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A graphic element for the LGA22 logo, featuring a stylized 'L' composed of geometric shapes: a blue semi-circle with purple diagonal lines, a yellow triangle, and a red triangle. A series of purple dots forms a curved path along the bottom of the 'L'.

# LGA22

Annual Conference  
and Exhibition  
28-30 June, Harrogate

[www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference)  
**#LGAConf22**

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## War and work

**A**s first was going to press, the situation in Ukraine remained awful and heartbreaking.

We know you stand ready to help refugees escaping the war settle into your communities, and we have updates on the support available (p5, p10), but for the latest news, please visit our Ukraine council information hub at [www.local.gov.uk/ukraine](http://www.local.gov.uk/ukraine).

Elsewhere in the magazine, Baroness Young discusses the launch of our independent Commission on Culture and Local Government, which she is chairing (p15); Mayor Marvin Rees reflects on the LGA's first Urban Summit (p13); and Councillor Ian Gilbert, Leader of Southend-on-Sea City Council, writes about what city status means for Southend (p23).

I would encourage you to find out more about LG Inform, our free data benchmarking tool (p18), and about our sector-led improvement support for councils working to reduce the number of people taking their own lives (p21).

We look at biodiversity net gain in planning (p12), and hear from West Midlands Employers about how councils in the region are working together on workforce issues, including recruitment of temporary staff (p20).

And it's not too late to enter your top apprentices for the 2022 Local Government Apprentice of the Year competition (p19).

**Cllr James Jamieson**  
is LGA Chairman



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## ‘Exhausted’ public health staff battling rising covid rates



**Councils and directors of public health have called for an urgent extension of local outbreak management funding because of rising rates of COVID-19.**

Without the funding extension, councils will not have the capacity to tackle rising rates of community transmission and future variants because of a loss of relevant expertise, the LGA has warned.

Meanwhile, an exclusive LGA survey, launched at its annual public health conference last month, has found that

more than half of councils say their public health services are running with disruptions because of staffing shortages.

There are growing concerns that staff have been left exhausted from the strain of tackling the pandemic over the past two years, with local authorities finding it increasingly challenging to recruit and retain staff.

An LGA spokesperson said: “Although vaccination now means many can live a more normal existence alongside the virus,

COVID-19 is not going away, with community transmission still rising in many parts of the country.

“There will need to be a continuing role for councils and their public health teams as we move to a new phase of this pandemic. Although this won’t require the same level of funding as the Government has provided so far, they will need ongoing funding support.

“It is vitally important that the Government extends part of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). This will allow councils to respond to new variants, tackle outbreaks in at-risk settings, and recruit and retain vital public health staff.”

COMF, which has provided £400 million to local authorities in England during the pandemic, was set to end as **first** was going to press, and the Government had not committed to a replacement.

LGA analysis shows that the public health grant, which provides dedicated funding for all council public health functions, has reduced by 24 per cent in real terms since 2015/16, equivalent to a total reduction of £1 billion. The greatest reductions have been in deprived areas with the highest levels of health inequalities.

● See p7

## Extra £500m for vulnerable families

The LGA has welcomed an additional £500 million for councils to help vulnerable households with rising living costs, but warned that a long-term solution is needed to prevent poverty.

It also flagged the “significant financial pressures” facing councils from high inflation, rising wage and energy costs, and the ongoing costs of responding to the pandemic and supporting recovery.

The £500 million for the locally distributed Household Support Fund was announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak in his Spring Statement last month, alongside a 5p per litre reduction

in fuel duty, a £3,000 increase in the threshold for paying national insurance, and a 1p income tax cut in 2024.

Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA’s Resources Board, said: “We are pleased the Government is providing a further £500 million for councils to continue to provide targeted local welfare support to low-income households facing financial hardship.

“As the impact of cost-of-living concerns grow, the mainstream benefits system will need to provide the first line of support for people so that councils and local partners can concentrate their limited resources on helping those who

need tailored and additional help.

“With many households likely to be economically vulnerable for some time, councils also want to work with government on an effective long-term solution to preventing poverty and disadvantage that moves away from providing crisis support towards improving life chances.”

Cllr Davies said that 2022/23 is looking “significantly more challenging for councils”, adding: “We remain clear that this continued pressure cannot be met by council tax rises alone. It is crucial that local services have a long-term, sustainable future with certainty for councils over their funding.”



## Councils 'ready to welcome Ukrainians'

As **first** was going to press, the LGA was continuing to work closely with the Government and partners to ensure support for new arrivals from Ukraine is put in place quickly and at scale, and that families are kept safe.

Tens of thousands of Britons have offered up their homes to people escaping the war in Ukraine, by registering for the Government's 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme.

Under the scheme, councils are expected



to offer a range of support, including data sharing, safeguarding and accommodation checks, administering payments to guests and their sponsors, providing school places, and supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities.

The LGA is feeding through issues raised by councils – including around data sharing, safeguarding and housing checks, and funding – to inform government guidance,

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "The humanitarian crisis caused by the Ukraine invasion is heart-breaking.

"Councils are ready to help new arrivals from Ukraine settle in the UK and to support communities who wish to offer assistance to those fleeing the devastating conflict.

"Councils will be central in helping families settle into their communities and access public services, including schools, public health and other support, including access to trauma counselling.

"The Government must continue to work closely with councils, the community and voluntary sector and other key local partners to co-design this sponsorship scheme so it can move at pace and scale. We look forward to seeing more details as soon as possible."

● See p10-11, p24

## Call for action on social care workforce

**The LGA and national adult social care organisations have called on the Government to deliver a long-term care workforce strategy and tackle the issue of care worker pay.**

In a new position paper, the group argues that action is needed to address serious recruitment and retention issues in adult social care. Without improving the pay, conditions, and career progression opportunities of care workers, it will be difficult to make meaningful progress towards improving services and supporting people to live the lives they want to lead.

The position paper is supportive of the positive workforce developments in the Government's recent adult social care white paper but says they do not amount to a proper long-term workforce strategy.

"Social care is at a turning point, with

a period of major change taking place over the next two years and major reforms now under way," says the paper, agreed with organisations representing social care providers, care workers, commissioners, and service users.

"The role of the workforce must be seen as fundamental to delivering integrated, personalised and preventative care.

"The insights and expertise of people who draw on social care and the frontline care workforce must be central to this work and serve as the foundation for bringing about a more robust and respected workforce."

The LGA has previously warned that adult social care is in a fragile position, with councils struggling to balance budgets and services affected by rising costs and recruitment issues.

● See p7

## Million more pupils could have free school meals

More than a million additional school children could receive free school meals (FSM) and be entitled to extra support funding if the scheme was simplified and extended to more families.

The LGA said automatic enrolment should be introduced and eligibility expanded to include all children whose parents are undocumented or have no recourse to public funds. These were among the recommendations contained in the National Food Strategy written by businessman and campaigner Henry Dimbleby.

It comes ahead of the Government's food strategy white paper, which aims to improve access to healthy food. The LGA is also calling for a review of the £7,400 income threshold for FSM, to reach more children at risk of experiencing food poverty.

Parents currently have to apply to their local authority, or via their child's academy school, to claim. Government estimates indicate that automatic enrolment could capture the 11 per cent of eligible school children who have not yet taken up the offer.

This would generate tens of millions of pounds in extra pupil premium funding, which is allocated based on the number of FSM claims per school.

A further 1.1 million children could benefit from FSM if the income threshold is changed and immigration limitations permanently lifted.

Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "Streamlining and removing the red tape in the applications process, so that councils get given the information they need, is vital if we are to ensure no child misses out on a healthy meal."



## In brief

### Road repairs

The cost of clearing the backlog of road repairs in England and Wales has increased by almost a quarter, to £12.64 billion – or £61,700 for every mile of local road – according to the Asphalt Industry Alliance. Its Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance survey estimates repairs will take nearly a decade to complete. Responding to the survey, the LGA called for certainty over future long-term funding, and highlighted the critical role of councils in improving local transport connectivity to support levelling up ambitions and in reducing transport-related carbon emissions to meet national net-zero targets.

### Former chair stands down

The LGA's first chair is retiring as a councillor. Lord Jeremy Beecham is standing down from Newcastle City Council at the May local elections, after 55 years' service. First elected in 1967, he was – from 1977 to 1994 – Newcastle's longest-serving leader, became the first chair of the LGA in 1997, and has served more recently as an LGA vice-president. Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "Lord Beecham's dedication to local communities across the country has been tireless and his many years in the House of Lords has allowed him to continue standing up for people and trying to make things better for us all. Everyone in local government holds him in the highest regard and we thank him for his dedication."

### Ethical standards

The LGA's work on developing a Model Councillor Code of Conduct and supportive guidance has been acknowledged by the Government in its response to the Committee for Standards in Public Life's 2019 report into local government's ethical standards. The report set out recommendations for improvements via legislative changes while highlighting the need for councils to continue taking a central role in maintaining high standards themselves. Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman, said: "We agree that there is still more to do to, but that a locally led standards and conduct system, supported by guidance, training and good practice, is the best approach."

# Jobs and skills warning when EU funds end

**New jobs and skills training vital to levelling up the country are at risk of delay or being lost altogether because of a looming funding gap when existing European cash runs out, the LGA has warned.**

Current plans show a potential gap in provision between the conclusion of EU funding for employment and skills at the end of next year, with some programmes finishing earlier than this, and the start of the 'people and skills' priority of its successor, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), in April 2023.

The LGA said this gap will most impact those who are furthest away from gaining employment and will probably lead to a reduction of capacity and provision in both councils and their partners, including the potentially permanent loss of vital expertise built up over many years.

Voluntary and community sector organisations will receive some support

for the transition, but this does not go far enough to bridge the gap.

Councils now want to work with government to develop an effective transition to the UKSPF, to mitigate disruption to residents and services.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "It is good that government has recognised the value of local leadership and flexibility in the design of the new fund, but this forecast gap in provision could disrupt future plans and the progress made so far.

"To support our local residents and businesses, it is essential that the Government ensures there is a smooth, uninterrupted transition from the end of the European Social Fund programme to the UKSPF, and works with councils at every stage, if we are to stay on course and together achieve our shared ambition of levelling up all parts of the country."

## £150m support for bus services

The Government has announced an additional £150 million to prop up local bus services still recovering from the pandemic.

The cash, available until October, will enable transport operators and local authorities to continue providing local services following the closure of the Bus Recovery Grant at the end of March.

Pre-pandemic, around 33 per cent of all bus journeys were made for commuting purposes and usage numbers are predicted to remain below March 2020 levels for the foreseeable future.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA's Transport Spokesperson, said: "This funding will help protect bus and tram services, ensuring people can get to work, visit family and access vital services while also helping to alleviate congestion, reduce harmful emissions in our communities and support local economies.

"It is now important that the Government does not lose sight of the ambitions set out in its National Bus Strategy.

"If we want to encourage greater use of public transport as we recover from the pandemic, we must embark on a long-term funding plan for bus services.

"This long-term investment could help councils and operators invest in better local infrastructure, more affordable fares, and improved and greener bus fleets.

"Councils across the country will continue to work with local operators and the Government to encourage greater usage of local services."





# 'Debate, don't hate' call for local elections

**The LGA is urging people to engage in positive, constructive debates ahead of the upcoming local elections and to find out more about the role of local councillors.**

Local elections are a great opportunity for residents to have a say on who their local leaders are and shape the future of their communities, with around 5,000 council seats across England and Wales up for election on 5 May.

However, there are growing concerns about levels of public intimidation and toxicity of debate in local politics, both online and in person.

This behaviour not only risks the personal safety and wellbeing of councillors, but also undermines the fabric of local democracy, the LGA has warned.

Councils strive for increased participation, as broadening the diversity of people standing as candidates, and of those engaging with the elected, helps councils make

better informed decisions for their communities.

LGA Chairman Cllr James Jamieson and the LGA's group leaders said: "Councillors play a unique role in representing the needs of residents, often working together cross-party to tackle important local issues and to improve the quality of life of local people.

"Differences of opinion, and the defence of those opinions through councillors' arguments and public debate, are an essential part of the cut and thrust of political life.

"But we hear too many harrowing stories from councillors and officers about the harassment and intimidation they face. This is unacceptable and damages our democracy by forcing people from public service.

"As we approach the May local elections, we urge residents to engage in positive, constructive conversations and debates, to help make local democracy a welcoming environment for all."



## Covid hospitalisations 'rising'

The pandemic is not over, with the Government's chief medical officer warning that hospitalisations will continue to rise into early April.

Speaking at the LGA's annual public health conference, Professor Chris Whitty said new variants could emerge at any point, albeit the current rise is being driven by Omicron and death rates remain low.

As **first** was going to press, the latest COVID-19 statistics showed positive tests were up 14.5 per cent on the previous seven days and patient admissions to hospitals up 19.5 per cent.

The LGA said that councils are managing multiple pressures across various services, including staff shortages as infection rates remain high, and support is needed to help local communities recover.

A spokesperson added: "With the move towards the 'Living with covid plan', we are seeking clarification from the Government on what local provision will still be needed, and what funding will be available to support it."

Meanwhile, people aged 75 and over, residents in care homes, and those with weakened immune systems in England are now able to book an extra booster jab against COVID-19.

Spring boosters are already being rolled out in Wales and Scotland.

And the current and former Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza and Anne Longfield, have criticised the draft terms of reference for the UK COVID-19 Inquiry, which were published last month, for not mentioning children.



## Care reforms 'underfunded by £854m a year'

The Government is "seriously underestimating" the costs of its adult social care reforms – by at least £854 million a year, according to an independent report.

The report, commissioned by the County Councils Network (CCN), warns that care homes could face widespread closures and bed shortages when the reforms are introduced next year.

The LGA warned last month that underfunding risked derailing the reforms and could leave some councils facing a budget black hole (see **first** 669).

The CCN report, by LaingBuisson, looked at two adult social care reforms: allowing private payers (self-funders) to ask councils to arrange care on their behalf at lower, local authority rates; and the introduction of a new 'fair cost of care', to increase care fees paid by councils to make the care market sustainable.

The Government has allocated £378 million a year to pay for these changes, but the report calculates that at least an extra £854 million a year is needed to make the proposals workable.

An LGA spokesperson said: "The risks set out in this report potentially have serious consequences for providers, councils and, most importantly, for those who draw on care.

"The Government must act on its findings and work with councils to ensure an adequate uplift for social care, as well as support to implement the reforms.

"Many councils have approached us regarding these reforms and this timely report clearly highlights the risk to care homes. We remain clear that underfunded reforms also pose a risk to the overall financial viability of some councils as they stand now."

## In brief

### first packaging

Because of rising paper prices and energy costs, the LGA has decided to replace first's paper wrapping with a fully compostable, starch polywrap. This change will come into effect next month. Made from starches, cellulose and vegetable oils, the starch wrapping can be used to line your food-waste bin, or can be disposed of in food-waste bins, green-waste bins and any compost heap. At least 90 per cent of the material will compost within 12 months. The magazine and address sheet should continue to be recycled via local paper/cardboard waste collections. For further information, please see p31 or email [karen.thornton@local.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thornton@local.gov.uk)

## Children's care places

The UK has "sleepwalked" into a "dysfunctional" system in which children are failing to get suitable placements in foster care and children's homes, says the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). It found a shortage of appropriate places, with local authorities paying high prices and some providers carrying high levels of debt. An LGA spokesperson said: "Councils have been raising concerns about the availability of suitable placements for children in care for some time, and this report underlines the urgent need for change. We support the CMA's view that oversight is needed of the financial health of the most difficult to replace providers of children's homes. We urge the Independent Review of Children's Social Care to consider these recommendations."

## Careers education

Only 30 per cent of Year 13 pupils have completed work experience, according to the Sutton Trust. The charity is calling for a new national strategy for careers education, including more funding to set up work experience placements. Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "Local government is ideally placed to lead on careers advice, using councils' unique knowledge of their labour markets and relationship with local businesses. Devolving careers advice, post-16, and skills budgets and powers to local areas would allow councils, schools, colleges and employers to work together to improve their offer to help give every young person the best start in life."

## 'Cut tax on vaping' – LGA

The Government should cut value added tax (VAT) on the sale of vaping products to help people to stop smoking, the LGA has said.

It has called for VAT on e-cigarette sales to be reduced from 20 to 5 per cent to bring it in line with sales of nicotine gum and patches.

Current legislation allows a 5 per cent rate to be applied to "pharmaceutical products designed to help people stop smoking tobacco".

The LGA said there is growing evidence that using e-cigarettes can help people quit smoking, with a recent study suggesting that people who use vaping products, such as e-cigarettes, are twice as likely to stop smoking than those who use nicotine patches.

The LGA has also called for ministers to impose a Smokefree 2030 Levy on tobacco manufacturers. The revenue generated could be targeted at geographical areas, occupational groups and communities where cessation services are most needed.



Last year, around 13 per cent of the UK population smoked, with smoking-related illness – such as lung cancer – still being one of the leading causes of preventable death in the UK.

As well as impacting upon health, smoking places a significant burden on the public purse – to the tune of £12.6 billion each year – and on the local economy, through sick days and lost productivity.

An LGA spokesperson said: "Council public health teams work hard to help reduce smoking rates in their areas, alongside local charities and community groups, and it is testament to their efforts that smoking rates continue to fall.

"Cutting the VAT on the sale of e-cigarettes would be an important way to continue to encourage more people to quit smoking and would bring them in line with other cessation methods, such as patches and gum."

## Supported housing changes to help vulnerable residents

**A package of measures designed to put an end to dishonest landlords exploiting some of the most vulnerable people in society has been announced by the Government.**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is investing £11.5 billion through the Affordable Homes Programme, including delivery of new supported housing for older, disabled and other vulnerable people.

Minimum standards for the support provided to residents, new powers for local authorities to manage their local supported housing market better, and changes to housing benefit regulations have all been introduced.

Cllr James Jamieson, LGA Chairman,

said: "We are pleased that government is acting on councils' concerns about the minority of unscrupulous landlords who exploit the supported housing system for financial gain while providing poor-quality accommodation and support to people in vulnerable circumstances.

"This has a significant and detrimental impact on the lives of the people who live in poor-quality housing without the right level of support, and the wider community, as well as a cost to the public purse.

"We look forward to working with government, supported housing providers, people with lived experience of supported housing and other partners to take forward these important measures and ensure this moves along at pace."



## Progress needed on gender parity

Councils stand ready to play their part, but funding issues must be tackled soon

To mark last month's International Women's Day (IWD), there were debates in both Houses of Parliament, giving parliamentarians an opportunity to celebrate women's achievements and reflect on the progress that still needs to be made in achieving gender parity.

With the theme of #BreakTheBias, International Women's Day 2022 served as an important call to action to accelerate work to tackle intersectional inequalities and support more women from all backgrounds into politics.

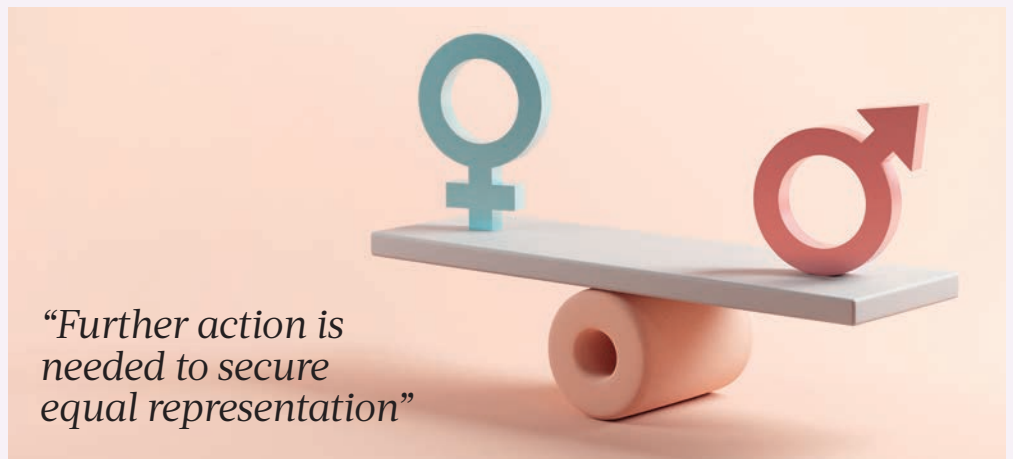
Ahead of the debates, the LGA briefed MPs and Peers on local government's vital work to support more women into local politics and positions of leadership. We also stressed the importance of vital local services in improving the lives of women and tackling all forms of discrimination.

During the debates, many parliamentarians echoed our view that further action is needed to secure equal representation and break the bias against women in politics.

Maria Miller MP (Con, Basingstoke) highlighted that more needs to be done to address the cultural and working practices in Parliament and local government that prevent women from entering politics.

Meanwhile, Baroness Gale (Lab) urged the Government to enact Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010, which would require political parties to monitor the demographics of their candidates.

Responding on behalf of the Government, Baroness Stedman-Scott confirmed the Government's commitment to supporting more women into politics, and urged political parties to take responsibility for improving the diversity of electoral representation through their selection processes. Parliamentarians also



highlighted the need for further action to address the growing online abuse and intimidation women in public life face.

Abena Opong-Asare MP (Lab, Erith and Thamesmead) raised that women from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds, members of the LGBTQ+ community and disabled people disproportionately face targeted online abuse, which is an issue the LGA has consistently highlighted.

Transport Minister Trudy Harrison responded that the Government has introduced the Online Safety Bill, to make the UK 'the safest place in the world online', and confirmed that online abuse will also be addressed in the 'Tackling violence against women and girls' strategy.

Addressing the abuse councillors face will be vital to improving diversity in local government and ensuring councils reflect the communities they represent.

We look forward to working with government as the Online Safety Bill makes its way through Parliament, to

ensure it makes the meaningful progress that is needed.

As we outlined in our briefing, the LGA is committed to helping councils improve their diversity and inclusion in all areas, and provides a range of support to help councils support women to run for political office.

And while more women than ever are choosing to become councillors, there is still more to do.

We know that a lack of pension contributions, lack of parental leave, and inflexibility in how councillors can attend meetings act as key barriers to women entering local politics and taking on leadership roles – and particularly to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are continuing to work with government and councils to reduce these barriers – for example, by encouraging councils to have leave arrangements in place and also calling on government to reinstate councils' powers to hold online and hybrid meetings.

These meetings saw important gains in accessibility during the pandemic, particularly for disabled people and those with caring duties.

● See p26



For the LGA's parliamentary briefing on International Women's Day, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses)



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

# Support for Ukraine

Councils stand ready to help people fleeing the war

## Family support

Many Ukrainian children and families arriving in the UK will have experienced trauma. Barnardo's has set up a free helpline (0800 148 8586), staffed by English, Ukrainian and Russian speakers, that offers advice, practical support and access to therapy. Children England is collating offers of support, including advocacy, translation and family reunification services – see [www.childrenengland.org.uk/support-for-ukrainian-children-and-families](http://www.childrenengland.org.uk/support-for-ukrainian-children-and-families). The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action has collated child protection resources that children's services teams may find helpful – see [alliancecpha.org/en/ukraine\\_resources](http://alliancecpha.org/en/ukraine_resources).

**A**s the war in Ukraine intensifies, so too does the humanitarian crisis.

Councils have a proud history of welcoming refugees, stepping forward at times of crisis to offer homes and support so families and individuals can build new lives in the UK.

As well as playing a unique role in welcoming new arrivals, councils have a huge range of expertise that should inform the development and delivery of support for people arriving from Ukraine.

The LGA continues to work around the clock with the Government, councils and our partners to ensure this expertise is used.

Last month, along with our sister LGAs in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, we wrote to Home Secretary Priti Patel and Communities Secretary Michael Gove pressing for further clarity to help councils plan their support for new arrivals and

## Council exposure to Russian firms

Communities Secretary Michael Gove wrote to councils last month about the Government's sanctions on Russia and Belarus, and urged councils to scrutinise their contracts and determine their exposure to Russian- and Belarusian-owned companies.

At the request of councils' procurement officers, the LGA has circulated a guidance note to procurement teams on issues

relating to contracting with certain bodies in light of the current crisis in Ukraine. The guidance includes responses to specific questions raised in relation to current contracts with Gazprom and other procurement issues.

If you have any questions, please email [thelma.stober@local.gov.uk](mailto:thelma.stober@local.gov.uk).

UK legislation, guidance and updates on financial sanctions against Russia are available at [bit.ly/3tw4ovE](https://bit.ly/3tw4ovE).

If you have any concerns, questions or need advice, please email [lgcommercial@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:lgcommercial@levellingup.gov.uk).

the people opening their homes to them via the Government's 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme

Councils have a number of responsibilities under this scheme, including undertaking safeguarding and accommodation checks, sharing data, and helping Ukrainian arrivals integrate into local communities.

The Government is still developing its guidance to councils on safeguarding, housing checks, and councils' responsibilities for homeless families. We are sharing the issues you have raised with us to inform this guidance.

I know access to data – for example, to all councils about existing communities, and actual numbers of arrivals and where they are settling – is extremely important to planning your council's response so people's needs can be met as quickly as possible.

Authorities with social care and children's service responsibilities have been invited by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to put forward a named data contact. I know you will be sharing this data with district council colleagues.

However, the data coming through to councils has not always been usable.

Our letter to ministers also flagged that the quantum and duration of funding for councils remains critical. For example, we need clarity on how the

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\$10,500 per person payment to councils should be shared in two-tier areas.

Councils need short- and long-term funding, both for their direct role in supporting new arrivals and for their community leadership role in ensuring integration and access to local services.

As with other resettlement schemes, this is likely to include access to English language support, school places and education needs; housing and homelessness support; mental health, trauma and wellbeing; social care; and higher housing costs in some areas.

In the long term, a flexible and creative approach to finding and funding accommodation is also needed.

Finally, the Government should prioritise working with local government and other partners to find innovative and safe solutions at pace. We need to see good local-national government communications, so that councils can plan with certainty and manage potential risks to community cohesion and resilience.

We also continue to raise general questions about the scale of the

scheme and the capacity needed to support new arrivals.

Councils simultaneously continue to support existing arrivals from Afghanistan and Syria. The LGA continues to lobby for improvements to the broader asylum system, and the need for elected members to be part of a single conversation with government.

Thank you for everything you are doing to help Ukrainians fleeing the war.

● See p24

## Voices of Ukrainian municipalities

The Association of Ukrainian Cities has produced a short video with messages from the mayors of Kharkiv, Kyiv and Mykolayiv (see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=89RSEBHlozU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89RSEBHlozU)), giving a glimpse into the extraordinary challenges they now face.

They are organising distribution of food and medicine, evacuation of women and children, and urgent repairs to basic infrastructure damaged by Russian bombs.

Ukrainian mayors are resisting the Russian invasion by assuring the continuation of public services in an extremely dangerous environment.

The LGA has a dialogue with the Ukrainian association via the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, which is sharing what local government in different European countries is doing to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

## Homes for Ukraine

**This government scheme offers a route for those who want to come to the UK who have someone here willing to provide them with a home.**

The scheme enables individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to offer accommodation, for a minimum of six months.

People arriving under the scheme will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition.

**Under the scheme, councils are expected to offer a range of support, including: initial reception at particular ports of entry; data sharing; safeguarding checks, including of sponsors and the accommodation they are providing; administering 'interim' £200 payments to guests and monthly £350 'thank you' payments to sponsors; providing school places for children; and supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities.**

Guidance for councils on Homes for Ukraine is available at [www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils).



See [www.local.gov.uk/ukraine](https://www.local.gov.uk/ukraine) for the LGA's latest updates on council information about Ukraine. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact your LGA principal adviser, see [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/lga-principal-advisers)





**Rebecca Moberly**  
is Principal Consultant  
(Environment) at  
the Planning Advisory  
Service

# Biodiversity net gain – why bother?

Enhancing biodiversity through the planning system creates a range of benefits for local communities

**B**iodiversity net gain (BNG) requires developers to leave the natural environment in a better state than it was, pre-development.

Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England, with a few exemptions, will have to deliver 10 per cent biodiversity net gain from late 2023.

BNG will be measured using the Government's biodiversity metric, and habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years.

This sits alongside: a strengthened legal duty for public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity; new biodiversity reporting requirements for local authorities; and mandatory 'local nature recovery strategies' (LNRs).

Councils will need to be ready to meet the new legal requirements in around 18 months – so why should you start thinking about biodiversity net gain now?

BNG delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development.

It is already required through national planning policy in England and Wales, and can be achieved on site, off site, or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures.

There is a lot of preparation

required to get ready for the new legal requirements, including planning decision-making and policy, but it's also worth thinking beyond the essentials.

The LGA's biodiversity e-learning module ([www.local.gov.uk/biodiversity-e-learning-councils](http://www.local.gov.uk/biodiversity-e-learning-councils)) highlights the benefits that creating and enhancing biodiversity provides for local communities. Not least of these is that a BNG approach delivers against plans to address the climate emergency, as demonstrated by Cornwall Council's Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (see [bit.ly/3wfogox](http://bit.ly/3wfogox)), which includes a BNG policy, alongside policies on green infrastructure and a nature recovery network.

For Plymouth City Council, making the city a great place to live and work is a key driver. It has integrated BNG into its approach to place-making, improving local greenspaces and bringing nature close to people.

Plymouth's joint local plan with South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils includes an exemplary BNG policy (see [bit.ly/3icQFDJ](http://bit.ly/3icQFDJ)). They are developing an approach to off-site BNG delivery with local partners that supports local aspirations and nature recovery, funding nature-based improvements to council-owned greenspaces.

Eden District Council wants developers to provide BNG, so, following an LGA Planning Advisory Service review, it allocated funding to enhance its pre-application development management service and employ an ecologist.

As well as providing income, this is key to securing BNG through negotiations at development design stage; it is more difficult at planning application stage.

Meanwhile, Buckinghamshire Council and the Natural Environment Partnership for Bucks and Milton Keynes are setting up an authority-wide BNG scheme, supporting priorities in their corporate plan and delivering against Buckinghamshire Growth Board's strategic vision.

The council was one of the pilot areas for the new LNRs and their BNG approach is closely tied to this.

They are working across council teams, including finance, legal and estates, have recruited biodiversity officers, and are finalising a supplementary planning document to set out requirements for developers and a new financial calculator for biodiversity units.

Taking a council-wide approach to BNG helps to deliver broader benefits for nature and local communities, and meet corporate strategies and objectives, and can act as a source of income for local authorities. It's worth starting now to get this approach embedded.

The LGA's Planning Advisory Service is developing an online resource centre to help you do just that, see [bit.ly/36EyuUB](http://bit.ly/36EyuUB).



**For more information about the Planning Advisory Service**, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/planning-advisory-service](http://www.local.gov.uk/planning-advisory-service). See p28

# Delivering on a collective vision

## The LGA's inaugural Urban Summit discussed the future of our cities



Mayor **Marvin Rees**  
is Chair of the LGA's  
City Regions Board

**C**ities are at the forefront of this century's global challenges, from tackling climate change to the rise of artificial intelligence and managing the diverse benefits and impacts of migration.

Increasingly, it is clear that these are beyond the reach of national governments alone to solve. As greater numbers of people are choosing to live in urban areas, they are looking to local leaders for solutions to help make our world a safer place.

Cities in the UK are already leading the way, driving our economy, culture, communities and individual people's sense of belonging.

Through migration, global trade and the sharing of ideas, our cities shape, and are shaped, by international events.

Mayors, civic leaders, think tanks, academics and other public sector leaders gathered last month at the LGA's inaugural Urban Summit to discuss these, and other, key issues that cities face over the next 30 years.

The Government's levelling up mission states that we should have a globally competitive city in every area of the country by the end of the decade, but it is up to us as leaders of place to decide what these cities should look like.

Should they compete with each other or share a future in which we all move forward as a coherent collective?

Working out the relationship within and between cities and their surrounding areas, as well as with the national economy, is essential if we are to maximise our chances of being successful.

We also need to address the gap between where our cities are today and where we will need them to be, to help address the stark inequalities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

This approach requires a 'UK cities 2050' plan, a 30-year blueprint that

delivers on a collective vision of what we need our cities to be.

This will need to include secure and predictable finance, support for devolution and, vitally, national government making the space that cities need to be able to act and deliver for the UK nationally and around the globe.

This could include a 'sustainable urban futures fund', a single pot for urban areas to use flexibly, addressing the Government's levelling up priorities in innovative ways and reducing the reliance on fragmented, short-term funding for single issues.

Such a fund could, instead, be for the next 5-10 years, based on indicators such as deprivation, job loss, unemployment and environmental factors, incentivising match funding from the private sector and contributing towards our economic recovery and growth.

International organisations should also be redirecting much of their energy and finance through our cities, for maximum impact.

The ability of UK cities to grow, adapt and build direct relationships with cities around the world means they are ideally placed to navigate global challenges.

Making urban leaders equal partners in shaping policy, and giving them the powers they need to make the best decisions for their communities, will help us tackle the challenges of our time head-on, with an ambition to unleash opportunity and prosperity for all.

We know levelling up cannot be achieved by any one body. A strategy for UK cities would take us a step forward in delivering this joint endeavour in the decades to come, just as we look ahead to what could be a new and very different global landscape.





# Leisure provision that's fit for purpose

The extension of Denbighshire Leisure's UK Leisure Framework, with Alliance Leisure continuing as Lead Development Contractor, will help local authorities deliver schemes that meet local needs

Over the next four years, Alliance Leisure and Denbighshire Leisure will work in partnership to deliver a committed pipeline of leisure-focused projects with an investment value of more than £250 million and many more projects yet to be agreed.

The UK Leisure Framework has been operational for 10 years, following the first generation launch in 2012. When the Framework extended its access beyond Denbighshire County Council in 2017 to offer its service to any public sector body in the UK, Alliance Leisure was appointed Lead Development Contractor.

Since then, the UK Leisure Framework, driven by Alliance Leisure, working in partnership with many public sector bodies, principally local authorities, has provided an efficient means of procuring and delivering leisure development projects across the UK. To date, Alliance Leisure has successfully delivered 58 projects, ranging from £18 million new builds and waterparks to smaller-scale play areas and skate parks.

"The UK Leisure Framework is unique for two reasons," says Paul Cluett, Managing Director, Alliance Leisure. "First, it is the only framework in the country entirely focused on leisure. This means, all suppliers working through the Framework are appointed based on their leisure industry experience and credentials. This ensures decisions are based on the application of best practice learned from years of experience.

**i For more information about the UK Leisure Framework visit [www.LeisureFramework.co.uk](http://www.LeisureFramework.co.uk)**



*"Physical activity has a huge role to play in creating healthy communities"*

"Second, the Framework adopts a full-service approach, supporting all elements that contribute to a successful, sustainable development including design, business planning, funding, construction and marketing. This is not just about the development of bricks and mortar facilities or delivering a specific segment of the development process.

"This Framework provides an end-to-end solution for the provision of active environments built in response to community needs. During these testing times, as the UK navigates its way through Brexit and 'builds back better' after the pandemic, the UK Leisure Framework will help local authorities meet their commitment to create sustainable, engaging, fit-for-purpose active environments that play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of the nation."

The new iteration of the UK Leisure Framework came into effect in February 2022 and will run for the next four years.

Jamie Groves, Managing Director at

Denbighshire Leisure, adds: "The UK Leisure Framework has already proved its worth, transforming public leisure provision for communities up and down the UK.

"Moving forwards, physical activity has a huge role to play in creating healthy communities. Currently, much of the UK leisure stock is tired and in need of investment.

"Over the coming years, Denbighshire Leisure will continue to work with Alliance Leisure, breaking down investment barriers to ensure communities across the UK have access to the facilities they need to live more active, healthy and prosperous lives."



**58**

Developments delivered to date

**£75m**

Value of completed projects

**£250m+**

Value of committed projects

**£2bn**

Potential Framework investment value



# Culture matters

Local libraries, museums, festivals and the arts have never been more important as we recover from the pandemic



**Baroness Lola Young of Hornsey** is Chair of the independent Commission on Culture and Local Government

**D**uring the pandemic, people turned to culture for solace and connection.

Local cultural services, such as libraries, museums, theatres and arts centres, reached out to communities in lockdown to address isolation, support mental wellbeing and provide educational opportunity.

As we move towards recovery, we face a whole new set of challenges: rising inequalities exacerbated by the experience of the past two years; a growing cost of living crisis; climate change; and global instability.

*“Cultural services bring people together at a time of crisis”*

Under these circumstances, it would be tempting to dismiss investment in cultural services as a luxury we can't afford – but, for the same reasons, these services have never been more important.

Cultural services and facilities bring people together at times of crisis; they provide support and social connection, help develop new adaptive skills, and underpin empathy and critical thinking.

In many cases, they act as a trusted source of information at a time when the concept of truth is under question.

These important community services remain vital, but they are under pressure.

Councils are the biggest public funders of culture, spending more than £1 billion a year in England alone. They run a nationwide network of local cultural organisations, including 3,000 libraries, 350 museums, 116 theatres and numerous castles, amusement parks, monuments, historic buildings, parks and heritage sites.

This is the foundation of our national cultural infrastructure.

Despite this, we have seen investment in these services decline over the past 10 years and rising demand for statutory services, such as social care, put increasing strain on thinly stretched budgets.

The incredible work of council cultural teams and local cultural organisations too often goes under the radar, while funding for these services remains disjointed at a local level.

It is for this reason that I am delighted to be working with the LGA to chair the new Commission on Culture and Local Government.

The commission will gather evidence on the role local culture can play in supporting recovery from the pandemic.

Over the next nine months, we will be showcasing the incredible range of work cultural services and organisations are providing at a local level.

We will be making the case for culture at a national, regional and local level, so that those who work hard to advocate for culture have the evidence they need to really champion the value of investment with decision-makers.

We will also look at existing funding models and make practical recommendations about a more sustainable, collaborative and place-driven approach for future investment in culture.

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Hull UK City of Culture, 2017

We have a fantastic group of commissioners leading this piece of work, including important national funding bodies, foundation trusts, academics, local government cultural leaders, and arts practitioners.

Lord Neil Mendoza, the Government's Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal, is acting as an official adviser to the commission, while the LGA's Culture Tourism and Sport Board is providing support, and has committed to building our recommendations into its work with councils.

We are confident that there will be real impact from our work.

We want to make sure the commission reflects a diversity of voices and experience, so we hope you will all contribute to this programme and share your stories. Please do go to the LGA website to find out more about our work.



**The Commission on Culture and Local Government will run until December 2022.**

For more information and to sign up to our newsletter, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/commission-culture-and-local-government](http://www.local.gov.uk/commission-culture-and-local-government)



Councillor **Lucy Nethsingha** is Deputy Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board



# Agreeing to disagree

## Reforms and more funding are needed to address flaws in support for SEND children

**A**head of the Government's much-anticipated review of the support provided to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the LGA has commissioned research into the huge rise in legal disputes and tribunal hearings since the SEND reforms of 2014.

'Agreeing to disagree? Research into arrangements for avoiding disagreements and resolving disputes in the SEND system in England', by the Isos Partnership, has found that the aspirations of these reforms – to reduce the need for parents to have to fight to get support – have largely not been achieved.

Instead, they have resulted in a system that has become more adversarial, with a soaring level of cases that are not resolved without being taken to a tribunal.

The LGA says the findings of the report underline the need for this to be addressed in the Government's imminent SEND review, so parents and

carers avoid having to take cases to tribunal. This comes as figures in the report show that:

- The number of appeals to tribunals over SEND disagreements has more than doubled since the reforms, rising by 111 per cent between 2013/14 and 2020/21.
- More than nine in 10 appeals are decided in favour of families, overturning the original decision made by councils. Prior to the reforms, 83 per cent of tribunal appeals were made in favour of the appellant.
- Before the Children and Families Act 2014, more disagreements were resolved before they got to a formal hearing, with 21 per cent of appeals decided at a tribunal – whereas, now, the figure is 64 per cent.
- The proportion of decisions appealed against has risen from 1.16 per cent to 1.74 per cent in 2020.

The research found that the main factor behind the rise in the number and rate of appeals was not councils

failing to meet their legal duties under the Act, but was instead reflective of deeper, fundamental problems that need to be addressed within the SEND system.

To tackle these issues, the LGA has called for a series of measures to be introduced, which could include: providing greater clarity around the level of need that would require SEND support; making mainstream education settings more accountable for SEND inclusion; and enabling decisions over SEND provision to be made jointly by all those responsible, such as health and care bodies, and not just councils.

While the Government recently announced much-needed funding for SEND support services, which will be vital to ensure support can be provided, this alone will not fix the underlying flaws within the system.

Councils want to ensure children with SEND get the very best support and we look forward to seeing how the proposals set out in the Government's forthcoming SEND Green Paper will help achieve that ambition.



See [www.local.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send](https://www.local.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send) for more on the LGA's work on SEND



# Social worker shortages

## Recruiting and retaining children's social workers is becoming increasingly challenging



Councillor **Lucy Nethsingha** is Deputy Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board

**C**hildren's social workers do an incredible job in extremely challenging circumstances. Thanks to their dedication and the work of a range of partners, England is one of the safest places in the world for children to grow up.

However, councils are facing a staffing crisis in children's social care, with the number of children and family social workers quitting their jobs at a five-year high, potentially putting thousands of young people at risk.

The latest workforce data shows the number of children's social workers leaving their roles in 2021 was 4,995, an increase of 16 per cent on the previous year. The number of vacancies is also at its highest in five years – with 6,522 positions available as of 30 September 2021, climbing 7 per cent from the year before.

This reflects both the impact of the pandemic and the increasing challenges of social work roles as a

result of rising demand for, and falling investment in, the services children and their families need.

The latest Employer Standards for Social Workers survey, managed by the LGA, found that – while a majority (67 per cent) of children's social workers were satisfied with the employment deal offered by the profession – 77 per cent reported an increased severity of caseloads.

Three out of five reported usually having a satisfactory level of control over workload and the resources needed to fulfil their responsibilities, while just 56 per cent had the time, resources, opportunities and support to undertake continuing professional development (CPD).

The LGA is calling for children's services to be adequately funded so that councils have the resources to ensure social workers receive the recognition, support and reward they deserve, and to fund the family help services social workers need to refer families to.

Well-resourced children's social care teams can also allow social workers to work more flexibly, which we know is important in retaining our staff.

We need to see more bursaries, funding for returner schemes to help people who have had a career break get back into social work, and conversion pathways for people working in care who could step up to a social work role.

The LGA has estimated that mounting pressures on children's social care mean future costs are set to increase by an estimated £600 million each year until 2024/25, with more than 8 in 10 councils already in the unsustainable position of having to overspend their budgets.

Despite some additional funding announced in last year's Spending Review, councils are having to make exceptionally difficult spending decisions, including for some the need to move funding away from family help and other early intervention services to protect those children at most immediate risk of harm.

Councils want to be able to provide the very best support for children, which is why we are urging government to work with us on these urgent funding and workforce issues, as part of a child-centred, cross-government pandemic recovery plan that offers the very best future for children and families.



See [bit.ly/3IYCKgc](https://bit.ly/3IYCKgc) for the latest figures on the children's social care workforce. The LGA provides a range of free and subsidised support to councils on improving children's services, including support for lead members. For more information, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/childrens-services-improvement](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/sector-support-offer/childrens-services-improvement)







Councillor **Peter Fleming** is Chairman of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

# Know your place

From fly-tipping to homelessness, LG Inform – the LGA's free data benchmarking tool – can help councils compare and improve services

**O**ver the past two years, the importance of having access to data for decision-making has come to the fore. It's likely there are now very few people in positions of responsibility who don't recognise this.

From focusing on 'data, not dates' during the peak of the COVID-19 response, to understanding the likely settlement of people from Ukraine based on the location of those already in the UK, data has underpinned much of the public sector's response to crises.

But data is also crucial for the day-to-day running of organisations, including for performance management and for understanding the context in which an organisation is working.

With their strong record of transparency, councils also use data to be open and accountable to their residents.

It's against these last two purposes that the LGA developed LG Inform – our data benchmarking tool for councils and fire and rescue services.

Funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' grant to the LGA for sector-led improvement support, it brings data about local authorities – and contextual data about their local areas – together into one place.



**Everyone can access LG Inform** at

[www.local.gov.uk/lginform](http://www.local.gov.uk/lginform) and view its themed reports (where you can select your authority at the top of each report) at [www.bit.ly/35ZqxxY](https://www.bit.ly/35ZqxxY)

This data would otherwise be scattered across the websites of multiple government departments and other organisations.

Moreover, it presents the data in user-friendly charts and graphs, rather than spreadsheets (see pie chart, below). All data items are regularly updated by the LGA, to keep the tool current with the latest publicly available data.

LG Inform makes it easy for councillors and officers to compare data about their own local authority with that of other similar councils. It identifies which councils perform the best (and the worst) against a range of performance metrics.

It is a one-stop shop for more than 10,000 pieces of information and, as an open tool, residents can use it, too.

We regularly produce themed LG Inform reports, enabling users to focus on a variety of topics in more depth.

We currently have more than 50 of these themed reports, on key statistics such as COVID-19 cases and deaths, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), children's services, rates of homelessness, and fly-tipping.

These can be useful for: councillors who are portfolio holders or cabinet leads for a service – or who sit on a service committee – so they can monitor performance; those on a scrutiny committee who are examining a service in some detail; and frontline councillors who want to understand how their council is performing against key measures and to share that knowledge with their residents.

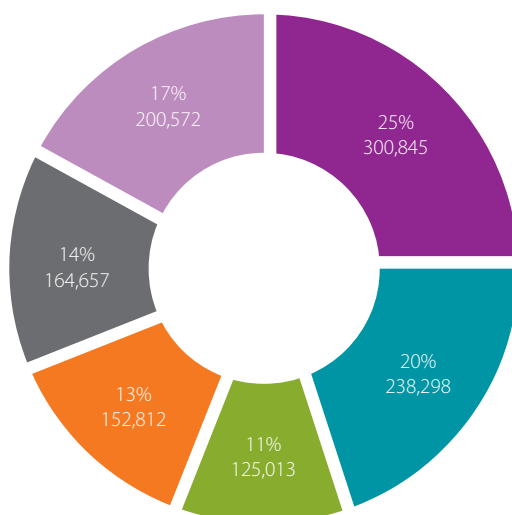
LG Inform has gone from strength to strength since its launch in 2011. In 2021, it was 'highly commended' in both the Civil Service's Analysis in Government Awards and the Local Area Research & Intelligence Association (LARIA) Awards for local researchers and analysts.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, LG Inform received more than 927,000 page views.

If you haven't used LG Inform yourself, or if you haven't used it recently, it is well worth having a look and seeing how the data within it can support your work.

## Estimated low carbon jobs in England 2050 by sector

- Low carbon electricity
- Low carbon heat
- Alternative fuels
- Energy efficiency
- Low carbon services
- Low emission vehicles and infrastructure



# Celebrating learning

## The search is on for local government's top apprentice



**Jamie Saddler** is the LGA's Apprenticeships Adviser

**N**ational Apprenticeships Week, held each February, is always a great time to shine a spotlight on the apprentices in our organisations and to reflect on their importance to councils.

While there has long been a variety of events to celebrate the successes of our apprentices, both in individual councils and regionally, there was previously no national event focusing specifically on apprentices in local government.

Last year, though, two regional employers' organisations – East of England LGA (EELGA) and South West

Councils – came together to discuss changing that.

They had both run 'apprenticeship challenge' events before the pandemic and were looking at whether they could move their events online and perhaps run one jointly.

Once they worked out how they could deliver a virtual event, they realised that there was no reason not to open it up to the whole of England.

That's when they approached the LGA to ask for our help in getting the word out and to come on board as sponsor.

The event would have a similar format to their previous in-person 'challenge' events, with apprentices assessed throughout the day across six tasks involving solving problems for residents of a fictional town – designed to mirror decisions councils are taking every day.

Moving the event entirely online – a necessity during the pandemic – did make us a little nervous. Would the format work as well remotely?

As it turned out, the 2021 Local Government Apprentice of the Year event was an outstanding success.

Teams were still able to come together and work effectively, while networking time was built into the day so people could get to know each other and share ideas.

The virtual nature of the event meant it could be truly national and allowed

*"The virtual event allowed apprentices to take part from all over the country"*

apprentices to take part from all over the country.

And we were able to secure the then Apprenticeships Minister Gillian Keegan's attendance, giving the apprentices the opportunity to ask her questions, which was extremely well-received.

In the end, more than 110 apprentices took part from eight of the nine English regions and feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive.

Entries are now open for the 2022 competition, until 4 May, to any Level 2 or 3 apprentice who is currently working in local government.

This exciting event will once again provide the opportunity for apprentices to learn, network and showcase their skills, expertise, and initiative.

Apprentices will again work in virtual teams to experience the opportunities, risks and challenges involved in delivering successful local government services, in a developmental environment.

**i** For more information about Local Government Apprentice of the Year 2022, and to book a place – by 4 May – please visit [www.eelga.gov.uk/events/national-local-government-apprentice-of-the-year-2022](http://www.eelga.gov.uk/events/national-local-government-apprentice-of-the-year-2022)

## The winner is...

Karla Overington, a business administration apprentice from West Sussex County Council, was the winner of the Local Government Apprentice of the Year 2021.

She felt the event required her to demonstrate engagement, teamwork and networking skills, while working with people she had never met before gave her the opportunity to see how others work and to hear about the

ideas they had. "I thought the day was incredibly well organised and it had a great flow to it. Everything was explained very well and I was confident that I knew what was being asked of me," she said.

Karla hopes to use the event as a learning experience to improve her skills and knowledge, and as a springboard to help secure a permanent role with the council.





Councillor **Ken Meeson** is Chair of West Midlands Employers' Elected Member Management Board and Mayor of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

# Improving workforce **planning**

West Midlands councils are working together on an ambitious initiative to tackle skills shortages

In the West Midlands, we recognise there is both a need and an opportunity to improve workforce planning. With agency workers representing 15 per cent of our workforce (and rising), looking at solutions to improve our temporary resourcing and stabilise our permanent workforce also needs to be a priority.

Councils in the West Midlands have been working with West Midlands Employers (WME), a not-for-profit membership organisation owned by 32 local authorities, to explore ways to collectively transform how we recruit and manage our temporary workforce.

The result is WMTemps, a regional agency solution for temporary workers that is linked to a regional workforce strategy that will complement councils' own strategies.

We know partnership working and collaboration between councils can make a real difference in helping more local people find jobs, and that 'our people' are the council.

From my experience as a council leader and cabinet member responsible for adult and children's services, I am also acutely aware of our need for good-quality temporary, as well as permanent, staff. So I really welcome the launch of WMTemps to give us greater control over who we employ to deliver services and how we develop and support local people.

An independent review of the business case for WMTemps said

that it represented an opportunity for councils in the West Midlands to work together to tackle challenges that cannot be solved by working individually – including addressing skills shortages, recruiting to hard-to-fill vacancies without driving up costs and creating churn in the labour market, and ensuring temporary workers are well trained, well managed and integrated with the permanent workforce.

Temporary workers remain an important part of our workforce.

As Rebecca Davis, WME's Chief Executive says: "While there is need for temporary workers, they are often used to fill permanent roles.

"We want to ensure temporary workers are only being used where there is a genuine temporary

requirement and that there is a sufficient talent pipeline to help fill permanent roles.

"The integration and relationship between temporary and permanent workers is important to recognise and to have strategies to manage these interdependencies."

Research shows some temporary workers have had negative experiences through existing resourcing processes.

Our temporary resource solution is designed to help tackle some of the issues, such as communication, quality control, and making sure individuals are matched to the right roles.

This should help improve the overall experience of temporary workers, leading to an increase in the number converting to permanent roles.

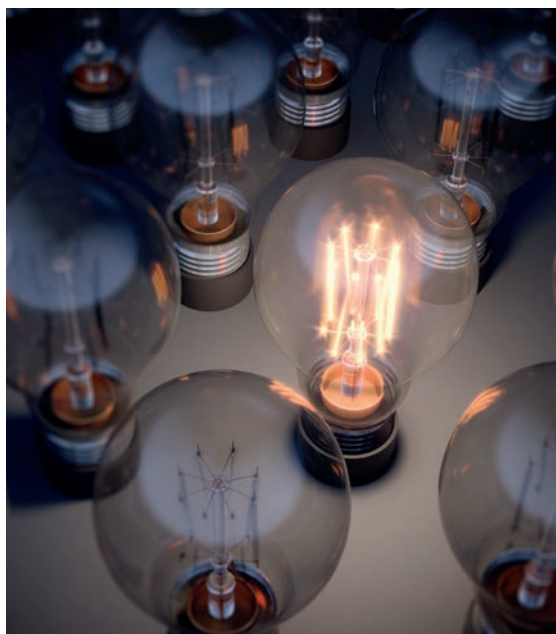
With recruitment agencies driving up pay rates and everyone fishing in limited talent pools, which increases competition between councils, we are encouraging yet more churn in a difficult market.

Working together, we can create strong recruitment campaigns to attract talent into our sector and stabilise rates of pay so that, as councils, we compete in a wider market and not with each other.

We can also build a stable workforce by employing people – permanent and temporary – who are committed to delivering great service to the community and want to drive positive change.

All too often, there is a tendency to respond to financial and resourcing pressures with quick fixes and short-run expedients.

We hope that, by doing something different, we, as local authorities, can coordinate workforce planning in a way that benefits everyone: our councils, our temporary workers, and the communities we serve.



For more information about West Midlands Employers, please visit [www.wmemployers.org.uk](http://www.wmemployers.org.uk)





Councillor **Dr Rosi Sexton** is Deputy Chair of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board and a member of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy Advisory Group

# Suicide prevention

The LGA is offering bespoke support to councils trying to reduce the number of people taking their own lives



In 2020, there were 5,224 lives lost to suicide in England and Wales.

Each case brings unimaginable pain to family, friends and the wider community. Suicide prevention is, therefore, not only a mental health priority, but also a public health priority, locally and nationally.

The impact of the pandemic on suicide rates is as yet unclear, and there has been no recorded increase in registered deaths from suicide.

We have seen increases in people asking for support around their mental health, and we know that the pandemic has eroded many of the 'protective factors' surrounding mental health.

Local authorities are essential in supporting residents to increase and improve these protective factors, such as good-quality housing and strong community links.

In 2013, councils were given responsibility by the Government for suicide prevention, along with a number of other public health responsibilities.

They are in a prime position to collaborate with stakeholders such as the police, clinical commissioning groups, NHS England, coroners, the voluntary sector, and their local communities to develop multi-agency suicide prevention groups, as well as local suicide prevention strategies and action plans.

Despite not being a statutory

requirement, as of April 2019 all local authorities in England have suicide prevention plans in place, with more than half starting to deliver some of the actions in their plans.

To support this essential work, the LGA is pleased to continue to work with the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH), funded by the Department of Health and Social Care, to deliver a suicide prevention sector-led improvement programme for 2022.

The programme will include: a series of case studies providing relevant examples of local and regional good practice for suicide prevention; a national webinar; and regional grants for suicide prevention activity through ADPH networks.

In addition, councils are now invited to submit an expression of interest for bespoke local support. I am so pleased we can offer support to up to 15 local authorities, for any aspect of suicide prevention that affects them at a local or national level.

We welcome applications from councils with their partners, as multi-agency working is crucial for dealing with the complexity of suicide prevention. The deadline for applications is 21 April.

Previous council support has focused on protected characteristics, partnership working, information sharing, bereavement support, system approaches, and frequently used locations.

You can also find case studies from previous years on our website. For example, Kirklees Council's suicide prevention action group established a men's mental health workstream, bringing together statutory and community-led services that work with at-risk men.

Aiming to understand the breadth of work being done, as well as gaps in provision, Kirklees has worked to encourage open dialogue between commissioners and providers, to raise awareness of three specialist projects that support men, as well as getting suicide prevention recognised as a priority by senior leaders and politicians (see [bit.ly/3CQfqiy](https://bit.ly/3CQfqiy)).

Suicide takes so much from our communities and wider society – but the good news? It can be prevented. The pandemic has shone a light on the importance of not just physical health, but also our mental health.

**i** For more information about the LGA's suicide prevention improvement programme, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/suicide-prevention](http://www.local.gov.uk/suicide-prevention) or email [suicide.prevention@local.gov.uk](mailto:suicide.prevention@local.gov.uk). **The deadline for applications is 21 April. When life is difficult, call Samaritans free** on 116 123, email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org), or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



# Inform

**Track and compare your local authority's performance across over 10,000 metrics with LG Inform – our free data benchmarking tool.**

Our themed reports show you all the latest data on a comprehensive range of topics including:

- green jobs
- recycling rates
- homelessness
- COVID-19 vaccination rates
- financial hardship.

[local.gov.uk/lginform](https://local.gov.uk/lginform)

# FORGET WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT COUNCILLORS



As we approach the local elections in May, our latest podcast episode aims to educate the wider public on the role of a councillor, challenging stereotypes and bringing to life stories of local democracy in action.

We hear from four different councillors on what it really means to be a councillor – whilst juggling university work, full time jobs and motherhood – and understand why it's a role for anyone who is passionate about their local community to consider.

Share, listen and download [www.local.gov.uk/podcast](https://www.local.gov.uk/podcast)



## Becoming the UK's newest city



Councillor **Ian Gilbert** (Lab) is Leader of Southend-on-Sea City Council

**Southend-on-Sea has featured in many national headlines, most recently thanks to the huge honour of a royal visit by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, to bestow city status on 'City Day'.**

This was a wonderful, but bittersweet, occasion, and even now it is hard to believe that what tragically preceded it – the death of our local MP Sir David Amess – could have happened in Southend-on-Sea.

We are a diverse 'city by the sea' – part traditional British seaside town, part commuter belt, incorporating the historic fishing village of Leigh and the garrison town of Shoeburyness, where weapons testing can still be heard.

The British seaside atmosphere is still an important part of our identity to be preserved. The seafront and pier remain the best-loved aspects and day-trippers continue to visit in their thousands. Our tourism economy is strong.

Clearly, a modern city needs more than one industry. Already boasting some high-tech manufacturing businesses, Airport Business Park Southend will encourage more such companies into the area.

**HRH Prince Charles bestows city status on Southend-on-Sea**



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In the post-COVID-19 world, we will see even more jobs being done remotely. With that in mind, our decision, in 2014, to work with CityFibre to become one of the first full-fibre 'gigabit cities' is extremely important.

One long-term issue we face is skills. The wider area is relatively poorly served by higher education opportunities, and qualification levels among the adult population remain relatively low.

We are working with our neighbours to bring forward a new technical university, in partnership with key employers, to provide university-level qualifications in a more inclusive, non-traditional way.

Our tourist economy will remain important to our livelihood and identity, and a new leisure park – anchored by an 11-screen IMAX cinema, just a stone's throw from our seafront and city centre – will complement our existing and more traditional economy.

Long known for our cultural and leisure offering, we will continue to build on that, so our new city is just as relevant, popular and exciting as it was in its early days.

We were successful in our levelling up bid to enhance Leigh Port and the Cliffs Pavilion. Leigh Port is part of our history, but also a working fishing port and an

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*"We want, as Sir David wished, to boost the profile of Southend and to foster civic pride"*

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attraction for visitors. The Cliffs Pavilion is a popular regional theatre and venue. We have a vibrant live-music scene, and host the UK's only Jazz Centre, as well as notable art galleries and museums.

Being a seaside city brings with it many challenges and we face serious day-to-day needs. Adult social care is increasingly stretched and our budget this year focuses on addressing that pressure as best we can.

A massive programme of road and pavement resurfacing to address decades of under-investment is also under way.

The formal granting of city status was a great honour for Southend, albeit one achieved in tragic circumstances.

We are working cross-party and cross-community to make sure it is something in which the whole of Southend can share.

We want, as Sir David wished, to boost the profile of Southend, encourage investment, and foster civic pride.

We have an exciting range of events that will show our new city at its best and you are more than welcome to join us to mark this new era.



**For more information about the UK's newest city,** please visit [www.southend.gov.uk](http://www.southend.gov.uk)



## Sowing the seeds of the cost-of-living crisis



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

**I**t can't be easy being the Chancellor when the Office for Budget Responsibility states that British households are about to suffer "the biggest fall in living standards since records began".

But the truth is he sowed the seeds of the cost-of-living crisis himself in the autumn, when he decided to raise the UK's tax burden to the highest it has been in 70 years.

Families face £24 billion in tax rises this year, at a time when millions are being pushed into fuel poverty.

For every £6 Rishi Sunak has taken in

tax since becoming Chancellor, he returned just £1 in the Spring Statement. And forcing councils to put up council tax yet again certainly doesn't help.

Will the cost-of-living crisis be a deciding factor in the local elections this year? It will be a hard-fought contest.

Labour will point to the fact that the average council tax bill for households living in Labour areas is £322 lower than those received by households living in Conservative-controlled council areas.

Many Conservatives, including the Prime Minister, will insist that Conservative councils 'cost you less', despite a lack of evidence.

But the truth is that council tax, whether set by a Labour, Conservative, or Liberal Democrat council, is neither a fair method of taxing people nor a fair way of funding councils.

Taxing a household based on how

much their house was worth 30 years ago is patently absurd, but so is a model of social care funding that sees the poorest areas with the most need receiving the least local funding.

The fact that local councils generally get the blame for council tax bills, even though fire and police also set a big chunk of it, just compounds the unfairness.

Even if we can't agree which party genuinely offers the best value for local taxpayers (and the answer to this question is, of course, Labour), perhaps at least we can all agree that council tax reform is long overdue.

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**"Council tax is neither a fair method of taxing people nor a fair way of funding councils"**

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

## Delivering public services in a war zone

**I**t will be impossible for many of us to truly imagine the horrors of the war in Ukraine and the devastating impact the unprovoked and illegal aggression by Russia is having on the country and its local communities.

Late last month, I, along with many council leaders and mayors from across Europe, joined with mayors from Ukraine, including the deputy mayors of Mariupol and Kyiv, to hear first hand of the terrible humanitarian crisis from Putin's illegal invasion.

We need to do all we can to support our fellow citizens in their suffering.

In the meantime, Ukrainian local authorities continue providing public services, including in areas currently occupied or encircled by Russian troops.

The call was organised by the Council of Europe as part of its 'Local governments unite for welfare and peace' series of events.



The scenes from Ukraine are heart-breaking and the mayors of Ukraine have shown heroic leadership.

On behalf of all councils, I expressed to them our full support and solidarity with the Ukrainian people and our peers in local and regional government, and reiterated that councils stand ready to help with new arrivals from Ukraine.

The LGA is working closely with the Government and partners to ensure support for new arrivals from Ukraine is put in place quickly and at scale (see p10-11).

And as **first** was going to press, I was due to give evidence to the

Commons' Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, setting out local government's priorities.

Refugees Minister Lord Harrington was also due to appear before the committee, whose Chair, Clive Betts MP, has been seeking clarity for councils on a range of issues relating to the Homes for Ukraine scheme's advice, guidance, administration and co-ordination, and the support available to local councils.

For the LGA's latest updates and information for councils on Ukraine, including support for new arrivals, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/ukraine](http://www.local.gov.uk/ukraine)



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

## Humbled by acts of heroism

**A**t the time of writing this article, we are in the fifth week of the war in Ukraine. Like everyone else, I have been shocked by the terrible scenes that we are witnessing on a daily basis while also being humbled by the resistance and acts of heroism of the Ukrainian people.

Many of our communities are home to people with links to Ukraine. I know that councils across the country are doing all they can to show their solidarity with the Ukrainian people and those in their communities who are most directly affected by this terrible war.

While the situation on the ground may have changed by the time you are reading this, the need to support evacuees is likely to have increased.

The public response to the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme has been inspiring, and, working with local volunteers, councils will play a critically important role in helping evacuees to settle into their communities and access public services, such as schools, GP surgeries and counselling.

## "Many of our communities are home to people with links to Ukraine"

The LGA is in constant contact with ministers and civil servants to ensure that the scheme works as seamlessly as possible on the ground – and please be rest assured that we are using these channels to highlight any issues or difficulties that you alert us to.

On a happier note, with the Easter break approaching, I hope you will be able to enjoy some time off and return refreshed ahead of the local elections in May.



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

## Shout more about our achievements

**A** key part of my platform to become Leader of the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group was about raising the profile of local government in my party, and the successes of our councillors and councils in the wider local government world.

So, I was delighted we were able to do this at our Liberal Democrat Spring Conference, which saw an in-person event for more than 100 key councillors and campaigners, alongside our online conference, to which more than 1,200 people logged in.

## "Liberal Democrats in local government stand by to do what we can for Ukraine"

We used it to showcase Liberal Democrat council achievements, with speakers from Oadby and Wigston, Hinckley & Bosworth, York, and Cambridgeshire – and we were delighted to have Helen Morgan, the new MP for North Shropshire, join us to celebrate her stunning by-election win.

We supported a conference motion on empowering local government to tackle climate change, and backed amendments stressing a stronger role for local government in tackling air pollution and sewage discharges.

We heard stunning speeches from Cllr Shaffaq Mohammed, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group at Sheffield City Council, and from South Cambridgeshire's Cllr Pippa Heylings – reinforcing the central role that local government plays in our party.

There was also a moving address by Kira Rudik, Ukrainian MP and Leader of the liberal Holos Party. She thanked us and local government in the UK for everything we are doing to help her nation.

As ever, Liberal Democrats in local government stand by to do what we can to support Ukraine.



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

## Arrival of first Ukrainian families

**W**ith the arrival of the first Ukrainian families to their sponsors in Britain, I know you are preparing to help those sharing their homes and those who are arriving having escaped from this terrible war.

The sanctions against Russia and Belarus are beginning to affect everyday life for our residents, businesses and ourselves, as councils – from tourism to fish and chips.

The issue of energy security has become stark, and we must reduce our reliance on overseas fossil fuels. Shared heating systems powered by renewables are an important part of that, so do take a look at the new Green Heat Network Fund.

We've finally had a government response on the report into local government ethical standards, published three years ago, confirming that the recommendation to suspend councillors for up to six months has been declined.

The Independent Group took a lead in the LGA's work, refining and agreeing the LGA Model Code of Conduct and related guidance.

As we head into the pre-election period, I wish all those standing for election who form the LGA Independent Group the very best of luck. As Independent candidates and candidates for smaller parties, I know there will be hard work ahead for you.

## "Sanctions are affecting everyday life for our residents, businesses and our councils"

It's heartening that the LGA's February residents' survey found that, although 74 per cent of respondents said they had not voted for an Independent candidate in previous elections, 51 per cent said they would vote for an Independent candidate in a future local election.



Councillor **Mark Nuti** (Con) is Cabinet Member for Communities at Surrey County Council

# Food for thought

**The Big Jubilee Lunch is part of the official celebrations for HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee from 2-5 June, and councils are being called upon to help communities take part.**

Surrey County Council is leading the way, with its libraries, communities and communications teams working together to promote The Big Jubilee Lunch and organise and encourage events all over the



county. We have seen communities stepping up to help, volunteer, and generally just join in.

We are embracing this and building on the good that has come out of such a challenging few years. Our goal is to 'leave no-one behind' – to give every resident an opportunity to be involved, to empower communities and, as a result, build healthier, safer and greener places to live.

The Big Jubilee Lunch is proving to be an excellent vehicle to help drive this

philosophy forward. Last year, we held a virtual Big Lunch to connect and communicate with colleagues. More than 500 people took part, with topics such as volunteering, community working, and diversity discussed in groups.

This year, we're excited to be able to get together in person. We have created a Jubilee web hub, are in close contact with borough and district colleagues and stakeholders, and are using libraries and community spaces to spread the word.

Social media platforms such as Nextdoor and Facebook have been crucial in promoting the campaign, and we've made our social media assets available to community groups across the county.

Everything we do is for the benefit of those who live and work in our wonderful county, and we can't continue to grow and improve alone.

We are actively changing how we work with residents, and the 'no we can't' culture is now a 'let's see what we can do together' culture.

The most valuable and powerful thing we have is our communities, and The Big Jubilee Lunch is the perfect excuse to celebrate that – and let's face it, who doesn't like to have a great lunch and a good natter with friends!

**i** To find out more about The Big Jubilee Lunch and Month of Community, and to order a free support pack, please visit: [www.edenprojectcommunities.com/the-big-lunch](http://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/the-big-lunch)

# Breaking the bias



**Sophie Small** is a Spokesperson for the NGDP Women and Non-Binary Network and works for Birmingham City Council

**The LGA's National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) matches passionate graduates with councils looking for the next generation of leaders to deliver key projects and help tackle the challenges we all facing.**

NGDP graduates move between different projects and teams, to develop broad experience of what it means to deliver in local government.

The NGDP Women and Non-Binary Network supports, empowers, and provides a platform for professional development for current graduates and alumni of the NGDP.

Our approach is open, inclusive and non-hierarchical, with network members all sharing in decision-making and contributing their ideas and expertise.

We meet regularly, via video call, to

build connections across councils, share insights and resources, develop our own professional skills, and reflect on issues around gender equality in local government. Our network exists precisely because gender equality is still a goal and not a reality.

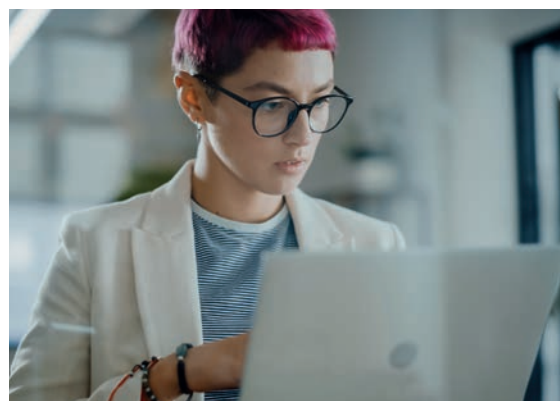
Many of our members work on issues around gender equality in their councils. As part of a placement in housing and safer communities, Rebecca Bowers is working on the Royal Borough of Greenwich's Women's Safety Charter.

She says: "I am working on getting [the charter] relaunched and spread far around the borough.

"We aim to get all the licensed premises, schools, sports teams, charities, and so on, to pledge and make a stand to say no to violence against women and girls. It's a way for the council to lead by example, but also promote culture change."

The charter was co-produced with Her Centre, the borough's service provider for women experiencing domestic and sexual abuse.

Once organisations sign up to the charter, they receive guidance, support,



and resources to help them to implement its principles.

This is an inspiring example of the role local government can play in the battle for gender equality and the kind of work our network members seek to champion and replicate.

Together, we can absolutely #BreakTheBias, as called for on last month's International Women's Day.

**i** If you would like to join the NGDP Women and Non-Binary Network, or find out more, please email us at [ngdp.womenandnb.network@gmail.com](mailto:ngdp.womenandnb.network@gmail.com), or follow us on LinkedIn or Twitter @ngdpwomenandnb





**Helen Barnard** is  
Director of Research  
and Policy at the  
charity Pro Bono  
Economics

# Councillors and charities

**Ground-breaking new research shows councillors lead the way in working with charities, but they want to build stronger relationships.**

A new landmark study from the Law Family Commission on Civil Society has assessed the current state of relationships between charities and local councillors, MPs and civil servants.

The report is based on a survey of more than 700 councillors, MPs and civil servants, as well as interviews and a roundtable with policymakers, academics and charity figures.

It found that local councillors are more deeply engaged with charities than other policymakers – 78 per cent have volunteered and 46 per cent have been trustees of charities.

Most councillors (67 per cent) think relationships between local policymakers and charities are good. However, they are worried about relationships at a national level – with only a quarter believing they are good.

Despite this strong local picture, there is clear demand for further action to strengthen relationships: nearly two-thirds of councillors (65 per cent) think their local authority should be more engaged with the charity sector.

Councillors see a strong element of reciprocity in their relationships with charities, valuing their insights, and their ability to bring people together to address issues in their communities and to signpost residents to local sources of support with specific issues.

However, councillors find it hard to navigate their local social sector and they recognise that local government can be just as confusing for charities.

The report recommends action from local authorities, membership bodies,

central government and charities, to build stronger partnerships. It proposes that local authorities should:

- Bring together working groups of councillors, officers and local charities to co-design a strategic approach to joint working, and to develop information and guidance that will meet the needs of each side.
- Review their approaches to grant-making, commissioning and procurement, building on the pandemic experience and shifting away from short-term project funding towards longer-term funding that builds up charities' skills and effectiveness.

Membership organisations such as the LGA and Solace can play an important role in supporting this, by identifying and disseminating good practice, advice and training about effective ways to collaborate with the local social sector, and successful approaches to funding and joint working.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities also needs to go further to support closer working at a local level, including through: providing advice, guidance and funding for councils to establish link workers or other engagement arrangements with their local social sector; creating a pilot programme of 'civil society regeneration centres' in places with little infrastructure or a weak civil society; and ensuring new devolution deals 'bake in' the involvement of local civil society organisations.

Charities themselves should focus on improving the sector's capabilities and practice in the four areas highlighted by this research: setting high standards for evidence; increasing understanding of government structures and processes; improving campaigning and engagement practices; and demonstrating value for money, effectiveness and productivity in service delivery.

This study uncovers a strong bedrock of mutual respect, cooperation and support between councillors and charities. It also highlights the appetite for these partnerships to be strengthened further, and demonstrates that achieving this is eminently achievable.

Action on this is needed from both sides, enabling local policymakers and charities to deliver even more for the communities that both aim to serve.

**i Pro Bono Economics uses economics to empower the social sector** and to increase wellbeing across the UK, see [www.probonoeconomics.com](http://www.probonoeconomics.com)

*“Councillors see a strong element of reciprocity in their relationships with charities”*





Councillor **Duncan Enright** (Lab) is Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy at Oxfordshire County Council

# A small step towards a big ambition

**We are working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. The zero-emission zone in Oxford city offers one more step to achieving our vision.**

In the 1800s, serious outbreaks of cholera blighted the city until the public authorities acted and cleaned up the water supply.

Until the late 1900s, the sumptuous Cotswold glow of the historic buildings was rendered black with soot, until public authorities enforced the Clean Air Act and they were cleaned.

Right now, the air in the city centre is beginning to be scoured of the invisible pollutants that cause serious health problems. At least one in 17 deaths in Oxford is related to air pollution, and the largest contributors are the internal

combustion engines in our cars, vans, buses and lorries.

Congestion and pollution hit residents on lower incomes hard, as they are more likely to live in areas of the city most badly affected and are least likely to own a car.

The newly launched zero-emission zone (ZEZ), in the heart of our beloved city, aims to help with this, and is one of a series of measures designed to tackle four significant challenges:

- **Climate emergency:** this is the hardest thing civilisation has ever faced – our natural world is our life-support system.
- **Pollution:** idling cars and traffic congestion create a build-up of harmful air pollutants that affect our air quality, our environment and, ultimately, our health.
- **Congestion:** in 2019, we passed four billion total miles driven for the first time in Oxfordshire. While cars have increased our personal mobility, they have also resulted in major congestion, contributing to the climate emergency and making public transport harder to function efficiently.

*“At least one in 17 deaths in Oxford is related to air pollution”*



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- **Safety:** congested roads make it harder for cyclists and pedestrians to travel safely around our town and city centres.

We know our challenge is to support people to get around safely while eliminating pollution and congestion, so our vision is to create a zero-carbon transport network in Oxfordshire.

If we achieve this, it will help towards our climate goals.

The Oxford ZEZ will play a role, but we are also bidding for a new fleet of electric buses and taking urgent measures to improve our cycle infrastructure.

We can only deliver our vision by working in partnership with other councils and organisations, local businesses and residents.

We launched our ZEZ pilot in February, in a small area of the historic heart of Oxford. What we learn from the pilot will help us to expand the ZEZ and encourage more residents and businesses to switch to low or zero-emission vehicles.

Many have already started using bike and electric delivery vehicles to expand their businesses while reducing emissions. Please come and visit Oxford's legendary Covered Market if you want to see what is possible.

In fact, just come to Oxford – it is a magical city full of possibility, set within a vibrant, diverse and innovative county.

We may be starting small with our pilot, but our big ambition is that Oxfordshire will become the greenest, fairest and healthiest it has been for some time.



**For more on Oxford's ZEZ,** please visit [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/zez](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/zez)



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# Making **change** happen in the early years



**Ben Lewing** is Assistant Director at the Early Intervention Foundation

**In 2020, the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) published a review of children's centres and family hubs.**

This highlighted the need to support local system planning, and gave a stark message about “an increasing diversity of local approaches and experimentation, but without a common language to describe these different approaches or a consistent set of metrics for assessing their impact”.

This was the trigger for work in 20 local areas on early childhood services, which is described in our new report, ‘Leading and delivering early childhood services: 10 insights from 20 places across England and Wales’.

At the heart of this report are more than 50 illustrations of local practice and innovation in the delivery of support for families with babies and small children.

These include Islington's Bright Start programme, which is seeing real

As Gail Barker, Health Visitor Professional Lead at Devon County Council, describes: “Often, it feels as if there is a gap between high-level programmes and the actual experiences of those receiving a service ... this self-assessment gave us a chance to reflect, and to consider how well the whole system works together to influence children and young people's outcomes.”

The report is also a frank assessment of the challenges facing local areas as they seek to renew maternity and early years services in the context of a global pandemic and a decade of constrained investment.

It identifies four key features at the heart of effective local multi-agency planning for maternity and early years systems, which should be embedded in local arrangements and which draw on the experience of the 20 local areas. These are:

- a good understanding of where you are starting from
- clear and inclusive partnership structures and processes
- common approaches that support coordinated working
- common approaches for learning and for measuring improvement.

EIF has set out the steps that need to be taken at a national and government level to create the conditions for local success. These include having an explicit focus on the key functions and roles that drive local system planning, and providing national leadership on population needs assessment, workforce planning, information sharing, and measuring outcomes.

The report also calls on government to give maternity and the early years a high profile in national policy making, and to mobilise the What Works Network and other academic partners to support this work.

There is no lack of ambition when it comes to early childhood services in Wales and England. Yet, if we are to realise the potential of early intervention in this crucial stage of child development, then it requires a coordinated, resourced, and long-term response, taking action at national and local levels.

**i** You can read ‘Leading and delivering early childhood services: 10 insights from 20 places across England and Wales’ in full at [bit.ly/3CLmBly](https://bit.ly/3CLmBly)

*“EIF has set out the steps to create the conditions for success”*

improvements in collaboration between early years and maternity services as a result of a clear vision and a good understanding of different family and community needs.

Devon's Best Start in Life Programme has strong leadership at every level, including for data analysis and evaluation, making sure that families' experience of services informs local decisions.

In Calderdale and Kirklees, the councils have been working closely with maternity services, the University of Huddersfield, and the Maternity Voices Partnership to understand and tackle health inequalities across the maternity pathway.

Each local area that took part in this work used a consistent self-assessment metric – EIF's maturity matrix, which is an early intervention system planning tool.





# first packaging

Alongside the majority of councils, the LGA has declared a climate emergency. We have pledged to reduce our own carbon emissions and to support councils and our partner organisations to do the same.

Rising paper prices and energy costs coupled with the pledge to reduce our carbon emissions have led the LGA to take the decision to replace first's paper wrapping with a fully compostable starch polywrap. This change will come into effect next month.

Made from starches, cellulose and vegetable oils, the starch wrapping can be used to line your food waste bin, or can be disposed of in food waste bins, green waste bins and any compost heap. At least 90 per cent of the material will compost within 12 months.

The magazine and address sheet should continue to be recycled via local paper/cardboard waste collections.

**If you need further information about this change, please email [karen.thornton@local.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thornton@local.gov.uk)**



Meanwhile, did you know that we publish all the stories from first magazine online each month, at **[www.lgafirst.co.uk](http://www.lgafirst.co.uk)**? If you're not already receiving it, you can also sign up for our fortnightly first e-bulletin, which links to key stories on the website, at **[www.lgafirst.co.uk/subscriptions](http://www.lgafirst.co.uk/subscriptions)**.

If you find these e-versions of first fulfil your need for information from the LGA, why not think about reducing our carbon footprint by unsubscribing from the magazine? Just email **[first@oscar-research.co.uk](mailto:first@oscar-research.co.uk)** to let us know.

# ELECTIONS



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



## No history of success

**The Green Party continues to succeed in some Conservative-supporting areas, despite little or no former presence.**

Rutland's Ryhall and Casterton ward provides the latest example. Since the current boundaries were established in 2003, the Greens have not fielded a candidate at any scheduled election.

In May 2019, the two sitting members, one Conservative, the other an Independent, were re-elected unopposed. However, the long-standing Independent, Chris Parsons, did not sign his acceptance of office, which led to his disqualification and a September by-election, in which the Conservative, Richard Coleman, gained the seat, despite a challenge from a Liberal Democrat and a Green. Coleman's own resignation and the absence of a Lib Dem candidate from this by-election gave the Green's Rick Wilson an opportunity, which he took by 13 votes.

The Conservatives suffered a second defeat in the soon-to-be-abolished South Somerset district. Neroche ward was established in 1973 and had returned a Conservative in 13 successive elections since then. The party faced no challengers at all until Labour triggered a contest in 1983, and in 1991 and 1995 the Liberal Democrats came within sight of victory. Persistence pays, it seems, with the Liberal Democrats' Ray Buckler, a local parish councillor, overturning a 36 per cent Conservative majority.

Conservative defeat in Spelthorne's Stanwell North ward was not unexpected. In 2019, the ward elected two Labour councillors and a single Conservative, who received rather more votes than his colleagues on the party's slate. The Labour candidate to miss out then was Jon Button, but he made it over the line this time, albeit by only 38 votes.

The vacancy in East Lindsey's Halton Holegate ward, prompted by the death of Independent Councillor Jim Swanson, gave the Conservative Party its only gain in a simple two-way fight with Labour.

Labour will be celebrating a gain from UKIP in Sunderland as it continues to face a strong challenge in some of its wards. Redhill was one of three seats won by UKIP in 2019. But while the challenge from that quarter has now largely disappeared, Labour continues to lose vote share, with both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats advancing in the 2021 elections.

Labour's second gain saw the party win Durham's Ferryhill ward. In 2021, as in previous years, voters divided their three ballot choices, electing Independent, Labour and Conservative councillors. Given that background, Labour's 16-point margin of victory appears rather impressive.

Sadly, almost a third of the vacancies were caused by the deaths of councillors elected to district and county councils.

Conservative Bob Adams had represented Isaac Newton ward on South Kesteven, and Colsterworth Rural division on Lincolnshire, for some years. Liberal Democrat Paul Clark was elected to North Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire in 2021.



Only results where there was a change of political control are shown right. **For additional data on these and other recent by-election results,** please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

Fellow Liberal Democrat Craig Cannell, who died aged just 32, not only sat on Essex and Rochford councils but also Rayleigh Grange town council. He first won a seat at a 2018 by-election and was re-elected to the county and district only last May.

### Local by-elections

#### Durham, Ferryhill

LAB GAIN FROM IND

16.4% over Ind      Turnout 26.2%

#### East Lindsey, Halton Holegate

CON GAIN FROM IND

32.5% over Lab      Turnout 21.8%

#### Rutland, Ryhall and Casterton

GREEN GAIN FROM CON

2.4% over Con      Turnout 23.9%

#### South Somerset, Neroche

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

10.1% over Con      Turnout 35%

#### Spelthorne, Stanwell North

LAB GAIN FROM CON

3.1% over Con      Turnout 21.1%

#### Sunderland, Redhill

LAB GAIN FROM UKIP

21.4% over Lib Dem      Turnout 25.4%

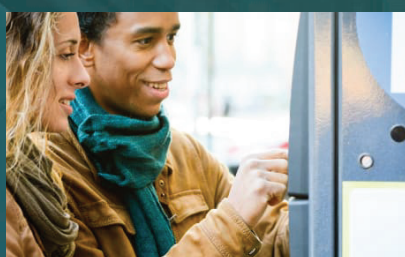


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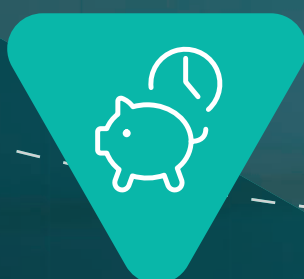
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