) and **p11**.



## Four in five parents worried about county lines

**More than 80 per cent of parents and carers are concerned about 'county lines' in their local areas, according to a survey conducted on behalf of The Children's Society.**

The research revealed that many parents were not knowledgeable about child criminal exploitation, or what they should do if they have concerns, with only 18 per cent knowing the risks of young people being targeted at transport hubs and on public transport.

The LGA has long identified county lines drug gangs as a significant and increasing concern for councils, with youth offending teams and council-run services under huge pressure over the past decade.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said funding for council-run youth services had reduced by

more than two-thirds in real terms since 2010, with limited funding for prevention work being diverted into services to protect children at immediate risk of harm.

"To robustly tackle serious violence requires multi-agency working across a range of partners, including health, education, local councils, the police and the voluntary sector," she added.

"We want to work with government to help it understand these pressures and how it can provide appropriate funding for children and youth services, to prevent children from being exploited and ensure the right support is available for all young people, whatever their needs.

"We also echo The Children's Society's call for a national campaign to raise awareness of child criminal exploitation."

## 'Nearly all children affected by pandemic' – Ofsted

Good, well-structured, face-to-face education and the return of sport and extra-curricular activities will help most children catch up with lost learning and improve mental and physical health, Ofsted's annual report finds.

While the long-term impact of pandemic-related school closures is still unknown, the report says almost every child in England has suffered as a result of restrictions.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said that, while additional government funding to support education recovery is positive, ministers "must go further, and commit to funding a programme that goes beyond academic achievement, to include measures to support children and young people's socialisation, communication and mental health and wellbeing".

Ofsted's report also raised concerns about an increase in the number of children being withdrawn from school to be home educated.

Cllr Bramble reiterated the LGA's long-standing call for a duty on parents to register home-schooled children, to "help councils monitor how children are being educated, and prevent children from disappearing from the oversight of services designed to keep them safe".

She added: "We also know that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and while additional funding to support them will help, it is clear that the system is in need of significant reform.

"We want to work with the Government on a cross-Whitehall strategy that puts children and young people at the heart of our long-term recovery from the pandemic, ensuring all children have the support they need to thrive."





## In brief

### Foreign care workers

Immigration rules on foreign care workers should be relaxed “immediately” to tackle “severe and increasing difficulties” social care services are facing with recruitment and retention, government advisers have said. In its annual report, the Migration Advisory Committee advised that care-worker jobs be made eligible for the Health and Care Visa and placed on the shortage occupation list. Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said the recommendation could help tackle some of the immediate challenges facing social care, but what was also needed was a “lasting, long-term solution for the care workforce that, crucially, addresses the issue of pay.”

● See p12

### Sport and recreation

A House of Lords committee has called for a long-term, cross-government national plan to integrate sport and recreation services into health systems and invest in sport and recreation at grassroots and community level – plus a new, dedicated minister for sport, health and wellbeing to lead this work. Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA’s Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: “With inactivity levels rising and statistics showing disparities in physical literacy across the country, the current delivery and funding streams are fractured and ineffective to tackle inequalities. As place-shapers, councils are at the forefront of this delivery and stand ready to support the development and implementation of this plan.”

### Alcohol-related deaths

There was an 18.6 per cent increase in deaths from alcohol-specific causes in 2020, compared with the previous year – the highest year-on-year increase since official records began. LGA Community Wellbeing Board Chairman Cllr David Fothergill said these “stark statistics should act as a wake-up call about the impact of COVID-19 on our general health, including for those with alcohol-related conditions”. Councils are committed to supporting everyone with alcohol and other misuse problems, he added, and urged government to publish councils’ public health grant for 2022 as soon as possible to provide certainty over funding.

## Change ‘urgently required’ to fire services

Fire and rescue services in England are improving, but more change is urgently required, according to Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services’ ‘State of fire’ report.

Progress has been made on protection and most services are better at promoting a positive professional culture, the report states. But outdated and ineffective structures for negotiating pay – and a lack of workforce diversity – are still challenges to overcome.

One of the six recommendations made previously for national reform of the sector included the introduction of a code of ethics, which was published in May 2021 after being produced by the LGA, the National Fire Chiefs Council, and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

Cllr Ian Stephens, Chair of the LGA’s Fire Services Management Committee, said of the code: “We will be continuing to work with our partners to ensure that it is taken forward across the sector.”

He added: “Positive industrial relations in the sector are vital to the effective and efficient delivery of services. While no evidence is provided in the report to support the assertion that the UK-wide National Joint

Council (NJC) is inefficient and outdated, nor that removing the current model of collective bargaining in England would improve any of the workforce issues raised, we remain open to discuss improvements that could be made to the NJC.

“The sector has been through a challenging year, with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to exacerbate existing pressures on vital services. We are committed to ensuring that the sector can improve and are working to support members.

“We are pleased that the report acknowledges the crucial role fire and rescue services play in keeping our communities safe, whether that’s through responding to COVID-19, fires or other emergencies.”



## Winter package to protect social care

**A £300 million fund to help recruit and reward social care workers, alongside extra support for the vaccination booster programme to protect the vulnerable and those providing care, was announced before Christmas as part of a new winter support package for the care sector.**

The Department of Health and Social Care has also issued updated guidance on care home visiting and testing to keep residents, staff and visitors safe in response to the Omicron variant.

The extra recruitment funding is in addition to the £162.5 million announced in October, and can be used to pay for bonuses and bring forward planned pay rises for care staff, fund overtime, and pay for staff banks to help increase

workforce numbers up until the end of March.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board, said councils and care providers have done an incredible job throughout the pandemic and that support for the booster programme will also “build on ongoing local authority efforts”.

He added: “The additional funding is positive, and it is important that it is allocated quickly and is easily accessible, so that it can make an immediate impact this winter.

“Moving forward, adult social care services continue to need significant and sustainable long-term investment – as opposed to short-term cash injections – to make permanent improvements so that people are supported to live the life they want to lead.”



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# PARLIAMENT

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## Putting places on the agenda

The levelling up white paper is expected this month

**The Government's rebrand of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities firmly places levelling up at the heart of its ambitions for communities, and councils eagerly await the publication of its white paper this month.**

Given that it will be local leaders responsible for delivering this structural equalisation, the LGA has maintained a steady drum beat of parliamentary engagement to ensure that local authorities have the resources, funds and powers to bring about progress in our communities.

In December, LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson and LGA Labour Group Leader Cllr Nick Forbes gave joint oral evidence to the House of Lords Constitution Committee, to highlight the importance of putting places at the heart of the reforms.

The session, which was orientated around 'the future governance of the UK', saw Cllrs Forbes and Jamieson lay down LGA priorities on ending funding fragmentation, make the case for an agreed devolution framework, and outline the need to establish local government on an equal footing with central government.

As part of our parliamentary engagement, we also proactively worked to secure a House of Commons Westminster Hall debate on 'the role of councils in levelling up'.

Ahead of the debate, we briefed an array of cross-party MPs, outlining our priorities for levelling up all communities, from ending funding fragmentation to establishing an English devolution task force.

It was encouraging to see the responding minister, Neil O'Brien, the Minister for Levelling Up, agree with the LGA that "local councils are an absolutely central part of our levelling up agenda"



and that "nobody understands the needs of a local area as well as the people elected to serve as the leadership of that area".

The LGA took further proactive steps to brief MPs and encourage interventions ahead of a series of additional Commons debates, including two on the Government's levelling-up agenda, and one on a discussion around high street growth, innovation and regeneration.

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*"We have ensured the voice of local government is considered"*

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Through engaging with parliamentarians ahead of these important events, we have ensured the voice of local government is carefully considered in all parliamentary dialogue on levelling up.

In addition to briefing for debates, we also worked to secure commitments from ministers via a series of written

parliamentary questions. We have called on ministers to consider our recent report 'A vision for urban growth and recovery', encouraged greater working with local leaders, and raised the concerns of those in rural communities.

The Devolution All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), sponsored by the LGA, has also been working to amplify the voice of local government in a series of (virtual) parliamentary events, including, most recently, on the constitutional reform of local government and international comparators.

The APPG has also called on the Government, through a recent report, to level up devolution and rethink a culture of centralisation that is leaving local areas behind.

In addition, we have worked with a number of select committees currently holding inquiries relevant to the LGA's levelling-up priorities.

Engagement has taken place with the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, and we will be organising a busy timetable of meetings in the coming months.



**To find out more about the LGA's parliamentary work,** please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament)

# Omicron and beyond

The latest outbreak underlines the importance of a local response



Councillor **James Jamieson** OBE is Chairman of the LGA

It was another busy and challenging year for local government as councils continued to respond to the pandemic – and many of those challenges look set to continue in 2022.

While, thankfully, the Omicron variant appears to be less virulent than its predecessors, it is highly infectious, and this is causing its own problems for our vital public services and local economies.

As **first** was going to press, it was looking unlikely that there would be any new restrictions in England beyond the 'Plan B' measures announced in early December, including the wearing of masks in most public indoor venues and home working where possible.

Regardless, we know the impact of Omicron is being felt by the hospitality and leisure sector across the country, which is why it was good to see the Chancellor announce a \$1 billion support package for businesses that have been impacted by the variant.

This will be a lifeline for businesses and councils as they cope with the knock-on effects of the new variant.

We know councils will also be concerned about the impact of the Omicron variant on adult social care this winter and the pressures facing frontline care services right now.

Our new briefing on the Government's adult social care reform white paper (see p12) provides an overview of its proposals, and outlines our call for a greater share of the Health and Social Care Levy to be redirected to adult social care.

More generally, Omicron's high infection rate is taking its toll on already hard-pressed council and other public sector workforces, with several NHS trusts declaring 'critical incidents' to manage rising staff absences.

Waste collection, where a shortage of HGV drivers is already causing

problems, has also been affected by coronavirus-related staffing issues, and the LGA has called for councils to be able to prioritise key frontline staff for lateral flow testing.

The vaccination and booster programme remains the key to combating the pandemic and reducing pressure on the NHS, with official statistics cited by the British Medical Journal showing that 74 per cent of covid patients in hospital in England in December had not had all three doses, and 61 per cent of covid patients admitted to intensive care were unvaccinated.

So, we were pleased to see the

*"The vaccination and booster programme remains key"*

Government announce new funding targeting 60 councils with the lowest vaccine uptake, to be used to run events in communities. Councils know their communities best and play an essential role in reaching people and groups who might be hesitant, or least likely, to come forward for a vaccine.

Here at the LGA, we will continue

to support you in your vital work in helping our residents through the pandemic.

But with the turning of another year, it's important we take some time to reflect back on the incredible things we have achieved (see p24), and look ahead beyond the pandemic to what more needs to be done.

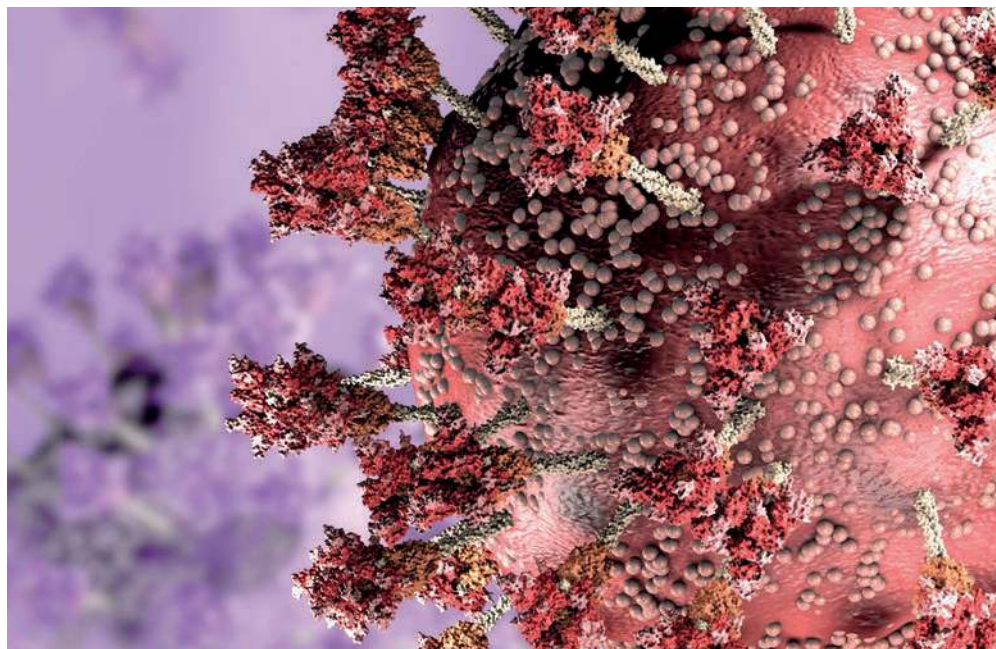
The provisional local government finance settlement offers a potential 6.9 per cent increase in council core spending power in cash terms, albeit subject to us all increasing council tax to referendum limits (see p11).

We are expecting a levelling-up white paper shortly, and councils continue to work diligently to tackle the climate emergency and address health inequalities highlighted and worsened by the pandemic.

Councils have gone above and beyond to carry out their roles and ensure local government is operating in the best interests of residents at a time when they are needed the most – thank you all for your incredible hard work.



See [www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus) for the LGA's latest updates on the pandemic, and follow us on social media @LGAnews and @LGAcomms





# Provisional settlement



## Local government set for yet another one-year finance deal

**T**he local government finance settlement is the annual determination of funding to local government from central government.

The Government listened to the LGA's calls to publish England's provisional settlement for 2022/23 before Christmas, and we expect the final version to be laid before the House of Commons for approval in late January or early February.

The settlement provides a potential increase of 6.9 per cent in council core spending power in cash terms, including new government grants. The potential increase will help councils meet extra cost and demand-led pressures next year, to keep providing services at pre-pandemic levels. However, these government forecasts assume that every local authority will raise their council tax by the maximum permitted without a referendum.

This leaves councils facing the tough choice about whether to increase council tax bills to bring in desperately needed funding when they are acutely aware of the significant burden that could place on some households.

The LGA has long highlighted that council tax rises – particularly the adult social care precept – have never been the solution to the long-term pressures faced by councils,

particularly in social care, which is desperately in need of reform (see **p12**).

Increasing council tax raises different amounts of money in different parts of the country, unrelated to need.

Steadily growing demand has seen councils with responsibility for children's and adult's social care devoting nearly two-thirds of their total spending to these services. While the additional funding for these vital services is good, it will not go far enough in addressing the very real existing pressures they face.

The new homes bonus (NHB) makes up a considerable part of funding for some councils, particularly shire district authorities. Councils need clarity on the NHB's future to plan their budgets beyond the next financial year and into the medium term. Any changes should come with transitional funding to ensure that local authority services on which residents rely are not put at risk.

The public health grant also needs to be published as soon as possible, so councils know how much they can budget for essential services to help keep people healthy, including for treating drug misuse and tackling obesity.

The Government should now provide clarity on which local

government funding reforms will happen and when. It needs to push ahead with the Fair Funding Review, including looking at the data and the formulas used to distribute funding. No council should see its funding reduced as a result.

While funding reforms make it difficult for a government to set out a multi-year settlement for local government, this is the fourth one-year settlement in a row, which continues to hamper councils' financial planning and financial sustainability.

Only with adequate long-term resources, certainty and freedoms can councils deliver world-class local services for our communities, tackle the climate emergency, and level up all parts of the country.

We will continue to promote the role all councils play in making a huge difference to the lives of our residents and communities, and to campaign for local services to be provided with a long-term, sustainable future that gives councils clarity and certainty over their funding.

This will allow local government to play our full part as we improve outcomes and value for money in public services, rebuild our economy, get people back to work, level up inequalities, and create new hope in our communities.



See [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses](https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses) for the LGA's full analysis of England's provisional local government finance settlement.

Consultations close on 13 January – please email [lgfinance@local.gov.uk](mailto:lgfinance@local.gov.uk) with your views to help shape our submission. See [bit.ly/3EmnCWS](https://bit.ly/3EmnCWS) for the Welsh LGA's response to the settlement in Wales



# People at **the heart of care**

## The LGA has published a briefing on the adult social care white paper

**T**he Government set out its 10-year vision for adult social care last month, in a long-awaited white paper, 'People at the heart of care'.

The white paper is based around three key objectives: that people have choice, control and support to live independent lives; can access outstanding quality and tailored care and support; and find adult social care fair and accessible.

It follows the September 2021 publication of 'Build back better: our plan for health and social care', which sets out a range of measures, including reforming the way adult social care is paid for and funded.

The key elements of the plan's social care proposals included: a cap on care costs and more generous financial means-

test thresholds; the ability for self-funders to ask their council to arrange their care; and moving towards a fair rate of care in respect of councils' fees to providers.

The plan also announced the creation of a new Health and Social Care Levy to fund the changes. Our briefing on the plan is available at [bit.ly/3IYYb1c](https://bit.ly/3IYYb1c) (see also **first** 664).

Since the plan, we have had the October Spending Review. This announced new government grant funding of £1.6 billion per year for councils over the next three years, but did not provide additional funding to address the pressures facing adult social care now. You can read our response to the Spending Review at [bit.ly/3sfTKJc](https://bit.ly/3sfTKJc) (see **first** 665).

The LGA fully supports and endorses

the positive framing of social care in the white paper, which mirrors much of the language we have used in recent years to describe the importance and value of care and support.

The Government's ambition for social care, as defined through the various statements about what people can expect from social care, and what the sector will do to achieve this, is helpful.

It reflects what the LGA and many others have articulated in terms of what social care needs to be for people to live their best life and an equal life.

There is welcome recognition in the white paper of existing good practice, and of the importance of taking forward reforms from the foundation of the Care Act 2014, which remains a well-supported piece of legislation.

The focus on the workforce, prevention, unpaid carers, innovation, and the links between care and housing are also helpful. However, councils will be unable to play their part in delivering the Government's ambitions if the central issue of funding is not tackled.

Mirroring previous moments of change, this white paper, the Spending Review, and the 'Build back better' plan have done very little to deal with the here and now challenges.

Funding to stabilise core services, tackle unmet need, stabilise the provider market and address care worker pay remains absent.

Without this, the white paper is attempting to build a better future from inadequate foundations.

The table (right) sets out the main issues that need to be addressed. The figures in the table do not include core pressures. In our Spending Review submission, we estimated that councils face future demographic and inflationary base annual pressures of £1.1 billion.

We estimate that the Spending Review measures will enable these pressures to be met this year, but will be insufficient to cover the pressures in full in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

We are not convinced that the £5.4 billion allocated for social care through the new Health and Social Care Levy is sufficient to fund the charging reforms set out in the Government's September plan. We question whether the funding set out in the white paper for its associated reforms adequately matches the Government's stated level of ambition.

For example, throughout the white paper there is helpful recognition of the crucial role played by unpaid carers, and a clear commitment to empower them and provide them with better support.



However, the only dedicated funding aligned to this priority is £25 million to kickstart a change in the services provided to support unpaid carers. This is not a significant investment, particularly when set against the estimated value of care provided by unpaid carers since the start of the pandemic (£111 billion).

Through our work on our own green paper for social care and wellbeing in 2018, we called on government to make the case for increases in national taxation to raise additional funding for adult social care.

Through the new Health and Social Care Levy, the Government has done this, but the clear majority of the funding raised in the first three years has been allocated to the NHS. We therefore call on ministers to immediately redirect a significantly greater share of the levy to frontline adult social care.

**i** See [www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper) for the Government's white paper. **You can read the LGA's response in full at** [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses)

	2020/21	2024/25
<b>Fair price of care</b> (including the cost of self-funders accessing care at the council-commissioned rate)	Minimum of £1.5bn for all councils to hit benchmark rates	Minimum of £1.8bn for all councils to hit benchmark rates
<b>Adult social care pay</b> – parity with comparable roles in the NHS	Estimates of £1bn (LGA) – £1.8bn (Health Foundation)	Estimates of £1bn (LGA) – £1.8bn (Health Foundation)
<b>Provide care for all older people who need it</b> (based on estimates of unmet need among older people by Age UK)	£3.2bn	£4bn
<b>Provide care for all people of working age who need it</b> (estimates based on broad assumptions, see full briefing)	£1.6bn	£1.9bn
<b>Total</b>	<b>£7.3bn - £8.1bn</b>	<b>£8.7bn - £9.5bn</b>

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# Leading on care

## Health and wellbeing boards are key to delivering integrated care locally



Councillor **David Fothergill** is Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board

**C**olleagues will be aware of the rapid development of the 42 'integrated care systems' in England, which will take over the responsibilities of clinical commissioning groups from April 2022 at the earliest (subject to legislation). But while work is happening at system level, it is important for us all to keep a sharp focus on health and wellbeing boards (HWBs) as the place-based leaders of health and wellbeing.

The LGA undertook a national survey of HWBs in the autumn to give a snapshot of the extent to which integrated care systems (ICSs) and HWBs are working together. We will be publishing a fuller summary early this year, but, in the meantime, here are some headlines.

There are promising signs that HWB and ICS plans are aligned in setting the high-level vision for improving population health needs. But there are also concerns that ICSs could be doing far more to involve HWBs in shaping their day-to-day priorities – for example, investment plans.

Around 70 per cent of respondents to the survey said their HWB:

- had effective working relationships and high levels of trust with their ICS, to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent
- was playing an active role within the ICS to underpin delivery of place-based partnerships
- was working effectively to align plans with the local ICS.

Just more than a third felt their HWB was playing an active role within the ICS in shaping investment plans. In areas where the HWB shares an ICS boundary with other HWBs, less than 40 per cent felt there were effective working relationships between them, but almost half did report that effective partnership working was happening 'to a small extent'.

In terms of the six principles

underpinning the drive for integration, there was a marked difference in perceived application of them locally across the HWB and ICS – see diagram, below. These principles – achieving best value, taking a preventative assets-based population health approach, a person-centred approach, building on what already works locally, subsidiarity, and collaborative local leadership – were developed jointly by the LGA, the NHS Confederation, NHS Providers, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, and the Association of Directors of Public Health.

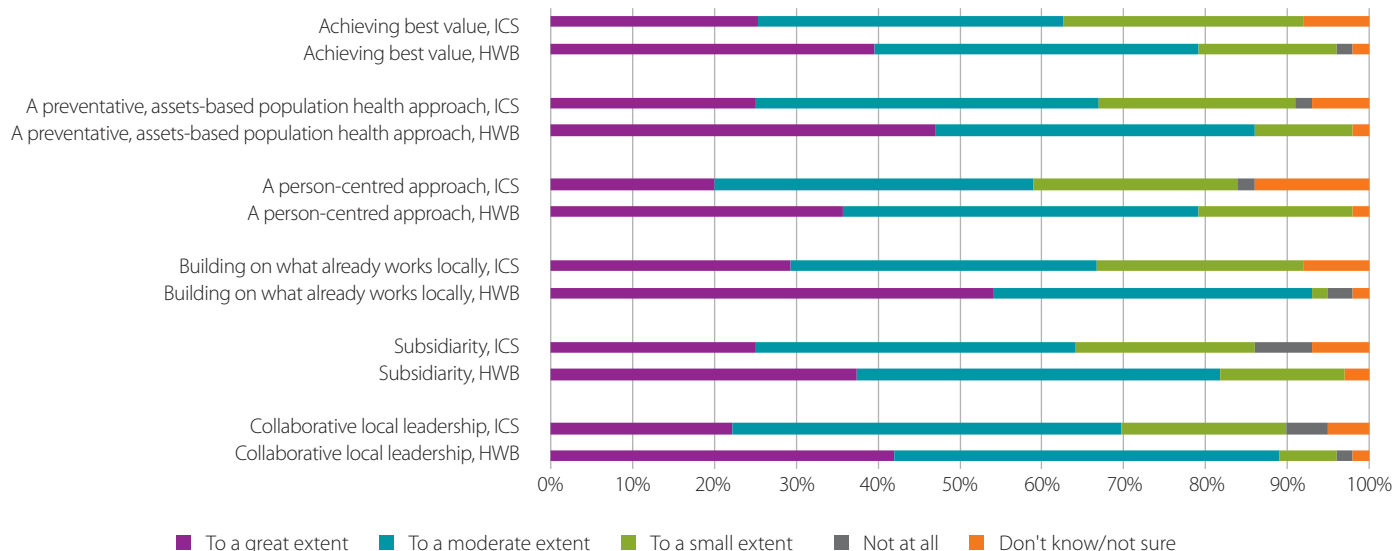
There's clearly still more to do to ensure HWBs and ICSs are not just working to the same end – better health and wellbeing outcomes for their communities – but that they also have a shared understanding of the foundations of effective integrated care.

The survey responses will provide a good evidence base for our response to the integration white paper, expected early in 2022. In the meantime, we will continue to work with the Government, NHS England and our partners to support local clinical, professional, political and community leaders, at system and place level, to work effectively together to drive place-based and person-centred care and support.



See [www.local.gov.uk/integration-and-better-care-fund](https://www.local.gov.uk/integration-and-better-care-fund) for **LGA support and information about health and care integration**, including the six principles for achieving integrated care

### To what extent do you think the following principles apply to your HWB and ICS?







# Learning the lessons of Grenfell

## The LGA has launched new training for lead members for housing



Councillor **David Renard** is Chairman of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board

**T**he fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 was an appalling event. It is often referred to as a tragedy, but it is important to recognise it was entirely avoidable.

The public inquiry into the fire is still examining its wider causes. But without pre-empting the inquiry's findings, it is already clear that there are many lessons for those responsible for resident safety.

Some of these are specific technical points, such as not allowing combustible

materials in the cladding systems of high-rise blocks; some are broader, covering our entire approach to safety and resident engagement.

The evidence at the inquiry so far suggests residents of Grenfell Tower were let down at every stage and every level. Perhaps the most worrying aspect is that residents warned of a disaster and their warnings do not appear to have been heeded.

In the wake of the fire, the Government appointed Dame Judith Hackitt to consider the lessons for building safety. Her recommendations formed the basis of the Building Safety Bill that is currently before Parliament.

The bill creates a Building Safety Regulator within the Health and Safety Executive; new 'gateways' to approve new residential buildings more than 18 metres tall; a new regime for managing safety in existing residential buildings above 18m; and a new construction product-safety regime.

The LGA has helped shape the bill by providing evidence and witnesses to the Public Bill Committee, briefing

parliamentarians ahead of key debates, and by encouraging interventions across both Houses.

The LGA continues to lobby for improvements to the bill along the lines set out in our briefings and our position statement on leaseholder costs (see [www.local.gov.uk/lga-position-statement-leaseholder-costs](http://www.local.gov.uk/lga-position-statement-leaseholder-costs)).

At the same time as this new regime is being devised, the Home Office, which is responsible for fire policy, has produced the Fire Safety Act 2021.

This applies to residential buildings of any height. It requires the review of fire risk assessments to include external wall systems and entrance doors to flats, and is expected to usher in regulations implementing the recommendations the inquiry has made to date.

We are in an unusual position that these are yet to pass, so details could change.

While timings and leaseholders' costs dominate conversations, the significant new responsibilities that councils with high-rise stock will have under the bill remain a key issue.

With this in mind, what can we, as elected members, do better to ensure residents are safe?

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry has demonstrated the need for portfolio holders and cabinet members to be able to exercise effective scrutiny over the delivery of the housing function by officers and arms-length management organisations (ALMOs).

So, this year, the LGA is launching a Leadership Essentials course on building safety, to support lead members for housing to explore these issues.

The course will take place on 24-25 February and will:

- discuss policy issues regarding the new regime, with input from key speakers, and create space for reflection
- explore new responsibilities as duty holders under the Building Safety Bill and the Fire Safety Act/Order
- focus on ensuring portfolio holders understand their scrutiny role in overseeing the work of housing departments.

If you are a portfolio holder or lead member for housing in a council with stock above 18m (including through an ALMO), it is crucial that you attend the course.

**i** To find out more and sign up, visit [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials](http://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials)



# Supporting people with learning disabilities

**P**eople with a learning disability have the right to the same opportunities as anyone else to live satisfying and valued lives, and to be treated with the same dignity and respect.

They should have a home within their community, be able to develop and maintain relationships, and get the support they need to live a healthy, safe and fulfilling life.

Unfortunately, though, people with learning disabilities experience disproportionate levels of inequality,

and their quality-of-life outcomes are lower than it is reasonable to expect in the 21st century. The pandemic has highlighted and deepened these inequalities.

Councils have a key role to play in helping people with learning disabilities to live a full life, and the LGA provides a range of support to help councils improve their services (see box below).

It is also good practice for councils to involve people with a learning disability fully in the planning and delivery of services, as co-producers. Having

learning disabled co-chairs of partnership boards and similar advisory groups is one of the really impactful ways councils can help this happen in practice.

We hear (opposite) from the co-chairs of the North Yorkshire Learning Disability Partnership Board about their work; about how North Yorkshire County Council works with the board to drive improvements (page 18); and from Learning Disability England about how partnership boards can help build person-centred, community-focused learning disability services (page 18).

## LGA support

The LGA provides a range of support to help councils improve their services for people with learning disabilities, including specific peer reviews (see [bit.ly/31Wd10T](https://bit.ly/31Wd10T)).

The LGA's Care and Health Improvement Programme team has written a briefing on 'Changes to LeDer: the learning from life and death reviews of people with a

learning disability and autistic people' (see [bit.ly/3oUvLbU](https://bit.ly/3oUvLbU)), and has been highlighting how the health inequalities faced by people with a learning disability have been exacerbated by the pandemic (see [bit.ly/3DT17uM](https://bit.ly/3DT17uM)).

Meanwhile, the LGA and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services have commissioned an 'outcomes and

improvement framework' to help directors of adult social services and lead members identify how they can improve their support to adults with learning disabilities and autism.

It will also look at how they can be assured that the care and support in their area is good value for money (see [bit.ly/3rq0br2](https://bit.ly/3rq0br2)).



**Mark Hamblin**, who has a learning disability, and **Katie Peacock**, founder of Exclusively Inclusive, are Co-Chairs of the North Yorkshire Learning Disability Partnership Board

# Making our voices heard

In Bradford and Craven, where Katie Peacock lives, the life expectancy of a woman with a learning disability is 29 years less than for a woman who doesn't have one – and for a man, it is 14 years less. “Very sadly, these shocking figures are in line with national statistics,” Katie notes.

Mark Hamblin, a self-advocate who represents other people with learning disabilities, recalls the death of a friend who used to help at Scarborough Hospital. “He had learning disabilities; he was only 57, was healthy and fit, used to walk and cycle all over the place, and he suddenly dropped down dead of a heart attack on a service bus. He probably didn't know he had heart problems. He had just left work at the hospital that day,” Mark says.

*“Still a lot of people are not well looked after with their health”*

‘Staying healthy’ is one of the four themes of the work plan the pair oversee, as Co-Chairs of the North Yorkshire Learning Disability Partnership Board, and their passion for making life better for people with learning disabilities is infectious.

“We take issues further for people with learning disabilities. Some people are not as good at speaking up for themselves, so I represent them,” says Mark.

Katie talks about how Mark inspires people around him to do their best: “To know I'm working with somebody who is equally passionate about the rights of people with learning disabilities and their families, and them having good lives, makes me feel I'm doing a good job.”

One of the areas that has improved – and where the board has undertaken a lot of work – is the accessibility of health (and other) information. All providers of publicly funded health, adult social care and public health services have been legally required to follow NHS England's ‘Accessible information standard’ since August 2016.

“There are still a lot of people who are not well looked after with their health, and this is one of the things that drives us with our work with the partnership board – it has real meaning,” says Katie.

Mark has had experience of the struggle to get the right help at his own doctor's surgery. “I've been very bad with my diabetes and my blood sugar levels, but now I'm getting more help because we've got two new people that work at our doctor's – a learning disability nurse and a support worker,” he says.

“I suffer a lot of bad panic attacks, feeling like I'm going to die at any minute. But now, I do feel a bit better, because if I need to see somebody, they can get me the right help.”

Housing is another area in which more could be done to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities, the pair feel.

Katie talks about the importance of “really good”, but also “ordinary”, housing – so people can live in their own community on an “ordinary” street, rather than, for example, in a supported living scheme, if that's their preference.

Mark and his wife, Amanda, live in a flat, but want to move to a bungalow.

“We don't like living in the flat where we are; we have noisy neighbours who come in and out, bang the doors, stuff like that. It's not a very good street, because there's no parking for our

friends and carers who come in their cars to see us.

“We want to get out of this place because it gets us down sometimes; you get depressed living here. We want somewhere with a garden, somewhere nice.”

Both are pleased to see the increase in the number of ‘Changing Places’ – larger public toilets with extra space and equipment, such as hoists, that allow people with a disability to use toilets safely and comfortably. But they want to see more, and flag continuing issues of accessibility – such as in leisure centres, where facilities “aren't as accessible as the managers might think”, because, for example, there isn't enough room to move around with a wheelchair present.

“So many people's lives are restricted because they can't go out for a day as they need to use the loo – and if there's not an accessible loo, they can't go out,” says Katie.

“It stops people getting out there and being part of their community, and living that ordinary life we are passionate about.”

The partnership board has not met in full during the pandemic, but work has continued, and various sub-groups and self-advocacy consulting groups have continued to meet over Zoom.

“It makes a lot of difference if all the information from the self-advocacy groups is taken to the partnership board meetings and issues are raised and we talk about how to make them better,” says Mark.

For him, making sure the voices of people with learning disabilities are heard and listened to by councils and other organisations is the key to improving their lives.

“They should listen to people with learning disabilities and give them all opportunities to speak up.”



# Partnerships for person-centred services



**Scott Watkin** BEM is Co-Chair of Learning Disability England's Representative Body and **Rob Greig** is a former Government National Director for Learning Disability in England



**T**he 2001 'Valuing people' white paper established learning disability partnership boards (LDPs) for three simple but ambitious reasons. These were: to create a genuine partnership between different organisations that needed to work

together to improve peoples' lives; to ensure the voices of people with learning disabilities and their families were at their heart (their full membership of boards was a statutory requirement); and to hold local authorities accountable to people, families and the wider community.

What actually happened from 2002-2011 was highly varied. While every local authority set up a partnership board, some ignored the board when it came to significant decision-making. Others became little more than time-consuming talking shops.

At their best, though, partnership boards were transformative.

With a significant proportion of board members being people with learning disabilities and their families, and 'unusual' partners – such as those responsible for employment, arts and education – being engaged, debates took on a different nature.

Innovative meeting processes were developed that enabled people

and families to engage as equals, using small group activities and visual decision-making tools.

Where boards worked well, different priorities were set, and local authorities experienced the unusual situation of the people and families who used services being allies when decisions (both positive and difficult) were taken.

When the guidance requiring local authorities to have partnership boards lapsed in 2011, many closed them down as part of financial savings.

Some though, did not – and have continued to derive the benefits, as demonstrated in North Yorkshire (see interview, **p17**).

Although 20 years old and no longer backed by statutory guidance, 'Valuing people' is still the national policy for learning disabilities and local authorities that (rightly) want to demonstrate good practice, and councils could do far worse than bring back a revamped partnership board.

If LDPs have taught us anything, it is that the impact of everyone's efforts is multiplied several times over when people work together towards a shared goal.

A genuinely accessible and focused LDP could be highly effective in rebuilding the momentum towards person-centred, community-focused, learning disability services.

**i** **Learning Disability England (LDE) is a charity that brings together** people with learning disabilities, their families, friends and paid supporters on an equal basis to create a movement for change, see [www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk). **Scott Watkin BEM** has a learning disability, and is Co-Chair of LDE's Representative Body and Head of Engagement at SeeAbility. **Rob Greig** is a Member of LDE's Representative Body and from 2001-2008 was a Government National Director for Learning Disability in England

## Co-producing support for people with learning disabilities



Councillor **Michael Harrison** (Con) is Executive Member for Adult Services and Health Integration at North Yorkshire County Council

**A** key priority for us is to make sure that people with a learning disability who live in our county can live long and healthy lives. This is at the heart of our Live Well, Live Longer Strategy, which we co-produced with the North Yorkshire Learning Disability Partnership Board (see **p16-17**) and which has driven a wide range of improvements.

The board advocates strongly for the rights of people with a learning disability to find a place they call home.

In North Yorkshire, a key step we have taken is the creation of a Transforming

Care team to support people who are detained, or at risk of being detained, under the Mental Health Act. It drives forward discharges, supports people to live within their communities, and works to increase accommodation provision.

The board has also worked with us to create training for social workers and embed annual health checks within social care assessments.

The past two years have been hugely challenging, and partnership board members have shown great leadership, despite not being able to meet in person. Self-advocates have also given each other incredible peer support, including through their co-produced Zoom quiz.

During the pandemic, the board's co-chairs have taken part in regular Q&A meetings with our director of health and adult services, giving insight into issues

such as vaccinations, digital inclusion and the reopening of day services. Earlier this year, board members also provided important commentary to our Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and as part of a peer review of our response to the pandemic.

The partnership board's work on accessible resources – such as the creation of a video about staying safe at day services and easy-read activity packs about mental health and wellbeing – have provided vital information to people with a learning disability throughout this time.

This year, we will embark on a large-scale adult social care development transformation programme. It is essential that people who use our services are involved in this and we are excited to work with the partnership board, whose contribution will be vital.

# The case for affordable credit

Councils and community lenders can help build financial resilience



**Gareth Evans** is  
Director of the Financial  
Inclusion Centre

**W**e all know how expensive Christmas is: the Bank of England estimates that a typical UK household spends more than £700 more in December compared with other months.

A poll by debt charity StepChange projects that four million people expect to borrow on credit to pay for the 2021/22 festive season – more than one million more than the year before. Rising living costs, reduced household income, the loss of the £20 Universal Credit uplift, and the end of COVID-19 support measures such as furlough, are all cited as reasons for this surge in borrowing.

For those needing to cover times of increased expenditure, or pay for unexpected events, credit is an essential tool. Unfortunately, a growing number of people are unable to access lower-cost credit, such as bank credit cards and loans, as they are financially vulnerable, on low or unstable incomes, or have a bad credit history.

Each year, an estimated 5.6 million people in this position turn to high-cost credit, such as payday lending, rent to own, or home-collected credit. As a result, credit

is most expensive for those who can least afford it.

Improving access to lower-cost credit, via community lenders such as credit unions and community development finance institutions (CDFIs), can help build financial resilience and capability, and reduce the need for borrowing in the future.

At the Financial Inclusion Centre, we have been working with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to understand and address this issue. Our analysis across the borough found that there are at least 6,000 annual users of subprime credit, taking out around 20,000 loans with a total value of more than £9.6 million. This means that, each year, £7.1 million in interest is lost from the pockets of the borough's residents and extracted from the local economy.

By facilitating access to fair and affordable financial products and services – ones that will help people meet their day-to-day financial needs, absorb shocks, smooth income fluctuations, deal with short-term financial problems and build resilience – we provide people with pathways to better financial health and wellbeing.

Of course, credit isn't the appropriate solution for everyone. It is vital, however, that affordable finance is locally available and part of a joined-up strategy, sitting alongside

debt advice and direct financial and in-kind support that helps build financial stability and resilience.

Councils have a vital role to play in supporting, developing, coordinating and promoting the delivery of affordable and responsible finance via credit unions and CDFIs. There are excellent examples of innovative partnerships between councils and community finance providers that have scaled the provision of affordable credit locally. Yet, there is a long way to go to close the gap between the £3 billion of annual subprime lending compared with just £250 million by community lenders.

*“It is vital that **affordable finance** is locally available and part of a joined-up strategy”*

Our recent affordable finance publication for the LGA (see below) provides a range of relevant evidence, good practice and learning, with case studies, alongside practical resources, reports and websites. These can be used by councils at all stages of the journey to build sustainable, effective collaborations with credit unions and CDFIs for the benefit of their residents – as well as their local communities and economies.



**‘The role of councils in improving access to affordable credit and financial services for low-income households’**, see [www.local.gov.uk/publications/improving-access-affordable-credit](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/improving-access-affordable-credit).

The Financial Inclusion Centre is an independent, not-for-profit think-tank, see [inclusioncentre.co.uk](http://inclusioncentre.co.uk)



**Dan Partridge** is a  
Director at Partnering  
Regeneration  
Development Ltd

# Effective partnering **for** **a fairer recovery**

## Public-private partnerships can help councils deliver local investment

**T**here has never been a more pressing need for innovative thinking about the role public-private partnerships can play in supporting councils to deliver services and growth.

These partnerships integrate different resources, expertise and powers across the public and private sectors to finance, develop and operate projects and services in ways that cannot be achieved by either alone.

The LGA asked Partnering Regeneration Development Ltd and Newbridge Advisors to explore how councils, investors and developers are shaping public-private partnerships (PPPs) to respond to challenges around housing, fuel poverty, decarbonisation and supporting successful places.

Practical insights were gathered about different approaches, the benefits offered, and how councils can plan and deliver effective partnerships via seven key 'steps' (pictured) across the project life-cycle.

Step one is about defining an overarching vision and long-term, market-facing outcomes. This should give clarity to a project and offer surety for the partner that upfront investment will result in outcomes, but ensure flexibility to respond to change.

Translating the vision into a 'brief' is the second step, and an important early activity to define and agree with stakeholders. This will pay dividends downstream by unearthing areas of divergence and key information gaps to be addressed.

Next, councils need to review their

partnership options for achieving the desired outcomes. PPPs come in multiple forms – contractual, corporate, investment and collaborative. Time is needed to review the optimal structure for delivering the desired outcomes, and to test the market.

Step four is about identifying and choosing the right route to market. Selecting the right procurement or appointment route is key for all parties, and best value must be demonstrated regardless of route. Consider (with legal advice) whether procurement is needed at all – for example, for land and investment transactions.

Fifth, plan well to start well. Look to establish the first business plan and 'early wins' to build confidence in the partnership. Ensure the council has appropriately skilled people with time to invest in the partnership and to provide the 'intelligent client function'.

Local Partnerships highlighted the importance of targeted training for council personnel, as managing PPPs can be complex and different from the day job.

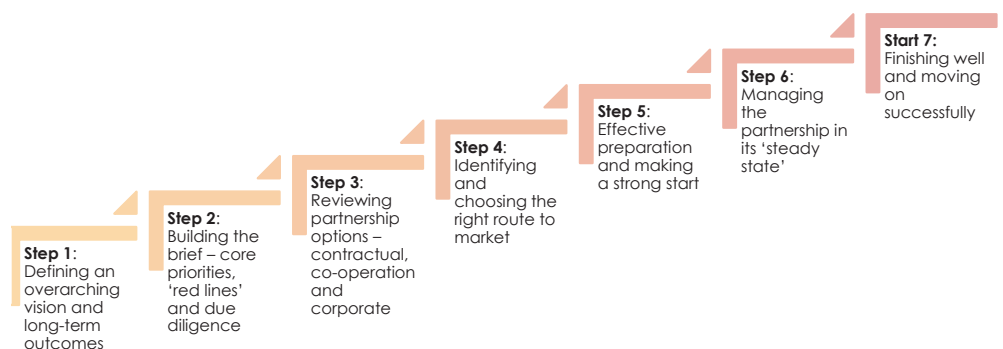
Managing the partnership in its 'steady state' is step six. Uncertainty after the first flurry of projects may bring inertia and this period needs

a distinct route map for delivery, including a business planning cycle, stakeholder engagement, monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs), and regular lessons learned.

Enfield Council's district heating company, Energetik, stressed the importance of setting clear KPIs with penalties, and consistently monitoring contractors' performance to ensure standards are upheld.

Finally, the end will appear very distant at the outset, but will arrive, and needs planning for, according to step seven. The parties need to: communicate any preferred future involvement; make clear provisions for winding down the partnership; review the contract for issues or challenges; assess the need for Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment; and develop a continuity and communications plan to mitigate disruption to services.

From delivering a fair and inclusive economic recovery and addressing the climate crisis, to tackling the shortage of affordable housing and delivering successful high streets, PPPs are one of the many important tools available to councils to deliver investment and direct resources in ways that matter for their economies and communities.



The LGA's guide, **'Public-private partnerships: driving growth, building resilience'**, which brings together the key findings of this research, will be published later this month, see [www.local.gov.uk/publications](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications)





# Leading on **climate change**

Small changes can make a huge difference to carbon emissions



Councillor **Richard Clewer** (Con) is Leader of Wiltshire Council

**I**n 2019, like many local authorities around the country, Wiltshire Council acknowledged a climate emergency. At the same time, we agreed to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and resolved to seek to make the whole county carbon neutral.

There are significant challenges to achieving this, but I'm delighted to say we've made excellent progress.

As a council, we have already cut our own carbon emissions by more than 80 per cent compared with 2014/15, which represents a 68 per cent carbon reduction on 2018/19, when we declared a climate emergency.

To achieve this, we looked at all our services and where we could make savings that would add up to a big reduction in carbon emissions. For example, switching to a green energy

tariff was an immediate easy win, as this ensures all energy the council uses comes from renewable sources and can be classed as zero carbon.

We're also 95 per cent of the way through our \$12 million programme to convert streetlights across the county, which has reduced energy consumption by 64 per cent, despite a growth in the number of streetlights as new developments are built.

In many ways, the same approach works for the wider county of Wiltshire, too. If people and businesses make small changes to the way they do things, they can make a huge difference in terms of carbon reduction.

That's why we're encouraging these small changes through our #WiltsCanDoThis social media campaign, which highlights the everyday things people can do to make a difference.

We're also trying to embed this change into our communities – for example, through our council house retrofitting scheme.

We're investing \$50 million to retrofit all council homes to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating B by 2030, which will bring a significant carbon reduction in Wiltshire. In addition, we're embedding skills – such as installing ground source heat

pumps – into the Wiltshire workforce.

These skills can then be used by the private sector and households to install their own energy-saving systems and reduce their carbon emissions, helping to bring down installation costs locally and creating a Wiltshire-wide carbon saving.

There is much more to do, however, particularly in terms of leading the whole county of Wiltshire towards becoming carbon neutral. That's why we have set out our plans for how we will achieve this in our Climate Strategy.

The strategy focuses on seven key areas that we can influence and will shape the next five years of our plan to tackle climate change.

Of course, it's vital that we bring our communities with us on this. We held a detailed consultation exercise last year, with residents, businesses, local groups and town and parish councils all giving us their feedback, suggestions and practical ideas to improve the strategy and to reduce emissions.

We'll be implementing our Climate Strategy this year as we look to build on all the progress we have made so far. We have made good headway, but together we all need to do more as we work towards our carbon-neutral goals.

**i** To find out more about Wiltshire's work on the climate emergency, please visit [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/climate](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/climate)



# E-learning platform for councillors

Do you know how GDPR impacts on your role as a councillor? Or do you want to find out more about your legal equality, diversity and inclusion obligations? As a councillor it is essential you stay on top of some topics.

Our new e-learning platform provides on-demand training modules to help councillors develop the essential leadership skills needed to work more effectively with their communities.

Our modules provide the information you need to know, from how to respond to issues arising from the pandemic, to neighbourhood and community engagement; local government finance; becoming an effective ward or division member, and more. The platform, part of our refocused learning offer to help councils' development, allows you to create a bespoke learning programme, choosing the modules that best fit your needs.

To find out more, register directly at  
**<https://lga.kallidus-suite.com/external>**



## Promoting diversity among councillors



Councillor **Andrew Morgan** is Leader of the Welsh LGA

**This year's local elections in May will be a chance to make significant strides for diversity in local government, as all seats across Wales' 22 councils will be contested.**

We all know the current situation in our council chambers; councillors are generally male, white and older than the average man or woman on the street.

Women account for only 28 per cent of councillors in Wales and six of Wales' 22 council leaders, which represents a miserly high point.

A further 11 per cent of councillors are disabled, and only 1.8 per cent are from a black or minority ethnic background.

Councils need to look much more like the communities they serve, and

communities should be represented in local decision-making. Research has clearly shown that 'great minds don't think alike' as the best decisions are made when a range of voices is represented.

Anyone who cares about inclusivity and local democracy should, therefore, be pulling out all the stops to ensure barriers are overcome to secure progress. That's why the Welsh LGA (WLGA) has

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*"Councils need to look much more like the communities they serve"*

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undertaken a range of ambitious actions and commitments intended to spur change and promote diversity in democracy. These include encouraging all political parties to commit to proactively improving diversity, supporting the use of voluntary quotas, and encouraging all councils to sign up to a 'Diversity Councils' declaration, to demonstrate a clear, public commitment.

We have also set up a 'Be a Councillor' website, with e-learning, advice, videos

and case studies, and councils have developed local action plans and are undertaking local engagement work with partners. These are progressive actions that, together, will support the emergence of more diverse civic leaders.

Progress relies on concerted and coordinated action, and the WLGA is working closely with the LGA and our sister LGAs in Scotland (COSLA) and Northern Ireland (NILGA) to campaign for more diversity in democracy.

We have welcomed work undertaken by the Welsh Government to remove barriers and improve access to standing for councils.

Legislation has been introduced to make permanent the provision for remote council meetings, following its successful adoption during the pandemic. A new Access to Elected Office Fund has also been launched recently, to support disabled people standing for election.

Welsh Government reforms mean councillors in Wales are entitled to family absence provisions on a par with public workers, and payments for costs for caring responsibilities, while job sharing allows greater flexibility for people to take on senior roles.

One of the main barriers to change is the rise in abuse and intimidation of public figures. Not only does this trend impact on the safety of individuals and their families, but it also dissuades people from taking part in politics, especially women and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

The WLGA is working closely with the LGA, COSLA and NILGA on a Civility in Public Life campaign to support any councillors who may have experienced abuse, and to stand up against intimidation of councillors.

Being a councillor is far from an easy role, but it is hugely rewarding. You can get things done. You can give voice to the seldom heard. You can make a real difference to people's lives.

It is up to all of us to encourage people from all walks of life to feel they can make a change in their communities by standing at the local elections.

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**i** **The WLGA's 'Be a Councillor' website is [www.beacouncillor.wales](http://www.beacouncillor.wales). For more information on civility in public life, see [www.local.gov.uk/civility-public-life](http://www.local.gov.uk/civility-public-life)**





## The big issues that will shape our communities



Councillor **Izzi Secombe** OBE is Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group

I hope that all **first** readers were able to take some time off over the Christmas period, and I would like to wish you a happy new year and all the best for 2022.

As **first** was going to press, there was significant concern in the UK and elsewhere about the impact of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

Before Christmas, the Prime Minister announced extremely ambitious targets in relation to booster jabs, and there were reports of long queues of people patiently waiting for their third dose.

I would like to thank all of you for the

hard work that I know you will have undertaken to support this crucially important booster programme, and by the time you read this I hope we are celebrating significant numbers of people having been given additional protection against the Omicron variant.

As ministers have consistently remarked when they join us for conferences, webinars and other events, councils have done an immense amount to support their communities throughout the pandemic, and I have no doubt about the important role you will have played in this latest stage.

I am sure that, like me, you are tired of hearing about COVID-19, and the hope must be that in 2022 we can again focus on the big issues that will shape our communities over the coming decade.

There are various white papers and other key announcements that we are

expecting to see this year, including in relation to special educational needs and disability (SEND), levelling up and devolution, planning, waste collection, and fire service governance, to name just a few.

While it is unfortunately likely that COVID-19 will be with us for some time to come, I hope as we progress through 2022 our focus will increasingly turn to these key issues and that we can work in partnership with the Government to bring about real and sustained improvements for the people who we have been elected to serve.

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**“Councils have done an immense amount to support their communities throughout the pandemic”**

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Councillor **James Jamieson** OBE is Chairman of the LGA

## Not just another year?

I am sure many of us will be glad to see the back of yet another year dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. From the awful loss of loved ones, friends and colleagues to widening health inequalities, economic turmoil and worsening mental health, COVID-19 has impacted every part of our lives.

But 2021 was also a year when, yet again, we saw the very best of local government demonstrated day in and day out, as we kept key public services running and protected and supported local residents and businesses.

This time last year, we were back in a full national lockdown, but the approval and rollout of the first vaccines provided a reason for hope.

Councils have since played a crucial role in promoting vaccine (and now booster) uptake, using their knowledge of their communities to address low take-up rates and vaccine resistance.

Local knowledge has also been key to

supporting businesses through lockdowns and economic downturns. The local distribution of government-funded grants during the pandemic has forged stronger links and better understanding between businesses and councils that will help rebuild and renew our high streets and town centres in the future.

Councils acted rapidly to help rough sleepers off the streets, as part of ‘Everyone in’, and are using the lessons learned from this initiative to make sure it is not just a one-off emergency response to homelessness.

Despite the pressures of the

pandemic, local government continues to look to a better future, with the sector proving influential at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) and continuing to tackle the climate emergency locally.

Local leaders have shown throughout the pandemic that they are well placed to deliver the best outcomes for local communities. Imagine how much more they could do with adequate long-term resources, new powers and freedoms – we have at the LGA, and will continue to work tirelessly to help you change our communities for the better.





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

## Time to fund councils properly

**A**s we begin a new year, it's natural to think about new beginnings. Could 2022 be the year that the Government stops dithering and finally gets a grip on council funding?

The recent provisional local government finance settlement points to another year of disappointment – or even despair – because it looks like it is doubling down on its policy of making council tax pay for everything.

Since Boris Johnson became Prime Minister in 2019, the Government has forced councils to increase council tax by more than 13 per cent. It has now confirmed it expects councils to raise it by another 9 per cent by 2024 if we want to ensure vital public services can be delivered.

Council tax rises – and in particular the adult social care precept – have never been the solution to the long-term pressures faced by councils.

## "Extra council tax hits the most vulnerable members of our communities"

Increasing council tax raises different amounts of money in different parts of the country, unrelated to need, and deepens financial inequality at a time when many working people are seeing their budgets hit from every direction.

Together with rising inflation, soaring energy bills, and a National Insurance hike in 2022, extra council tax hits the most vulnerable members of our communities.

This comes after the Conservatives have slashed funding for council tax support schemes, leaving more than 500,000 low-income households no longer receiving any help with their bills.

The Government has a choice in 2022 – it can either fund councils properly, or it can introduce a fairer system of local taxation.

My prediction? Another year of dither and delay, with local services paying the price.



Councillor **Joe Harris**  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Liberal Democrat Group

## Victory for forgotten rural communities

**I** sit here writing this column still buzzing from our stunning victory in the North Shropshire by-election. Helen Morgan will make a fantastic MP, and a great voice for ignored rural communities.

This result shows you that people are getting fed up with being taken for granted, and they will not tolerate being taken for fools.

## "People are being driven out of their villages because of second home ownership and a lack of affordable housing"

We have all made sacrifices over the past year, and the scandal of the Downing Street parties rubbed salt into an open wound.

We were being laughed at by those in charge, by a government that seems more interested in looking after its friends than the wider public.

We hear a lot about 'forgotten' communities. In rural areas, these are the people who are driven out of their villages because of second home ownership – making it impossible to buy locally – and a lack of affordable housing.

They face non-existent bus services, poor broadband, NHS services on the verge of collapse, a massive shortage of GPs, village schools under threat – and don't get me started on the pothole-ridden roads.

This is what I was being told on the doorstep when I went to help, and echoes so many similar messages that I hear from my Liberal Democrat colleagues up and down the country.

Rural communities are suffering, and the North Shropshire by-election result should be a wake-up call to those in power.

"Ignore us at your peril" is the message, in my view.



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

## A trusted pillar of democracy

**W**e enter 2022 with everything to play for.

The planning reforms that would have centralised power away from councils are under new management with Secretary of State Michael Gove.

So is the voracious demand for 300,000 new dwellings – every year. How does that fit with reducing our impact on Earth, or is COP26 already 'so last year'?

Our group is calling for house building to match local needs and facilities, for the five-year land supply rule to be scrapped, and local determination of resident need.

We see a rethink on devolution, of power and money. Devolution should be to all councils, not a reward for dissolving a council's identity and handing power into a single pair of hands.

The new changes to care do not tackle the long-term funding of the current service. It's a service built on sand and our residents deserve more.

While the Government has been in disarray at times, local government continues to be steadfast, an asset to our residents and a trusted pillar of democracy.

Our role as councillors has never been so important as we support our communities and businesses to navigate the pandemic.

## "While the Government has been in disarray, local government continues to be steadfast"

Our LGA group continues to support our members to be the best they can, through events, peer support, candidate school, and other development opportunities.

In February, we will be sorry to lose Sarah Woodhouse, but welcome Abigail Gallop as our new Head of Group Office, working with Aimee and Noleen. Get in touch if we can help: [independent.groupplga@local.gov.uk](mailto:independent.groupplga@local.gov.uk)



Councillor **Steve Darling** (Lib Dem) is Leader of Torbay Council

## Co-designing adult social care

**Adult social care in Torbay is on a radical transformation journey, focusing on a co-designed, asset-based approach that has evolved out of the fantastic community response to COVID-19.**

Community, faith and voluntary organisations came together, alongside dozens of very small organisations and a myriad of volunteers. The council financially supported the sector and was brave about the ideas emerging from the partnership.

A major achievement was the Community Helpline – a single point of access to help, including with food, debt advice, practical errands, and support with isolation. The focus was on neighbourhood solutions and identifying what everyone could potentially offer to others.

It soon became apparent that most of the work of the helpline was promoting wellbeing, actively preventing some people needing adult social care (ASC).

As a result, the council made a shared commitment to develop the Community Helpline into an 'open front door', with anyone referring in.

Torbay Food Alliance now uses the helpline for triage, so people seeking help with food get help with debt, mental wellbeing, and housing if they need it – thus addressing the underlying reasons for food poverty.

Partners in Torbay are still developing the helpline, and the 'telephony switch' from the ASC call centre to the community and voluntary sector line isn't planned until spring. However, the results so far speak for themselves.

From a sample of 242 callers referred into the Community Helpline model, only



47 needed formal help from ASC, and a dual approach between statutory and community/voluntary services was found for them.

Meanwhile, a fifth of people calling ASC are finding support and solutions from within their own communities, meaning they don't need statutory help.

The community and voluntary sector isn't free. The council is supporting the work from COVID-19 grants and a considerable commitment from the ASC precept, alongside funding the sector to develop projects where they identify gaps.

Statutory services have to learn to really listen and be prepared to change their viewpoint. Co-design means accepting that someone else's idea might be the best one.

## Championing good, green growth



**Jenny Herrera** is Chief Executive Officer of Good Business Charter

**In June of last year, York announced it had achieved accreditation as a Good Business Charter city, the first of its kind.**

In contrast to some of the regional employment charters that have sprung up in recent years, the Good Business Charter presents a more holistic approach by championing minimum standards of responsible business behaviour across 10 key components throughout a city, town, county, borough or region.

The Good Business Charter is a simple accreditation with backing from the Trades Union Congress, the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Living Wage Foundation.

Founded by entrepreneur/philanthropist Julian Richer, it looks to measure organisations on their care for employees, customers, suppliers and the environment,

all while committing to paying their fair share of tax.

For local government, this presents an opportunity to bring to businesses in their area something nationally recognised and business-led. It is underpinned by consumer polling that reveals 97 per cent of people think it's important for a business to act responsibly.

City of York Council said its Good Business Charter would help it ensure York's residents have access to the best working conditions, with fairness, representation, diversity and a shared commitment to environmental responsibilities at the core of its employment standards.

More recently, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames received charter accreditation and is now encouraging businesses in the borough to follow suit.

We believe adopting the Good Business Charter in this place-based model brings all the benefits of a regional charter – championing your local area and spurring organisations and residents on to good,



green growth – without the huge outlay in resources that designing your own charter can create.

Furthermore, it comes with support from our key partners and the opportunity for businesses to become part of a community that includes such companies as Aviva, Richer Sounds, Brompton and TSB.



To find out more about the **Good Business Charter**, visit [www.goodbusinesscharter.com](http://www.goodbusinesscharter.com)





**Toni Griffiths** is  
Senior Outreach  
Officer at the  
Holocaust Memorial  
Day Trust

# ‘One Day’ to mark Holocaust

## Could 27 January 2022 be the ‘One Day’ that every local authority marks Holocaust Memorial Day?

Holocaust Memorial Day is the international day to remember the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, and the millions of people killed under Nazi persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

It is an occasion for communities to come together to learn, remember and reflect.

Each year across the UK, thousands of people gather to learn more about the past and take action to build stronger communities and create a safer future that is free of genocide and all other forms of identity-based hostility.

Marking Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is now more important than ever, as prejudice and the language of hate are on the rise. In the year ending March 2021, there were 124,091 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales.

As local authorities, you are doing essential work in responding to threats such as these, and here at the Holocaust

Memorial Day Trust (HMDT), we would like to encourage you to use HMD as an opportunity to reflect and inform within your own organisation and communities.

Learning about the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, and the steps that led to them, equips people with the facts they need to resist hatred and prejudice.

Councils are at the very heart of the local community, and in the face of enormous challenges to community cohesion, both locally and nationally, you are already bringing your residents together in innovative and powerful ways.

In 2021, more than two-thirds of local authorities marked HMD, ranging from virtual ceremonies (Peterborough City Council) to wreath laying (Burnley Borough Council); from lighting up council buildings in purple (Swansea Council) to tailor-made

blog posts (North East Lincolnshire Council); and from the lowering of flags (Amber Valley Borough Council) to poetry workshops (Staffordshire County Council).

The data for 2021 is inspiring, because it shows the enormous contribution you have made to the national picture of HMD – and against the backdrop of the pandemic, there was an increase compared with the previous year. Can we work together to make 2022 even better?

The theme for HMD 2022 is ‘One Day’. Survivors of the Holocaust and of genocide often talk about the ‘One Day’ when everything changed, sometimes for the worse and sometimes for better.

One Day is just a snapshot in time and therefore cannot give the full picture, the context, the background that is needed, but it can help bring a piece of the full picture to life.

For those who suffered for days, weeks, months, years, focusing on just One Day is a starting point. It is a way for us to learn more about what happened during the Holocaust and the genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, and help create a better future.

The HMDT is funded by the UK Government to promote and support HMD, and we are here to help you to mark HMD 2022. Our support for councils includes resources and advice on planning an HMD activity on any (or no) budget. You can download resources and order stickers and booklets for free from our website ([www.hmd.org.uk](http://www.hmd.org.uk)).

Please play your part in creating One Day in our communities without hate, prejudice and intolerance.



Register at [hmdt.geteventaccess.com/2022](http://hmdt.geteventaccess.com/2022) to watch the **UK Commemorative Ceremony for Holocaust Memorial Day 2022** online from 7-8pm on 27 January. Toni Griffiths can be contacted on [toni.griffiths@hmd.org.uk](mailto:toni.griffiths@hmd.org.uk)



A view of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin

# Using residents' insight to tackle crime



**Dr Javed Khan** OBE is Chair of the Redbridge Community Crime Commission

The Redbridge Community Crime Commission was established after the largest ever response to a council survey – more than 2,800 shared their views.

Local people expressed their fear and frustration about crime – factors blamed for blighting a borough and overshadowing its inherent richness of diversity and amenity.

Over six months, 16 local people, all with a passion to help create change, sifted through the evidence of more than 40 expert witnesses – from police, youth services, domestic abuse workers, academia, education and health professionals – who spoke candidly about the ambition they all have, but the barriers they face, to improving the situation.

Heartbreaking testimony was provided by victims of crime – children who saw no future beyond gangs and drugs, through to those fearful of abuse within their own home, and many who were too scared to walk their local streets.

Evidence sessions were supplemented by visits to youth offending services and community groups, and by fact-finding missions with local enforcement teams, CCTV operators and into schools.

On each of these occasions, we were struck by the ambition and professionalism of the various representatives.

Far from a lack of skill, it became clear that other, hidden issues were undermining efforts to create a safer borough.

Taking a holistic view, these issues became glaringly apparent – we describe them as our 'golden threads' and they are pivotal in creating the kind of step-change required to tackle some of these entrenched problems.

The 'golden threads' of change necessitate new ways of working, with some of the most immediate tasks being to address a disconnect between agencies that prevents early support or legitimate data sharing.

It is perverse that a child in need might find that the first time they can access support is when things have gone terribly wrong. If we are to turn the tide on youth



crime, we need to recognise that those involved are children first and foremost, and likely to be victims themselves.

Other key learnings reflect the need to co-produce solutions with local people and organisations. We can't arrest our way out of crime. Residents are the experts in their own experience, and often bring a level of insight and commitment to an area that cannot be replicated by parachuting in officers.

Recommendations from our Community Crime Commission will be scrutinised by decision-makers within Redbridge Council and its key partners as part of budget setting.

Our report will provide new evidence and a strategy for tackling issues such as violence against women, domestic abuse, drug and street crime, as well as burglary.

Critically, we recognise the need to increase local confidence, to empower people to report and feel reassured about efforts to address crime.

We're clear that our recommendations are not a magic wand, but they do mark the opportunity to respond to one of the biggest citizen engagement exercises

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*“Allowing local people to scrutinise services had the potential to be uncomfortable”*

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that the council has ever undertaken.

Establishing the commission was a bold and brave move; allowing local people to scrutinise public services had the potential to be very uncomfortable. But such an approach is at the heart of creating trust and accountability. It seeks to redefine the partnership between electors and the elected.

With an election year ahead for many councils, there are also real lessons to be learned here about how positive engagement with residents can go beyond listening and into positive action.



**The findings of the Redbridge Community Crime Commission are due out in early 2022.**

See [crimecommission.redbridge.gov.uk](https://crimecommission.redbridge.gov.uk) for more information

# LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

15-16 March 2022, Hilton Hotel  
Newcastle Gateshead

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

The fire and rescue sector has played a critical role in the ongoing pandemic response whilst continuing to deliver the core functions that keep our communities safe. The 2022 LGA Fire Conference provides an opportunity to consider key strategic and practical developments that can be expected to impact the fire and rescue sector over the next year.

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



## LGA virtual events programme

### The LGA continues to run a full programme of virtual events.

The events cover a wide range of local government issues including lessons from COVID-19, children's services, construction, climate change, cyber security, digital, funding, housing, licensing, planning and public health.

Hosted on the Zoom platform, the events are free to attend for all councils and government departments.

To see what's coming up next and to book online, please visit the LGA's events pages **[www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)**





## ‘Partygate’ impacts on local by-elections



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



**It was all going reasonably smoothly for local Conservative candidates.**

At the end of November, they recorded three gains – two from Labour (one by the margin of eight votes) and another from Independent in Wyre Forest. A fourth eluded them when Labour held on by one vote in Wandsworth’s Bedford ward.

Then, on 30 November, the Daily Mirror reported a party being held in Downing Street in December 2020, despite the Prime Minister banning such events in the capital only days before.

Following this revelation, the Conservatives lost four of the six council seats they were defending two days later.

Liberal Democrats seized two seats in Lancaster, with the Greens and Labour winning in Wealden and Worthing respectively.

Against the run of play, there was a Conservative gain from the Liberal Democrats in North Norfolk, with candidate Matthew Taylor emerging a surprise winner.

Simultaneously, in the Old Bexley and Sidcup parliamentary by-election, the Conservative majority was cut to 4,000. There, the turnout of 33.5 per cent was the second lowest for a Conservative seat since the war.

Matters went from bad to worse. A widely circulated video of a mock interview

showed Downing Street officials at the time joking about the alleged party.

This resulted in the resignation, on 8 December, of Allegra Stratton, the former 10 Downing Street press secretary and COP26 spokesperson.

The following day, the Conservatives lost five of six seats they were defending. In Rotherham, two seats went to Liberal Democrat and Labour.

In Tonbridge and Malling, the Conservatives held one seat, but lost two others, including another defeat to the Greens.

‘Partygate’, as it has become known, then competed with news that the Electoral Commission was fining the Conservative party for not reporting donations used for refurbishment work in Downing Street.

On 16 December, the Conservatives lost four of six council seats. There was another defeat to the Greens in Ashford, making it three in less than a month.

The remaining losses were all to the Liberal Democrats, although these results had to share second billing when the party captured the North Shropshire constituency in spectacular style.

Twenty-three seats, more than half of the 40 pre-Christmas by-elections, changed hands. The Conservatives show a net loss of nine seats, and the Liberal

### Local by-elections

#### Allerdale, Maryport South

LAB GAIN FROM IND

24% over Ind

Turnout 17%

#### Ashford, Highfield

GREEN GAIN FROM CON

5.9% over Con

Turnout 23.5%

#### Bracknell Forest, Old Bracknell

LAB GAIN FROM CON

22.3% over Con

Turnout 17%

#### Bridgend, Caerau

IND GAIN FROM LAB

7% over Lab

Turnout 22.3%

#### Horsham, Roffey North

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

11.4% over Con

Turnout 22.4%

#### Lancaster, Bare

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

9.8% over Green

Turnout 23.5%

#### Lancaster, Upper Lune Valley

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

33.5% over Con

Turnout 31.7%

#### Middlesbrough, North Ormesby

LAB GAIN FROM IND (MIG)

60.6% over Ind

Turnout 13.3%

#### Northumberland, Hexham East

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

17.3% over Con

Turnout 35.1%

#### Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Knutton

CON GAIN FROM LAB

2.2% over Lab

Turnout 18.3%

#### North Norfolk, Stalham

CON GAIN FROM LIB DEM

18.2% over Lib Dem

Turnout 22.5%

#### Nuneaton & Bedworth, Bar Pool

CON GAIN FROM LAB

31.9% over Lab

Turnout 17.4%

Democrats and Greens net gains of six and three respectively.

Conservative fortunes have plummeted. Liberal Democrat appeals to voters will gain traction, putting many Conservative council seats in jeopardy. With the Greens advancing, the Conservatives face a two-pronged attack.

The one crumb of comfort is that Labour, which is the principal opponent

# LETTERS

## Utility companies and potholes

Having read your article on funding the filling in of potholes (**first** 665), I would be interested to know other councils' thoughts on this.

From what I can tell here, locally, 80 to 90 per cent of potholes are caused by utility work. So, why is it that local councils are responsible for clearing up after profit-making utility companies? Surely, they should pick up the repair bills, not the local council?

Perhaps it's something the LGA could put to the Government – that utility companies should have, say, a 10-year responsibility for the holes they dig in the roads?

It would certainly lift the standard of work the utilities contractors carry out and, therefore, mean fewer potholes in the first place!

**Cllr Mike Bird** (Ind),  
North Somerset Council

## Community champions

It was a pleasure to receive the Community Champion award at the recent Cllr Awards, run by the Local Government Information Unit in partnership with CCLA, at a ceremony at Camden Council.

With more than 400 applications and a shortlist of 10, I believe everyone was a winner. With all my nominations, from several hundred individuals, I wish to say the award is for the residents and community – I see it as a 'people's award'.

I was proud to win the award as the only person from Wales, and I pay tribute to all elected members from every political party, and to Independents, who work so hard for their communities.

We must never forget our residents who are an inspiration to us all.

**Cllr Kevin Etheridge** (Ind), Caerphilly County Borough Council

## Keep charging for garden waste

I agree with the LGA's Environment Spokesperson, Cllr David Renard, that money shouldn't be spent on introducing universal free garden waste collections (**first** 666).

We had controversy here, in North East Lincolnshire, when introducing an annual charge for this service several years ago. There's been a change in political control since then, but the arguments have died down, with people accepting that they have to pay.

As a largely urban area, we felt it was wrong to

subsidise a service mainly of benefit to wealthier residents living in the more affluent suburbs. Many close to the town centre either live in flats or street-level terrace houses, so don't use any garden waste collection.

What with the potential problems of recruiting HGV drivers and the extra traffic on the roads, I hope this is a central government idea that can be kicked into touch.

**Cllr Tim Mickleburgh** (Lab),  
North East Lincolnshire Council

### Rotherham, Anston and Woodsetts

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

12.5% over Con

Turnout 28%

### Rotherham, Aughton and Swallownest

LAB GAIN FROM CON

11.5% over Con

Turnout 19.9%

### Tonbridge and Malling, Castle

GREEN GAIN FROM CON

22.5% over Con

Turnout 34.4%

### Tonbridge and Malling, West Malling and Leybourne

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

9.7% over Con

Turnout 27.5%

### Torridge, Northam

CON GAIN FROM IND

15.6% over Lib Dem

Turnout 24.5%

### Tunbridge Wells, Speldhurst & Bidborough

TW ALLIANCE GAIN FROM CON

3.7% over Con

Turnout 34.7%

### Wealden, Hartfield

GREEN GAIN FROM CON

12.3% over Con

Turnout 36.6%

### West Lindsey, Nettleham

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

18.4% over Con

Turnout 32.2%

### Wigan, Bryn

LAB GAIN FROM IND

1.2% over Ind

Turnout 15.3%

### Worthing, Marine

LAB GAIN FROM CON

10.8% over Con

Turnout 37.4%

### Wyre Forest, Franche and Habberley

CON GAIN FROM IND (ICHG)

13.9% over Lab

Turnout 18.3%

nationally, is not regarded as a natural choice for local protest voters. Were that position to alter, the months ahead would look distinctly gloomy for Conservatives.



**Only results where there was a change of political control are shown above.** For the full

results, and additional data on other recent results, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

# LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition

28-30 June 2022

Harrogate  
Convention Centre

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